

## 6. Learning to Bear with One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways we show the love of Christ is by learning to bear one another's burdens. Today, we will look at another way that we help our children learn how to show the love of Christ as we help our children learn to bear with one another. Ephesians 4:1-2 says, "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love." In these verses, we see that we are to bear with one another in love. The word that is translated "bear with" means *to endure or be patient with another person*.

In the two verses above, we see four key attitudes that we model and teach our children if we want to see them learn to bear with others. A second passage that talks about bearing with one another is Colossians 3:12-13. Those verses read, "Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do." These verses add two more attitudes that we model and teach our children if we want them to learn to bear with others.

First, we want to show them how to walk worthy of the calling with which they are called. Several passages describe what it means to walk worthy. Philippians 1:27 says, "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel..." Here, we see that a "worthy walk" means that *our conduct is in agreement with the Gospel of Christ*. This means that our attitude will be to desire to grow so that our actions become more and more like the actions of Christ.

In Colossians 1:9-12, Paul told what he prayed the Lord would do in the lives of the Colossian Christians so that their walk would be a worthy walk. Those verses say, "For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light." In addition to showing our children how to walk worthy of the Lord, these verses also show that we need to be praying that these attitudes will develop in the lives of our physical and spiritual children.

Then, 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12 tells us how we help our children learn to practice these things in their lives so that they become a part of their lives. Those verses say, "You are witnesses, and God also, how devoutly and justly and blamelessly we behaved ourselves among you who believe; as you know how we exhorted, and comforted, and charged every one of you, as a father does his own children, that you would walk worthy of God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory." These verses show us that the way our children learn to practice these things is by our encouragement to follow our example and our instruction as a parent to help them learn to put

these things into practice in their own lives so that they will walk worthy of the Lord.

Second, we want to show our children how to walk with all lowliness. The word that is translated “lowliness or humility” means *to have a humble opinion of one’s self*. The Romans and the Greeks had no word for humility. As a result, this was probably a word that was created by the Christians to describe the key attitude that Christians need to develop in order to bear with one another. The Lord calls for us to have this attitude in Philippians 2:3-4 where we read, “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.” This is followed by Philippians 2:8 where we see that Christ showed this attitude by humbling Himself and becoming obedient unto death even the death of the cross.

Third, we want to show our children how to walk with gentleness. The word that is translated “meekness or gentleness” is used nine times in the New Testament. In each case, it speaks of a gentle attitude that is the result of ministering with the love of Christ. In fact, in Galatians 5:22-23 it is listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit. Those verses say, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” In order to bear the fruit of the Spirit, the earlier verses tell us that we are to walk in the Spirit and be led by the Spirit.

A key example of how we show this gentleness is given a few verses later. We read in Galatians 6:1, “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.” The word that is translated “trespass” in this verse means *a sin or a deviation from truth and uprightness*. Our children certainly commit sins just as we do as parents. Here, we see that our goal is to restore not to punish. We are to do this in a spirit of gentleness; otherwise, we will also be tempted to sin.

2 Timothy 2:24-26 gives another example of how we show this gentleness. Those verses say, “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.” Here, we see that we are to mold the character of our physical and spiritual children by correcting them when they are in opposition through patient teaching.

Fourth, we want to show our children how to walk with longsuffering. The word that is translated “longsuffering” speaks of patience or slowness to avenge wrongs. Christ demonstrated this longsuffering to Paul by putting up with his persecution of the church and still saving Paul. Paul said in 1 Timothy 1:15-16, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. However, for this reason I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show all longsuffering, as a pattern to those who are going to believe on Him for everlasting life.” Paul says that Christ gave all of us a pattern of how to show longsuffering by the way that Christ showed His longsuffering to Paul.

Fifth, we want to show our children how to put on tender mercies. The word that is translated “tender” speaks of the place that is the center of our emotions. Paul used this word to speak of the affection that Titus had for the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 7:14-15 says, “For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I am not ashamed. But as we spoke all things to you in truth, even so our boasting to Titus was found true. And his affections are greater for you as he remembers the obedience of you all, how with fear and trembling you received him.” Here, we see that Titus was filled with tender affection as he thought of the Christians in Corinth. We see that we want to show our children by our example what it means to have a heart filled with mercy so that they learn to develop that same tender mercy for others.

Sixth, we want to show our children how to put on kindness. The word that is translated “kindness” speaks of a life that is filled with goodness, kindness and integrity. It was the kindness and love of God that led Him to send Christ to die for our sins. Titus 3:4-5 says, “But when the kindness and the love of God our Savior toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.” It was the kindness and love of God that caused Him to show His mercy to us and send His own Son to save us by giving us new life.

Colossians 3:13 reminds us of one other thing that we are to do when our children fail and sin. That verse says, “Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.” Here, we see that we are to bear with them and forgive them. By our example, we are showing them and helping them to understand the forgiveness of Christ. Most people only grow to understand the forgiveness of Christ as they see that forgiveness modeled by either their physical parents or their spiritual parents.

Many Christians have never received true forgiveness from parents for things that they have done in the past. As a result, they will only come to really understand that forgiveness as they see it modeled by other Christians when they sin. When Christ warned Peter that he would deny Him, Christ said in Luke 22:31-32, “And the Lord said, ‘Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.’” Then, after the resurrection, Christ reminded him how to strengthen the brethren by saying, “Feed My lambs”, “Shepherd My sheep”, (NASB) “Feed My sheep” in John 21:15-17.

Christ has called us to show by our example to our physical and spiritual children what it means to bear with one another. May the Lord richly bless you as you show both physical and spiritual children, by your example, how to bear with one another.