

16. Learning to Do What is Good for One Another and for All

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to forgive one another. Today, we will be focusing on the topic of doing what is good for one another and for all. 1 Thessalonians 5:15 says, “See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.” Here, we see that we want what is good in its character and beneficial in its effects for one another. We want to show our physical and spiritual children what it means to do good to one another and to all.

Today, we live in a world where the focus is on self. Words such as self-esteem, self-centered and selfish are very common in the thinking of the world. Since this is the way that the world commonly thinks, we have to show and teach our physical and spiritual children to place Christ in the center of their thinking and not self. To “esteem” something means *to value it very highly*. Instead of self-esteem, we want to show our children the importance of Christ-esteem. Philippians 3:10 explains what it means to have Christ-esteem when it says, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death.” Here, we see that Christ-esteem will cause us to value Christ so highly that our greatest desire will be to know Him better and become more like Him.

As we show our children how to know Christ better so that they become more like Him, we will see a change in their attitudes toward both Christ and others. Christ had a love and concern for others. As our children see that attitude in our lives, they will also develop similar attitudes. Philippians 2:3-4 says, “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.” Selfish ambition and conceit cause a person to develop pride in their own accomplishments. A humble attitude causes a person to focus on the accomplishments of others. When we notice the accomplishments of others, we encourage them to continue to grow and develop in their service for the Lord.

Instead of becoming self-centered, we want to help our children become Christ centered. That will lead them to make Christ the center of their lives instead of self. A person that is self-centered will seek to bring glory to self. Paul, Silas and Timothy gave the Thessalonians a key example to follow both by what they said and what they did. In 1 Thessalonians 2:5-6, we see some things that they avoided to help their spiritual children learn to grow in Christ. Those verses say, “For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness. Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.” To be an example, these men avoided three things. They did not use flattering words. They did not have a covetous attitude. They did not seek glory from men. Instead, 1 Thessalonians 2:7-9 says that they provided the love of a nursing mother. Then, 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 says that they provided the example of a godly father.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, there were many in that church that were seeking to bring glory to self. 1 Corinthians 3:1-3 says, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until

now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" A baby or a young child is very self-centered. Two of the early words that children learn are usually "mine" and "no". The Corinthian Christians were still acting like little children. After discussing those childish characteristics for ten chapters, Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." Paul wanted the Corinthians to learn to bring glory to God by making Christ the center of their lives instead of self. We want to show our children how to do the same.

The world also encourages people to be selfish. Most people in the world think only about the things that will benefit themselves. That is why people try to get even when they do not get their own way. That is why 1 Thessalonians 5:15 says, "See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all." Instead of encouraging our children to get even with others, this verse says that we want to show our children how to pursue what is good. The word that is translated "good" means *that which is good in its character and beneficial in its effects*. Something that is good in its character means that it is the right thing to do because it is pleasing to God. We want to show our children how to walk to please God.

As our children learn to walk to please God, the things that they do in their lives will also benefit others. In his sermon at the house of Cornelius, Peter said that Christ had a ministry that was focused on doing good. Acts 10:38 says, "...how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him." In 2 Thessalonians 3:13, Paul encouraged the Thessalonians by saying "But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good." Here, we see that Paul encouraged his spiritual children not to get tired of doing good. Paul gave similar encouragement to spiritual children in Galatia. Galatians 6:9 says, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart." Here, Paul even reminded his spiritual children that there will be a reward for those who do good.

1 Thessalonians 5:15 also said that we are to pursue what is good for all. This includes both Christians and non-Christians. When we pursue what is good in character and beneficial in its effects for those who are non-Christians, we know that the most beneficial thing that we can share with non-Christians is the message about how to receive forgiveness of sins. Paul summarized what we want to help the non-Christian understand when he said in Acts 26:18, "To open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me." Here, we see that the most beneficial thing that we can show our children is how to help those who do not yet know Christ learn how to have their lives transformed.

However, to get the opportunity to really share this message with people who are not yet Christians, we have to help our children learn how to build healthy relationships with people who do not yet know Christ. In the sermon Peter spoke at the house of Cornelius, mentioned earlier, we see that Christ focused on two things as He met people who needed eternal life. First, Christ focused on doing good. Christ found many different ways to do good. Twice we see that Christ did good by

feeding people when they had been with Him for an extended period of time without eating. Other times, Christ did good by ministering to people in their sorrow because of the death of a relative. In fact, wherever Christ went he found opportunities to do good to others.

Second, Christ focused on healing all those who were oppressed by the devil. “To oppress” means *to exercise harsh control over another person*. In Acts 10:38, we see that the devil oppresses people. In James 2:6, we see that the rich oppress people. We want to show our children how to help any person that is oppressed whether by the devil or by other people. One of the ways that Satan oppresses people is through fear and especially the fear of death. Hebrews 2:14-15 says, “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Satan is able to keep people in bondage through fear.

In contrast, we want to help our children learn to walk in love. 1 John 4:18 says, “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.” People are either driven by fear or they are led by the love of Christ. We want to show our children by our example how to help others learn to be led by the love of Christ in their lives. We help our children learn to lead others to Christ so that they can be set free from the bondage of Satan.

However, once a person becomes a Christian we also want to show our children how to help a new Christian grow in Christ so that the new Christian learns how to become led by the love of Christ instead of still being driven by fear. Our children will only learn how to be led by the love of Christ as we show them the love of Christ by our own example. Christ did not give the new commandment to His disciples when He started His ministry. Instead, Christ gave that new commandment the night before He was crucified. That new commandment in John 13:34-35 says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” We help our children grow and become the disciples of Christ. Then, we show them how to love one another as Christ loves them. Only as they are shown by example will they know how to love others as Christ loves them.

It is a great privilege to help our physical and spiritual children learn to do good to one another and to all people. We show them how to do that as we love them as Christ loves us. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to love one another as Christ loves them.