

## 19. Learning to Look for Opportunities to Minister

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to bear the burdens of others. We saw that bearing burdens can include restoring those who are caught in any trespass. It can include helping those who are struggling with any kind of a heavy burden such as the death of a loved one. It can include helping young Christians grow in their faith. It can include many other things. In this topic, we will focus on how we help our physical and spiritual children learn to look for opportunities to minister to others with their lives.

There are many different ways that we can serve others and minister to them. Galatians 6:6 says, “Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.” One “who is taught” is a person that has received instruction directly from another Christian. Here, we see that the one who is teaching is sharing the Word of God with the other person to help the other person in their spiritual growth and understanding. In Luke 1:3-4, we read, “It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed.” Luke knew that Theophilus had been taught the teachings of Christ by listening to others who told him what Christ had said and done. However, Luke was led by the Lord to give that teaching to Theophilus in written form so that he could know with certainty the things he had heard from the words of others.

The last part of the verse speaks of “him who teaches”. In 1 Corinthians 14:18-20, Paul uses the word in this way. Those verses say, “I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.” Paul said that if he spoke to the Corinthians in another language or tongue that they did not understand it would mean nothing to them. He said it was more important to speak five words that would teach them than to speak ten thousand words that they could not understand. As a result, we see that the purpose of teaching is to help people gain understanding of the Word of God so that they can apply the Word in their daily lives. The purpose of teaching is to give understanding that will produce spiritual maturity.

In Galatians 6:6, we see that sharing is to go both ways. The word that is translated “share” means *to become a sharer or a partner*. In some situations, this means that two people discuss the Word of God together and learn from each other. In other situations, it may mean that people share financially to help those who are teaching them. Philippians 4:15-16 says, “Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities.” In these verses, we see that Paul had shared the Word of God with the Philippians and the Philippians had later shared their finances with Paul to help him take the Gospel to other places.

In Romans 15:26-27, we see that the Christians in Macedonia had shared in a similar way with the Christians in Jerusalem. Those verses say, “For it pleased those from Macedonia and Achaia to

make a certain contribution for the poor among the saints who are in Jerusalem. It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things.” Here, we see that the Christians in Macedonia heard about the poor among the saints in Jerusalem and so they sent a gift to help them with their physical needs. As a result, we see that we can share with one another in many different ways as a part of our ministry to others.

We also see that ministry can bring spiritual rewards. Galatians 6:7-8 says, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.” Those who choose to sow to the flesh instead of the Spirit will reap corruption. In contrast, those who choose to sow to the Spirit will reap everlasting life and eternal rewards.

We are warned that people can deceive themselves so that they think they will receive eternal rewards even though they are sowing to the flesh. However, God says that He will not be mocked. Even David learned that he would reap what he had sown to the flesh. 2 Samuel 12:13-14 says, “So David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” David made a choice to sin and he reaped the consequences of that choice. The child that was born as a result of that sin died and brought great sorrow to the life of David. That is why we want to help our children learn the importance of sowing to the Spirit instead of the flesh.

That is why Galatians 6:9 goes on to say, “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” To “grow weary” means *to become exhausted or to be totally spiritless*. Paul gave us an example of one who did not grow weary in ministry for the Lord. 2 Corinthians 4:1-2 says, “Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” Paul did not grow weary or lose heart even though it meant suffering but continued to minister because he understood the mercy that the Lord had shown to him. In 2 Corinthians 4:16, he added, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.” Paul understood the fact that the Lord renewed his spirit daily even though his physical body was wearing out.

Paul also encouraged the Christians in Thessalonica not to become exhausted doing good. 2 Thessalonians 3:13 says, “But *as for* you, brethren, do not grow weary *in* doing good.” The Thessalonians had only been Christians for a fairly short period of time so they were all fairly new Christians. As a result, Paul encouraged them to continue doing good and not to grow weary as they did good. In the same way, we need to continue to encourage our physical and spiritual children to do good at every opportunity that the Lord opens for them to do things that have eternal value.

We see that was the same encouragement that Paul gave to the Christians in Galatia even though they were also fairly new Christians. Galatians 6:10 says, “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” The word that is translated “opportunity” means *a fixed and definite period of time*. That fixed or definite period of time is the time that the Lord has given each one of us to live on this earth. Here, we see that as long as the Lord has given us life and left us on this earth that He still has ministry for each Christian to do. That is why Ephesians 5:16 says, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” Here, we see that we are to make the best use of the time that the Lord has given to each of us individually because we are living in evil days.

Colossians 4:5-6 tells us how to redeem or make the best use of the time that the Lord has given to each one of us as individuals. Those verses say, “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time. *Let* your speech always *be* with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.” Here, we see that we are to use the opportunities that the Lord gives us to share the Gospel with those who are not yet Christians. We are to walk in wisdom toward them. This means that we are to look for every opportunity that the Lord opens for us to share the Gospel. Each time those opportunities come we are to share the Gospel with grace.

We are also to let our words be seasoned with salt. Salt causes thirst, preserves and purifies. Here, we see that we are to share the Gospel in such a way that it causes people to want to hear more about Christ. Then, 1 Peter 3:15 says, “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always *be* ready to *give* a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.” As we share in such a way that people want to hear more about what Christ did to provide forgiveness of sins and eternal life, we are told to pray that the Lord will give us the particular words that we need to answer each question. This is how we show our children how to do good to all people.

We see that we are to also show our children how to look for opportunities to do good to those who are of the household of faith. The household of faith refers to all Christians. The Christian life is a shared life and we are to look for opportunities to share our lives with other Christians so that we can help them become more effective in the ministries that the Lord has given them. That is why Christ said in Mark 10:43-45, “Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” We are to follow the example of Christ and show our physical and spiritual children how to give their lives for the sake of others. The Lord will work as we serve. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to look for opportunities to minister to both Christians and to those who are not yet Christians.