

5. Learning How to Be a Good Example to Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to follow the example of Christ. We also saw that learning to follow the example of Christ will cause us to be faithful in our study and teaching of the Word of God so that we teach what the Word of God says and not our own ideas or opinions. In our topic today, we are going to see that Paul explained to Timothy how to be a good example to others. In the same way, we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to be a good example for others to follow.

In order to be a good example to others, Paul told Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:19-21, “Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” 1 Corinthians 3:11 says, “For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” Then, Ephesians 2:19-20 says, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief *cornerstone*.” The apostles gave us eyewitness testimony of the resurrection and the prophets gave us the written Word of God. Together with Christ, this makes a solid foundation.

False teachers have built on a false foundation. True believers have built on this solid foundation. God has placed His seal on those who have built on the solid foundation. 2 Corinthians 1:21-22 says, “Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us *is* God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” The fact that the Holy Spirit is our guarantee and seal of our salvation means that the Father knows us and we are His children. Romans 8:14-15 says, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’” We can know the Father as Abba (Daddy). Second, the Holy Spirit gives us His power to depart from iniquity. Romans 6:16 says, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin *leading* to death, or of obedience *leading* to righteousness?” Each moment we yield to the Holy Spirit, He gives us His power to keep one’s self from sin.

As Paul wrote to Timothy, he compared people’s lives to vessels (a household container or utensil). Some containers are made of metals that last. Other containers are made of materials like wood or clay that do not last. Containers that last are often used for food (honor) while containers that do not last are used for things like garbage (dishonor). We are to confess our sins and cleanse our lives from the things that bring dishonor. Then, our lives will be like a container that is set apart for God. Our lives will then be useful to the Lord. The Lord will use our lives to accomplish every good work.

To have a life that is useful to the Lord, we are to flee certain things and follow other things.

2 Timothy 2:22 says, “Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.” Youthful lusts involve a variety of things. 1 Corinthians 6:18 says, “Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.” 1 Corinthians 10:14 says, “Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.” 1 Timothy 6:10-11 says, “For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness.” These verses give us a sample of things to flee.

The word that is translated “to pursue” means “*to run swiftly to catch a person or a thing.*” When we are calling on the Lord out of a pure heart we will have a strong desire to see righteousness, faith, love and peace develop in our lives. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” The whole Word of God will help us grow in righteousness and equip us for every good work. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 says, “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father.” Then, Philippians 4:7 adds, “And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” As we pursue these things, the Lord is able to work mightily through our lives.

We also see how we are to minister to those who oppose us as we serve the Lord. 2 Timothy 2:23-26 says, “But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and *that* they may come to their senses *and escape* the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to *do* his will.” The word that is translated “foolish” means *godless*. The word that is translated “ignorant” means *rude or uneducated*. The word that is translated “disputes” means *things that stir up arguments*. False teachers try to get those who serve the Lord to argue about meaningless and worthless questions. Such questions just stir up fights and arguments. Titus 3:9 adds, “But avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless.” We may win an argument but we will lose the opportunity to share the Gospel.

Like Timothy, we are to realize that we are servants of the Lord. If we are going to show the attitude of a bondservant of the Lord, we must not quarrel (get involved in a war of words). Christ is our example. 1 Peter 2:21-23 says, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: ‘Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth’; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed *Himself* to Him who judges righteously.” Christ did not sin, did not speak to deceive, did not speak evil, and did not threaten. Instead, He committed Himself to the Father. As the bondservants of Christ, He gives us an example to follow.

As we follow the instructions to Timothy, we see we are to show godly attitudes even when we speak to those who are in rebellion against the Word of God. First, we are to be gentle to all. The word that is translated “gentle” is only used one other place in the New Testament. 1 Thessalonians 2:7 says, “But we were gentle among you, just as a nursing *mother* cherishes her own children.” When a mother is nursing an infant, she must be very gentle or she could injure or even kill a newborn infant. We are to have that same attitude toward everyone including those who are in opposition to the Gospel.

Second, we are to be able to teach. The word that is translated “able to teach” means *skillful in teaching*. The only other place this word is used is in 1 Timothy 3:2 where it is a qualification for an elder. Since we want to help our children become qualified for spiritual leadership, we want to help them become skillful in teaching. In Ephesians 4:11-13 we read, “And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.” Here, we see that evangelists equip the saints for evangelism, pastors equip the saints to minister to one another and teachers equip the saints to teach and apply the Word of God. In order to help our children become skillful at teaching, we realize that this includes growth in knowledge, in understanding and in application.

Third, we are to teach with patience. This will only happen as we have a humble attitude. Titus 3:1-2 says, “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.” Here, we see that we are to have an attitude of humility toward all people. People will often have an attitude of rebellion if correction is done with pride. In contrast, they will often accept correction if it is done with a humble attitude. As we show our children how to correct with humility, they will see many respond with an attitude of repentance and come to a correct understanding of the truth.

False teachers have been taken captive by Satan to do his will. Sound correction and teaching with humility makes it possible for some of them to come to a true understanding of the grace of God and escape the trap of the devil. Paul certainly understood how the Lord can change and transform a life because of what happened in his own life. Paul was transformed from the chief persecutor of the church to the apostle to the Gentiles. Just as Paul told Timothy that the Lord could use Timothy to help others, the Lord also wants to use us and our children to change and transform the lives of others. We want to show our physical and spiritual children by our example how to correct with humility others people including false teachers. The Lord will use our attitudes to accomplish His purpose in the lives of others and draw some of them to the Lord so that their lives are also transformed. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to be a good example to others.