

1. Fellowship Develops as We Walk in the Light

Today, we are beginning a new series of topics on how to help our physical and spiritual children develop fellowship with Christ. As people become Christians, they have become children of God. This means that they have established a relationship with God, but many have never been shown how to develop fellowship with the Father, and Christ. This can even happen with our own physical children, or spiritual children, unless we show them how to develop their fellowship with the Father, and Christ. That will be the focus of this series of topics.

In 1 John 1:3-4, we read, “That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.” In these verses, we see that fellowship is necessary in order to experience great joy in our lives. John was experiencing fellowship with the Father, and with Christ, but he realized that his spiritual children, to whom he was writing this letter, were not experiencing that same fellowship. As a result, we see many principles in the book of 1 John to show us how to help our children enjoy that fellowship.

1 John 1:5-7 says, “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.” First, we must help our children understand the fact that God is light in order to have fellowship with the Father, and with Christ. In John 8:12, Christ said, “Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’” Unless our children understand that God is light, and that Christ is the light of the world, they will not understand how to have fellowship with God.

Second, we want to help our children learn that Christ will always get rid of the darkness. One way to illustrate this to our children is to turn off the light so that the room becomes dark. Then, turn on the light and help our children realize that the light will always get rid of the darkness. Since Christ gives us spiritual light, His light will always get rid of spiritual darkness. As 1 John 1:5 says, “...God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.” We want to help our children realize that when we are sharing our life with Christ, we will be “in the light” because Christ gets rid of the darkness; there is no darkness in Him at all.

Third, we want to help our children learn the difference between walking in the light and walking in darkness. In Luke 22:31-32, Christ said to Peter, “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, Christ told Peter that Peter was going to deny Him three times that very night. Peter answered that he would never deny Christ. When Christ was arrested a few hours later, Luke 22:54-55 tell us, “Having arrested Him, they led Him and brought Him into the high priest's house. But Peter followed at a distance. Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together,

Peter sat among them.” Instead of walking with Christ to the trial, Peter followed at a distance so that he could stay in the shadows.

Then, Peter sat down in the light of the fire of those who were against Christ. We might say that he chose the wrong light. He chose the physical light instead of the spiritual light. Since he was now sitting in the physical light provided by the enemies of Christ, he was not prepared when the questions and statements started to come to him. As a result, over the next few hours, Peter denied Christ three times. The same thing will happen to us, and to our children, if we are walking in the false light of the world. In contrast, Christ promised that the one who follows Him will not walk in darkness but have the light of life. Peter was following at a distance and he denied Christ.

In contrast, Peter had been as bold as a lion a few hours earlier when he was standing next to Christ. John 18:10-11 says, “Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, ‘Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?’” At this point, Peter was standing next to Christ, so he had great boldness. (Christ even took time to protect Peter from future trouble by healing the ear of the servant so that there was no evidence that Peter was guilty of assault with a deadly weapon.) The lesson we see is that to have true fellowship with Christ, we must choose to follow Christ closely and not follow Him at a great distance.

Fourth, we want to help our children learn that once they become Christians, they must choose whether they are going to walk in the light or walk in darkness. Christ illustrated the fact that we must make a choice. Matthew 7:24-27 says, “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Our children can hear the teachings of Christ. However, this passage shows that they must both hear and choose to obey the sayings of Christ in order to walk in the light.

Christ also used John to give a warning about the danger of self-deception. 1 John 1:6 says, “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” If people continue to walk in darkness, they are not experiencing fellowship with Christ. Instead, they are lying to themselves and deceiving themselves. We help our children learn to choose to walk in the light as we give them an example through our own lives by our own choices. Our children are the first to recognize when we are walking in darkness, for even a short time, as Peter did. Since our children see what we do when no one else is around, they know if we really live what we teach. Unless we walk the walk, our children will not listen to us when we talk the talk. Our actions and our words must agree.

Paul also warned the Christians in Corinth of this danger of self-deception. In 1 Corinthians 3:1-3, we read, “And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to

receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?" The Corinthians were behaving like people who were not even Christians. As a result, their lives were filled with envy, strife and divisions.

In the next chapter, Paul encouraged the Corinthians to begin imitating his life. In 1 Corinthians 4:15-17, he said, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me. For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church." Even though Paul could not be with his spiritual children at that moment, he said that he had sent Timothy to remind them of his ways (the way that they had seen Paul walk) when he had been present with them.

Paul repeated this request to the Corinthians when he said, in 1 Corinthians 11:1, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ." This verse also reminds us how we help our physical and spiritual children learn to make the choice to walk in the light. We provide them with an example to follow, and then encourage them to follow our example just as we follow the example of Christ. We show our children how to walk in the light as we provide an example by walking in the light ourselves.

Fifth, as we show our children how to walk in the light of Christ, we will show them by our example how to have fellowship with other Christians. 1 John 1:7 says, "But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Walking in the light with Christ causes us to also walk in fellowship with all other Christians who are walking in the light with Christ. As a result, we show our children how to share their lives with other Christians as they share their lives with Christ. Christ never taught Christians to live their Christian life in isolation. Instead, Christ chose the twelve so they could learn to live their lives in relationship with one another.

As we take our physical and spiritual children with us when we are sharing our lives with other Christians, they will be learning how to share their lives with other Christians. As 1 John 1:7 says, we have fellowship with one another when we are walking in the light. We have fellowship with our children as we take them with us while we are fellowshiping with other Christians. We also help them learn how to have fellowship with others from our example. At the same time, they are having the opportunity to begin to develop fellowship with these other Christians, because they are already beginning to share their lives as they spend time together with us while we are sharing our lives with other Christians. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your physical and spiritual children develop fellowship with other Christians as they walk in the light.