

12. Learning to Walk as New People in Christ

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to speak the truth in love. We also saw that we want to help them learn to function as a part of the body of Christ. It will give their lives great meaning and purpose as they begin to understand that the Lord has created them for good works and they are shown how to function as a part of the body of Christ of which Christ is the Head. In our topic today, we are going to see how to help our children learn to walk as new people in Christ.

This section begins by reminding us of what we were like before we placed our faith in Christ. Ephesians 4:17-19 says, “This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.” We are reminded of the way that we used to walk and that Gentiles who have not placed their faith in Christ continue to walk. “Walk” talks about our daily conduct.

First, we see that the daily actions of Gentiles who are not Christians are based on the futility of their mind. The word that is translated “futility” here is translated “emptiness” in 2 Peter 2:18 where we read, “For when they speak great swelling *words* of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.” This verse is talking about false teachers. Here, we see that such false teachers try to impress people with their words. However, they are actually using their words to stir up the sinful desires of the flesh in an effort to get others to commit more outrageous sins without shame. Here, we see that those who are not Christians live to satisfy themselves by sin.

Second, we see that the Gentiles are alienated from God. These verses tell us that the daily lifestyle of those who are not Christians is the result of having their understanding darkened. 1 Corinthians 2:14 says, “But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know *them*, because they are spiritually discerned.” They cannot understand spiritual truth because they are spiritually blind. The word that is translated “ignorance” speaks of ignorance of godly things or moral blindness. Separation from God prevents spiritual understanding. The word that is translated “blindness” is translated “hardness” in Mark 3:5 where we read, “And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts, He said to the man, ‘Stretch out your hand.’ And he stretched *it* out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other.” In this case, the religious leaders were condemning a man for coming to Christ on the Sabbath to be healed. In Ephesians 4:18, we also see that the Gentiles are alienated from God by spiritual blindness and hardness of heart.

Third, we see that the Gentiles are past feeling. The word that is translated “past feeling” means *to cease to feel pain or grief*. Titus 1:15 says, “To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled.” Here, we see that Gentiles without Christ reach a point where they defile their conscience and their sins

no longer bother them.

Fourth, we see that the Gentiles are following all uncleanness with greediness. Once people have reached a point where their consciences no longer bother them, they turn to all forms of sin to satisfy themselves. The word that is translated “uncleanness” speaks of impurity and lustful living. Ephesians 5:5 says, “For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.” Here, we see that moral impurity and greediness (covetousness) often go together. This shows that such individuals have a desire for more of all kinds of sin.

In contrast, we see that the Lord gives us a desire to see our lives changed and transformed when we place our faith in Christ. Ephesians 4:20-23 says, “But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Here, we see what brought us to Christ and changed our lives.

First, we see that we learned about Christ. The word translated “learned” means *to increase in knowledge*. Romans 10:17 says, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.” The process of being drawn to Christ includes increasing in our knowledge and understanding of Him. Mark 4:26-29 says, “And He said, ‘The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed on the ground, and should sleep by night and rise by day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he himself does not know how. For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head. But when the grain ripens, immediately he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.’” This passage makes it clear that it normally takes time between when we first hear about Christ and when we place our faith in Christ. We were drawn to Christ over time as people shared the Word of God with us.

Second, we see that we have heard Christ. The word that is translated “heard” can mean to come to an understanding. James 1:19-20 uses the word when it says, “So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God.” In these verses, we see that coming to an understanding because we hear will prevent wrath. Our verse in Ephesians talks about coming to an understanding of the Gospel.

Third, we see that we have been taught by Him. Once we come to Christ, the Holy Spirit begins to teach us. 1 Corinthians 2:13 says, “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” At the moment of salvation, the Holy Spirit begins to teach us and help us to understand spiritual things. That is why it was possible for our lives to begin to change from the moment we placed our faith in Christ.

As we learn the truth of Christ, we see that Christ calls us to put off the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts. The old man is our old sin nature. The word that is

translated “put off” speaks of taking off old or dirty clothes. The same word is translated “cast off” in Romans 13:12, where we read, “The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.” We are to remove the sins of our former lives just like we would take off dirty clothes at the end of working a long day out in the fields. Here, we are reminded that we have the power to stop doing the things that we formerly did as we yield our lives to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to give us His strength to do what is right.

Verse 23 tells us, “And be renewed in the spirit of your mind.” Here, we see how the Lord changes and transforms our lives. Romans 12:2 says, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” We see that as Christians, the Lord gives us His power to learn to think a whole new way. As we hear, read, study, memorize and meditate on the Word of God we begin replacing our thoughts with God’s thoughts. Isaiah 55:8-9 says, “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD. ‘For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” We begin to think differently as we replace our thoughts with God’s thoughts.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 says, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” As we begin to think the thoughts of God, He will give us power to obey His Word as we yield to the Spirit and ask Him for strength.

This is why Ephesians 4:24 says, “And that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.” The “old man” was our old sin nature, which we had at the time that we were born physically. The “new man” is the new nature that we receive at the moment of salvation. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says, “Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” At the moment of salvation, this new nature gives us a desire to live to please God. We have new desires and are given the power to live a new life and carry out those new desires as we learn to confess our sins and yield our lives to the Holy Spirit moment by moment.

We see that the new man is really a restoration to the state that Adam had before he sinned. We are given the freedom to again make wise choices and do the things that are pleasing to God. We can do as Adam did and choose to sin. However, we have been set free from the control of sin so that we are now able to choose to do what is right and pleasing to God. Then, we have been given the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives to give us the power to carry out those choices. As we help our physical and spiritual children fully understand what it means to be a new creation in Christ, they begin to realize that they can now walk as new people in Christ. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children and help your children learn to walk in Christ.