

## 16. Learning to Minister to the Needs of Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to show our physical and spiritual children how to follow the example of Christ. We saw that one of the things that Christ showed us was what it meant to sacrifice for the needs of others as He gave His life to meet our need for forgiveness of sins. He became poor so that He could freely give us eternal life and the riches of heaven. Today, we are going to build on that topic to see how we can show our children how to learn to minister to the needs of others.

In 2 Corinthians 8:9-11, we read, “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich. And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; but now you also must complete the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to desire *it*, so *there* also *may be* a completion out of what *you* have.” After reminding the Corinthians of the example of Christ becoming poor so that the Corinthians could receive eternal life and share the riches of heaven, Paul went on to give the Corinthians some advice.

The advice that Paul gave to the Corinthians was to complete what they had begun a year earlier. A year earlier, they had begun collecting an offering for the needy Christians in Jerusalem. At that time, they had a real desire to share in meeting the needs of the needy Christians. Apparently, their desire had not resulted in continuing action. As a result, Paul now encouraged them to complete what they had said they wanted to do. Here, we see an important lesson that we want to help our children understand. It is one thing to talk about helping others. However, the important thing is to actually do what we have talked about doing and actually get involved in helping other Christians.

The desire of Paul was not to command the Christians or tell them how much to give. Instead he wanted to give them advice and encouragement so that they could carry out their plans and not just talk about them. 2 Corinthians 8:12-15 says, “For if there is first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he does not have. For *I do not mean* that others should be eased and you burdened; but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack--that there may be equality. As it is written, ‘He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.’” Paul wanted the Christians to know that the thing that God really desires is a willing attitude and His concern was not the amount of money that they would give.

Paul wanted to make it clear what he meant so that what he was saying would not be misunderstood. Paul said he did not mean that the Christians in Corinth should place a heavy burden on themselves so that the Christians in Jerusalem could just rest. Instead, Paul wanted all Christians to be concerned about helping to meet the basic needs of others. The new Christians in Jerusalem had originally sold their possessions so that they could share with the new Christians from other places who were in Jerusalem at the time the church began. Acts 2:44-45 says, “Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.” This had made it possible for these

Christians from other areas to stay in Jerusalem and learn more about Christ before they returned to their homes.

The word that is translated “equality” means *that which is fair*. The only other place this word is used in the New Testament is Colossians 4:1 where we read, “Masters, give your bondservants what is just and fair, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven.” Paul told the masters in Colosse to give their bondservants what was just and fair. Here, Paul is encouraging the Christians in Corinth to share with the needy in Jerusalem what is just and fair. Paul wrote in 1 Timothy 6:8, “And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” From this verse, we see that his encouragement to the Corinthians was to share with the Christians in Jerusalem to meet basic necessities. The Christians in Jerusalem had shared to spread the Gospel to many places. Now, Christians in other places had the opportunity to share with the needy in Jerusalem.

Paul then quoted from Exodus 16:18 which says, “So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one's need.” By quoting from this passage, Paul showed that a Biblical principle for us as Christians is to recognize when other Christians have basic needs and to share with them. We want to help our children see by our example that we look for opportunities to meet the basic needs of others and share with those Christians to meet those basic needs.

Paul also wrote about the love that Titus had for the Corinthians. 2 Corinthians 8:16-17 says, “But thanks *be* to God who puts the same earnest care for you into the heart of Titus. For he not only accepted the exhortation, but being more diligent, he went to you of his own accord.” Here, we see that the Lord had also placed a real concern for the Corinthians in the heart of Titus. The word that is translated “earnest care” here is the same word that was translated “diligence” in verses 7 and 8. We saw that the word spoke about the eagerness of the Corinthians to be obedient to the Lord. Here, we see that Titus had this same eagerness as he encouraged the Corinthians. Because Titus had the Corinthians in his heart, it was his choice and desire to go to the Corinthians.

Paul sent another brother with Titus to help him prepare the offering of the Corinthians for the needy in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8:18-21 says, “And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the gospel throughout all the churches, and not only *that*, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift, which is administered by us to the glory of the Lord Himself and *to show* your ready mind, avoiding this: that anyone should blame us in this lavish gift which is administered by us--providing honorable things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” The brother that came with Titus was well known to all of the churches. In addition, he had been the one chosen by the churches of Macedonia to travel with Paul and Timothy to take their gift to the church at Jerusalem.

Here, we see that Paul and Timothy were very careful to make certain that they did things in such a way that no one would think that they were gathering the money for themselves. This brother had been chosen by the churches to help take the gift to Jerusalem so that no one could question the integrity of Paul, Timothy and Titus. As a result, he was a part of the team that would carry out this service of the churches of Greece as they all helped to serve the church in Jerusalem in its

time of need. Paul wanted everything that was done to be done in such a way that no one would question his motives. He wanted to do things in a way that brought honor to the Lord and was honorable in the sight of people. This is an important principle to help our children understand. We want to show them how to function as leaders in a way that will make it impossible for anyone to question their integrity so that their lives will be a godly example for others to follow.

Paul further explained in 2 Corinthians 8:22-24, “And we have sent with them our brother whom we have often proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, because of the great confidence which *we have* in you. If *anyone inquires* about Titus, *he is* my partner and fellow worker concerning you. Or if our brethren *are inquired about*, *they are* messengers of the churches, the glory of Christ. Therefore show to them, and before the churches the proof of your love and of our boasting on your behalf.” Paul and Timothy had sent this brother along with Titus because everyone knew that he had a good reputation among the churches and that he was very diligent. People knew that they could trust him to serve them by being on the team that took the gift to Jerusalem.

Paul and Timothy had great trust in the Corinthian Christians. They knew that they would want to share in the gift that was being sent to the churches in Jerusalem. As a result, they knew that this brother would be an encouragement to the church in Corinth just as he had been an encouragement to the churches in Macedonia. Paul also used two words to describe Titus. First, Paul said that Titus was his partner. Here, we see a key to the effectiveness of the leadership of Paul. He had helped Titus as a spiritual son to grow to spiritual maturity and become a full partner in ministry. As a spiritual father, we see that Paul had helped Titus to become an “adult son” and partner in ministry.

Second, Paul called Titus his fellow worker. In 1 Corinthians 3:9, we read, “For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, *you are* God's building.” In that passage, we see that Paul had viewed Apollos as an “adult son” and fellow worker in ministry. This is exactly what we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn. We want to help them become “adult sons and daughters” and full partners and fellow workers in ministry.

As Titus and these other brothers went to the church in Corinth, Paul encouraged the Christians in Corinth to show their love to these brothers. The Corinthians already knew the character of Titus and had shown their love to him. Now, Paul encouraged them to show the same love to the other brothers that came from Macedonia. Here, we see that Paul also worked to build relationships between the Christians in various churches. These brothers would not exercise any control over the Corinthians but would serve the church in Corinth just as they had served the churches in Macedonia. We want to help our children learn to build relationships between Christians in various churches in the same way. We do this as we show them that we serve the churches and do not try to control the churches. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to serve others and minister to their needs.