

23. Learning to Be at Peace with One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to be members one of another so that we learn to function as the body of Christ. We saw that we help our physical and spiritual children learn to function in unity as they learn to think Biblically and learn to yield to the Holy Spirit. Today, we are going to be discussing how we can help our children learn to be at peace with one another. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 says, “And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. Be at peace among yourselves.” In these verses, we see that we are to be at peace among ourselves. That will be the focus of our topic today.

In order to understand what it means to be “at peace with one another”, we need to begin with a definition. *To bring to peace, to reconcile or to keep and maintain the peace that is already present*, is what it means to be at peace. First, we see that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to bring two people in conflict to peace with one another. In Philippians 4:2, we read, “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.” Here, we see that there were two women in the church at Philippi that were having a conflict with one another. Such conflicts often grow as people begin to choose sides in the conflict. In fact, many church splits through the years started out as a personal conflict between two people. As a result, Paul is here encouraging these two women to resolve the conflict so that they will be brought to a state of peace with one another.

Scripture gives some key principles for resolving conflicts between Christians. Luke 17:3-5 says, “...Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him.’ And the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith’.” In this case, we see that there is a conflict because one Christian has sinned against another. Instead of talking to others about the one that has sinned against us, we need to talk directly to the person. We are to go to the person in love and rebuke the person for their sin against us. This means we must use the Scriptures to define what sin was committed and explain to the person how the person committed that sin against us.

In order to help our children learn how to be effective when rebuking another person for a sin against them, we need to help them understand the attitude that the physical or spiritual child must have in order to be effective. Galatians 6:1 says, “Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted.” This verse points out that an effective rebuke requires two things. First, our goal must be to restore the relationship and not to destroy it. Second, we must have a spirit of gentleness on our part. Otherwise, we will be tempted to sin ourselves. We will only help our child to understand these two key principles if we are regularly applying them when we correct or rebuke the child when the child has sinned.

Second, we want to help our children learn to reconcile two people who have been in conflict with

one another. Often a person will have two friends and have a genuine love for each of those friends. However, those friends have had a conflict with one another and as a result are no longer talking to one another. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 says, “Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation.” Our model here is our own relationship with God. To “reconcile” means *to bring a person back into favor with another*. God brought us back into favor with Himself through the shedding of the blood of Christ on the cross. Now, God has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

Each of our physical and spiritual children has family and friends that are not Christians. We want to show them how to help these family members and friends to be brought back into favor with God by learning how to share what Christ did to make that possible when He shed His blood on the cross and died in our place to pay the penalty for our sins. Every Christian needs to be shown how to help others learn to be brought back into favor with God through Christ. This is the ministry of reconciliation using the Word of God to explain to a person how to become a Christian and receive forgiveness of sins.

However, many times there are two Christians that also need to be reconciled and brought back into favor with one another because of conflicts that have happened between those two Christians in the past. We spoke about such a conflict earlier between two Christians in Philippians 4:2. 2 Corinthians 5:18-19 points out the fact that we are to use the word of reconciliation to carry out the ministry of reconciliation. This means that to help our children bring about effective reconciliation, we must teach them the principles that they can share from the Word of God between two Christians that are in conflict with one another.

One such key principle is found in Ephesians 4:32 where we read, “And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.” In this verse, we see why God forgave our sin. He forgave us at the very moment that we were in Christ. 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 we placed our trust in Christ, we became a new creation in the sight of God. The penalty for all of our sins, past, present and future, was paid by the blood of Christ and made it possible for the Father to now view us as a saint instead of a sinner. This is exactly what we want to help two Christians in conflict understand. Because God forgave them for Christ’s sake, Christ can give each of them His strength to forgive the other person.

The key choice that each person in such a conflict has to make is to decide if he or she is willing to yield the control to God. Romans 6:13 and 16 say, “And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God...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?” When we choose to yield ourselves to God, He will give us His strength to forgive the other person.

Third, we want to help our physical and spiritual children maintain the peace that is already present. Paul encouraged the two Christians in conflict in Philippians 4:2 to be of the same mind in the Lord. To “be of the same mind” means *to be in harmony or agreement with each other*. Philippians 4:6-7 says a few verses later, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” Instead of worrying about what another person has said or done, we need to help our children learn to focus on what the Lord has done for them. We are to bring our requests to the Lord in prayer. We are to have an attitude of thanksgiving as we bring those requests to the Lord. These verses promise that if we bring our requests to the Lord with a thankful attitude, the peace of God will guard our hearts and minds through Christ.

Philippians 4:8-9 go on to add, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy--meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.” Christians that depend on their own strength will usually think negatively. In contrast, Christians that come to God in prayer with an attitude of thanksgiving are given His peace. With His peace, we are able to view things from the viewpoint of God instead of a worldly viewpoint. 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.’” As we meditate on the thoughts of God and the ways of God, we begin to view the things happening in the world with the viewpoint of God and the love of God. We realize that the God that gives peace is with us at all times and that as we yield to Him, we will experience peace.

When we maintain the peace of God in our hearts, we are able to experience His peace regardless of what is happening around us. That is why James 1:2-4 says, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” Happiness depends on what is going on around us. Joy depends on what is going on inside us. We can experience peace with one another as we are walking in fellowship with the God of peace.

It is a great privilege to help our children learn how to enjoy both peace with God and learn how to be at peace with one another. That will change and transform their lives and their ministry to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your physical and spiritual children by your example how to have peace with God and peace with one another.