

22. Learning to Be Members of One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by becoming like-minded. We saw that we are able to teach our physical and spiritual children how to become like-minded as we listen to their opinions, desires and interests and then help them learn at a later time to compare their opinions and thoughts with the thoughts and ways of God. Today, we are going to discuss how to help our children learn what it means to function together like the parts of the body. Romans 12:5 says, "...so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another." Then, Ephesians 4:25 adds, "Therefore, putting away lying, 'Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,' for we are members of one another." In both of these verses, we see that we are to learn to be members one of another. That will be our focus today.

First, the verse that we just quoted from Romans 12:5 shows us a key Biblical principle that we want to teach our physical and spiritual children. We want to help our children understand that they are part of a body and we all need what the other parts of the body can contribute to us. 1 Corinthians 12:22 says, "No, much rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary." At the same time, the other parts of the body also need the things that God has equipped and gifted us to contribute to them. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says, "But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all." Here, we see that our gifts are not given for our glory but so that they can profit the entire body. That is why it is so essential to help our children realize that they need other Christians and other Christians need them.

Second, the verses that are given prior to Romans 12:5 give us some other key principles to help us understand how to function like a body. Romans 12:3 says, "For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith." In this verse, we see the attitude that we are to have regarding the spiritual gifts that the Lord has given us. We see that we are not to think more highly than we ought to think but to think soberly. Here, we see that we are to have a humble attitude about our spiritual gifts. 1 Peter 5:5 says, "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for 'God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.'" Since we have been given whatever gifts we have, we are to be clothed with humility because we can do nothing in our own strength.

Third, we also see in verse three that God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. Here, we see that the Holy Spirit gives us exactly what we need to fulfill the ministry that the Lord has for us in the body. 1 Corinthians 12:11 says, "But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills." Here, we see that the Holy Spirit gives us what we need to carry out the role that the Holy Spirit has for us in the body of Christ. 1 Peter 4:10-11 says, "As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." The Holy Spirit gives some of us abilities to serve and others abilities to speak. It is the Holy Spirit that chooses what to give

us.

Fourth, Romans 12:4-5 says, “For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.” In verse four, we see that since we are many different people in the body of Christ, we do not all have the same function. In the physical body, our hands and our feet have very different responsibilities. We want to help our children understand that God gives each one of them a different combination of gifts, abilities, personalities and experiences in life because God has a unique ministry for them in the body of Christ. The goal of the Lord is not uniformity (everyone doing the same thing at the same time) but unity (everyone carries out the unique ministry that the Lord has equipped them to do to serve the other members of the body).

There will never be unity in any body where the parts do not use their different gifts to minister to one another under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. There will always be unity in any body where the parts are using their different gifts to minister to one another. Ephesians 4:3 says, “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” The Holy Spirit always functions in unity. We keep the unity of the Spirit when we are in submission to the Holy Spirit so that we allow Him to work through our lives. When Christ prayed for us the night before He was crucified, He said in John 17:20-21, “I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” It is the unity of the body as we together submit to the Holy Spirit that causes the world to believe that the Father sent Christ.

Fifth, Romans 12:6-8 tells us how we help our children use their spiritual gifts since they have been given different gifts. Those verses say, “Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; or ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” Here, we see that we are to show our children that we use our gifts in different ways according to the grace the Lord has given to each one of us. As you notice, in the seven gifts mentioned in these verses, no two gifts are to be exercised in the same way. Instead, each gift is to be exercised in the way that the Lord intends for it to be exercised. That is the diversity that makes unity possible. The human body functions most effectively when every part functions the way that it was designed to function. The same is true in the spiritual body.

Ephesians 4:25 is the second verse that tells us we are to be members one of another. The previous three verses give us some other key principles for functioning effectively as members of the body of Christ. Ephesians 4:22-24 says, “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, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness.”

Sixth, we see that we are to put off the old man and be renewed in the spirit of our mind so that we begin to think Biblically instead of thinking the way that the world thinks. 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 are not to continue to think like the world.

Seventh, we are to put on the new man that is created according to God. This will produce true righteousness and holiness. We learn to put on the new man as we memorize and meditate on the Word of God so that we learn to think Biblically. Psalm 1:1-3 says, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night. He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.” As we learn to think Biblically, we begin to understand the will of God.

Eighth, once we understand the will of God, it becomes possible for us to carry out His will. That actually happens as we learn to yield to the Holy Spirit and ask Him to give us His power to put off the actions that are the result of worldly thinking. As we yield to the Holy Spirit, He gives us His strength to put off the things mentioned in Ephesians 4:25-31. Those verses say, “Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.” We want to show our children by our example that the Holy Spirit does give us His power to put off these things as we yield to Him.

Ninth, as we yield to the Holy Spirit, He gives us the strength to put on the actions that are the result of Biblical thinking. Ephesians 4:32 says, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” Just as we model for our children the fact that the Holy Spirit gives us the power to put off the actions of the old man, we also model for our children the fact that the Holy Spirit gives us His strength to carry out the actions of the new man.

It is a great privilege to be a part of the body of Christ and to be able to show our physical and spiritual children how to function as a part of the body of Christ. We can be filled with joy as we learn to function in unity. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children learn to function effectively in the body of Christ.