

### 36. Learning How to Minister to Others

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn what it means to present their bodies to the Lord as a living sacrifice. We also saw that we want to help our children learn how to use spiritual gifts to serve one another and bring glory to God. Today, we are going to study a list of character qualities that our lives will demonstrate as we are learning to walk in the Spirit, be led by the Spirit and live in the Spirit.

Romans 12:9 says, “*Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good.*” Here, we see that there are three things that will be present in our personal lives as we learn to walk in the Spirit. First, our lives will demonstrate love that is without hypocrisy. The word for “love” is the word that Christ used in John 13:34-35 when He gave us the new commandment which says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” Before we became Christians, we worked hard to get our own needs met instead of meeting the needs of others. Godly love is demonstrated by self- sacrifice to meet the needs of others.

Second, the word of “abhor” means *to dislike or have a horror of those things which are evil*. 1 Thessalonians 5:22 says, “Abstain from every form of evil.” Here, we see that we choose to avoid every form of evil. Our lives will demonstrate a desire to avoid any kind of sin if we are walking in the Spirit. Instead, we will do just the opposite when we are walking in the Spirit. Third, the word that is translated “cling” means *to be fastened together or to be welded together*. Here, we see that as we are walking in the Spirit, our lives will demonstrate those things that are good in their character and beneficial in their effect. True love hates evil and practices those things which are good and beneficial to others.

Romans 12:10-13 says, “*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.*” Here, we see a whole series of actions that a church that is being led by the Holy Spirit will demonstrate in their relationships with one another. We see that we will be devoted to one another with a strong family love. This reminds us that as local churches we are really a large extended family that has a great concern for one another. The statement that the world made about the early church was, “See how they love one another”. It was the love that the early Christians had for one another that had a great impact on the world around them.

We also see that as a body of Christians, we will honor one another by giving preference to one another. Philippians 2:3 says, “*Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.*” Here, we see that we are not to focus on our own interests. Instead, we are to have a humble mind that causes us to place a high value on others instead of placing a high value on our own desires. This value of others is shown by our actions.

We are not to be lagging in diligence. The word that is translated “diligence” means *to put our whole effort into the things that we do* and to do them with haste so that we do whatever we do for the Lord with a full effort. It is the same word that is used in Romans 12:8 where we read, “He who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.” In that verse, we see that it talks about those who are given the spiritual gift of leading. Here, we see that it also applies to all Christians in their service for the Lord.

We see that we are also to be fervent in spirit. The word that is translated “fervent” in this verse means *to boil with heat*. It can be used in either a good or a bad sense. However, in the New Testament it is used in a good sense to speak of a person that has a great eagerness to do what is good and pleasing to the Lord. We see that our eagerness to do what is good and pleasing to the Lord comes from our human spirit, which can only happen as we are yielding our human spirit to the Holy Spirit. Our focus is to be on serving the Lord. The word that is translated “serving” is the word that means *to serve as a slave*. It was used of the Thessalonians in 1 Thessalonians 1:9 where we read, “For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God.” Here, we see that the Thessalonians had a great desire to serve the living and true God.

As we are being led by the Holy Spirit as a church, we see that we will also be serving the Lord. We will be rejoicing in hope. We see that hope is based on two things. The first is the resurrection of Christ and the second is the return of Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:19-20 says, “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable. But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” Then, Titus 2:13 says, “Looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” This blessed hope also gives us the Lord’s strength to be patient in difficult situations. As we are led by the Spirit, we realize the importance of practicing 1 Thessalonians 5:17 which says, “Pray without ceasing.” We also have a desire to share in the needs of other saints. Then, in our relationship with one another in the body of Christ, we will look for opportunities to use our home as a place of ministry.

Romans 12:14-16 says, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.” Here, we see a whole series of actions that a church that is being led by the Holy Spirit will demonstrate in their relationships with the people of the world that are around us. We see that we are to bless those who persecute us. Christ gave us four ways to treat those who are against us in Matthew 5:44 where we read, ““But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you.”” When we are led by the Holy Spirit, we will be a blessing to others.

We will also minister to the people around us in other ways. We will rejoice with them and celebrate with them in their times of joy. We will weep with those who are experiencing sorrow or grief. We will not treat some people special and reject others. We will not be filled with pride.

Instead, we will spend time with the lowly. In addition, we will not think that our opinions are better than the opinions of others. Here, we see that whether people are Christians or not that we will follow the example of God and treat them with respect. I Peter 1:17 says, “And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay *here* in fear.” We are reminded that the Father does not show partiality.

Romans 12:17-21 says, “Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord. Therefore ‘If your enemy is hungry, feed him If he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.’ Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.” In these verses, we see how to respond to those who treat us as enemies.

When we are led by the Holy Spirit we will not return evil when someone does evil to us. As I Peter 3:8-9 says, “Finally, all *of you be* of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, *be* tenderhearted, *be* courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.” Here, we see that the Holy Spirit gives us the strength to respond with compassion when others are doing evil to us. We choose to do the things that are good and right to all people whether they are Christians or not. We do all that it is possible for us to do to be at peace with all people.

Instead of trying to get even when others do something evil, we choose to leave all judgment or vengeance to God. God promises that He will judge their sin. For those who place their faith in Christ, God has already judged their sin at the cross. For those who do not turn to Christ, they will experience the eternal judgment of God in the future. In fact, we are given some specific ways to show kindness to those who treat us as enemies. Proverbs 25:21-22 says, “If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; for *so* you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the LORD will reward you.” As Paul quoted these verses from Proverbs, he made it clear that when we are being led by the Holy Spirit, we will look for specific ways to show kindness to those who are treating us in evil ways. We see that the Lord will reward us.

The final verse shows that the way that we overcome evil is by doing good. We want to show our physical and spiritual children by the way we respond to others that we are led by the Holy Spirit and not by evil. 1 John 5:4 says, “For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world--our faith.” We want to show our children that as we show kindness and do good to others that we actually have victory over those who do evil. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children how to minister to others.