

9. Learning to Comfort One Another

In our last topic, we saw that one of the ways that we show the love of Christ is by learning to care for one another. In this topic, we will look at another way that we help our children learn to show the love of Christ to one another. We will be looking at what the Bible teaches about learning to comfort one another. The word that is translated “comfort” is used 109 times in the New Testament and is translated by several words including “comfort”, “encourage”, “exhort” and “beseech” as well as several others. The word means *to come to the side of another and provide comfort, encouragement or exhortation*. This word is used several times in 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 where we read, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.” We will look at several key passages that will show us how to equip our children to comfort and encourage others.

In the verses quoted above, we see that God comforts us during our times of suffering so that we are able to comfort others who experience any kind of trouble. First, we want to see why comfort or encouragement is so important. Hebrews, 3:13 says, “But exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” Here, we see that unless a Christian receives regular comfort and encouragement from other Christians that it will be easy for a person to become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. As a parent, this means that you need to give each of your children comfort and encouragement from the time that each one is born. When we are talking about spiritual children, we see that they need encouragement and comfort from the day that they become Christians.

Hebrews 10:24-25 says, “And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.” Here, we see that we are to be concerned for one another and that concern should cause us to stir up love and good works in the lives of one another. The opposite of love and good works is fear and no works or fear and sinful works. 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 driven by fear because of sin. However, we see it is possible to stimulate a Christian to love and to good works.

This brings us to the question, How do we stimulate our physical and spiritual children or any other Christian to love and good works? Hebrews 10:25 tells us that we stimulate to love and good works by doing two things. First, we get together. Second, when we are together we encourage one another. The Hebrews were going through times of suffering and persecution. As a result, it was easy to get discouraged and do nothing or even be tempted to turn away from Christ. In the same way, our physical and spiritual children go through times of suffering and discouragement. They need fellowship with other Christians and they need words of encouragement. We provide that fellowship by spending time with them and encouraging them. This passage reminds us that one way to encourage them is to remind them of the fact that Christ is coming.

Hebrews 3:12-13 reminds us, “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief

in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.” These verses show us that all Christians need that fellowship and encouragement daily. This means that we are talking about more than just getting together on Sunday. We need to share our lives throughout the week with our spiritual children as well as our physical children. The Lord says that time spent together with words of encouragement will stimulate the love and good works of those with whom we spend time.

Paul frequently spoke of comfort as he wrote to new Christians like the Thessalonians. In 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12, we read, “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.” Here, we see that Paul, Silas and Timothy provided the comfort and encouragement to the new Christians that a father would provide to his own children. They also provided an example to follow so that their lives would demonstrate a worthy walk. Just as spiritual children need comfort and encouragement and an example to follow to walk worthy of the Lord, physical children also need these same things.

Then, in 1 Thessalonians 3:1-3, we read, “Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought it good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ, to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith, that no one should be shaken by these afflictions; for you yourselves know that we are appointed to this.” Paul realized that the Thessalonians needed to be established and encouraged in their faith as new Christians because they were going through times of suffering. Our physical children also go through times of suffering and problems. They need that same encouragement to help them be established so that they are able to stand strong in their faith.

In 1 Thessalonians 4:9-10, Paul said, “But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another; and indeed you do so toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more.” Paul, Silas and Timothy encouraged the Christians to continue to grow in their love toward one another. They said that God is the one that teaches us to love. However, we are to encourage one another so that this love will grow stronger and stronger.

Then, after talking about the return of Christ for the church in 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 4:18, “Therefore comfort one another with these words.” Here, we see that the Christians were to comfort one another by reminding one another about the return of Christ. In the time of the death of a Christian, it is especially important to comfort one another by reminding one another that the Christian that died is with the Lord and that one day we will be reunited and be together with that Christian in the presence of Christ. These three passages from 1 Thessalonians 3 and 4 about comfort together point out that comfort strengthens faith, love and hope. 1 Corinthians 13:13 says, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” These verses remind us that encouragement is important to strengthen all three.

Paul also reminded the Thessalonians that God did not appoint us for the wrath that would come

with the day of the Lord. Instead, he told the Christians in 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11 that they could comfort one another by reminding each other of the salvation that Christ has provided. Those verses say, “For God did not appoint us to wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with Him. Therefore comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing.” The early verses of this chapter warn that judgment is coming on those who do not believe when the day of the Lord comes. In contrast, as Christians we are able to comfort our children and one another by the fact that we are living with Christ in our lives now and will live together with Christ for all eternity.

Then, in 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17 Paul reminded them of the life that they had in Christ. Verses 16 and 17 say, “Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.” The life that we have in Christ is not just for this earth. These verses remind us that Christ has loved us and given us everlasting encouragement. Christ is also the One that comforts our hearts and strengthens us so that we are able to carry out every good word and work. Here, we see that Christ encourages us by the fact that He has equipped our lives so that our lives can have an eternal impact. One of the greatest things that we can do to encourage both our physical and our spiritual children is to remind them that Christ wants to work through their lives to give their lives an eternal impact.

Even in warning disorderly Christians in 2 Thessalonians 3:11-13 Paul said, “For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread. But as for you, brethren, do not grow weary in doing good.” Here, we see that when Christians are struggling we need to encourage them in their obedience to the Lord. In fact, we are not to get tired of looking for opportunities to encourage our physical and spiritual children.

As we started this topic, we mentioned that God comforts and encourages us in all of our suffering and tribulation. In addition to providing the comfort that we need at that time, God comforts and encourages us for a second reason. God teaches us through His comfort how we can comfort others who are experiencing any trouble in their lives. This means that God comforts us so that we can pass on this same comfort to others. We help our physical and spiritual children as we help them learn to pass on this comfort to others. May the Lord richly bless you as you comfort and encourage your spiritual and physical children and equip them to comfort and encourage others.