

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 5 - LESSON 43

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth:

• *Godly Parenting*

3. Share The Gospel Of The Covenant With Your Children
4. Instill In Your Children A Repentant Heart
5. Show The Importance of Communal Righteousness
6. Impart A Forgiving Heart Through the Spirit
7. Role Model How To Love



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Jesus that determines your priorities, your choices, the work of the Spirit in you—how the pilgrimage to salvation should be lived.

Your children need to understand that the Covenant our Father offers them invites them to *live in union with Him.*

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The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth: *Godly Parenting*

3. Share The Gospel Of The Covenant With Your Children

“Whoever trusts in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” By this He meant the Spirit, whom those who trusted in Him were later to receive. Up to that time the Spirit had not been given, since Jesus had not yet been glorified” (John 7:38,39).

At some point in life your children will encounter one of the counterfeit gospels that are being peddled throughout Hellenized Christendom. This is why you need to introduce them **early** and **often** to the Gospel of the Covenant that our Father offers them. Show them by your *way of life*—your loving trust in

Remember, union implies a *oneness*. Your life journey is an *ongoing pilgrimage with Him* on Earth until the time when your name is read aloud before the host of heaven. Role model for your children what it means *to work out your salvation together*.

Reinforce this goal as they walk in Covenant union:

To live in a way that brings glory to our Father and Jesus.

Your children need to hear testimonies from you that reveal your gratefulness for His faithfulness. There is no better or more influential role model than parents who are living in union with their Lord!

If you engrave in your children’s heart the stipulations of this Covenant, you’ll also be instilling in them the

foundations for a marriage that reveals our Lord. There is a vital connection between the Covenant Gospel and the marriage covenant, and it's crucial that your children understand this.

These two covenants are the two most important relationships they'll ever enter into! By helping our Father's stipulations become a way of life for them, you are setting the spiritual framework for heaven and for marriage at the same time.

We mentioned in Lesson 27 the parallels of both the Gospel and the marriage covenant stipulations. Ask yourself regarding each covenant:

1. Can it exist without *Repentance*?
2. Can it bloom without your *agape Love*?
3. Can there be peace without your mutual *Trust*?
4. Can it flourish without *Forceful Conviction and Steadfast Determination* to make it succeed?
5. Can love grow without *Forgiveness*?

As our Father's stipulations are engrained in your children as a way of life, they will increasingly understand the **ongoing relational union** He desires with them. Then they'll be able to discern the **outcome-based perspective** of false gospels: "getting saved" with no commitment to a lifelong journey of love-grounded, obedient trust in Jesus.

You're responsible to role model for your children our Lord's process of being *set apart for holiness*. They need to both know and be prepared for the life changes that embracing the Covenant entail. This isn't a season to be casual!

Emphasize for them the life-long transformation process of **sanctification**. Engraft into their hearts that embracing

the *true* Gospel that is offered by our Father starts them on a pilgrimage that will *transform* them into increasing Christ-likeness. At journey's end, they'll then find themselves welcomed at the Judgment Throne with their parents if they endure in trust (2 Timothy 2:12).

Enable them to understand that being set apart for holiness and availability for our Lord's purposes is an *inner* transformation process. They are changing from giving in to their sin nature to learning to keep in step with the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:25).

Help them to appreciate the beauty of the various **altar experiences** they'll confront along the way. These opportunities to deny self-will are all part of the Spirit's work of transforming them into Christ's likeness during their pilgrimage.

Remind them that Jesus is a *Heart Circumciser*. He is vitally more concerned with their *heart motives* than with outward behavior incited by self-interest.

The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live (Deuteronomy 30:6).

The often-painful altar experiences and trials your children will experience in life are instruments through which our Lord accomplishes His goal:

That they may depend on Him and love Him more and more, and in the process of growing in dependent love, become more like Him.

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4. Instill In Your Children A Repentant Heart

“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at My word” (Isaiah 66:2).

From man’s horizontal perspective, creeds and denominations erect walls that divide Christian camps. Yet from our Lord’s perspective, the delineation comes between the **repentant** and the **unrepentant**. The repentant enjoy fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus, as well as all of God’s promises of blessing.

The unrepentant, however, do not experience fellowship until they turn away from their sinful ways and confess these before God. And, because He loves them so much, our Lord will chastise them until they do repent.

David was a man who had drunk deeply of sin’s dregs but also basked in the mercy of forgiveness. He clearly portrays the difference between the blessings of the forgiven and the suffering of the unrepentant so that they *will* turn from their iniquity:

Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the LORD does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. Selah Then I acknowledged my sin to You

and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD”—and you forgave the guilt of my sin. Selah (Psalms 32:1-5).

Remember that biblical repentance always demands a *turning from* sin and a *turning to* God for forgiveness and reconciliation. Teach your children this important distinction so they’ll realize their walk with Jesus calls for personal responsibility on their part:

Turn from their sin and turn to God.

Help your children to understand *through your example* that repentance should grieve their heart because their sin has grieved their Lord (Ephesians 4:30). Plant within them a hunger for the forgiveness, cleansing and restoration that only their Father can give.

Teach them the truth undergirding this important passage, ***“Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret”*** (2 Corinthians 7:10). Repentance is far more than feeling bad for the wrong you’ve *done*. Regret can be camouflaged by remorse that you got caught! Rather, ***godly sorrow flows because a relationship has been violated by your sin.***

Again by example, help your children to identify the intimate connection between repentance and **confession**. When you confess a sin, whether it’s through attitude or action, you’re acknowledging from your heart that you’ve violated God’s righteous commands. Help them clearly understand that when they confess, they’re *agreeing with God’s perspective* that they’ve sinned and need to turn from it to restore fellowship.

Remind them of the painful consequence if they hold onto their sin and refuse to repent:

**Their Father in heaven
will not hear their prayers.**

Never let them forget His warning, for He longs to respond when they walk uprightly in Jesus:

The LORD is far from the wicked [unrepentant] but he hears the prayer of the righteous (Proverbs 15:29; apperceived in 1 Peter 3:12).

Remind your children that our Father uses His refusal to answer the prayers of the unrepentant to warn them: “*He who turns away his ear from listening to the law, even his prayer is an abomination*” (Proverbs 28:9). Out of desire for restoration He will bring pressure on them until they come to the point of seeing their sin from His perspective—as utterly sinful!

Then He faithfully shows them how to restore their line of prayer communication with Him: through repentance and confession.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:8,9).

Through role modeling and testimony, let your children appreciate the power of answered prayer when a person has been cleansed of all unrighteousness:

The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective. Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops (James 5:16,18).

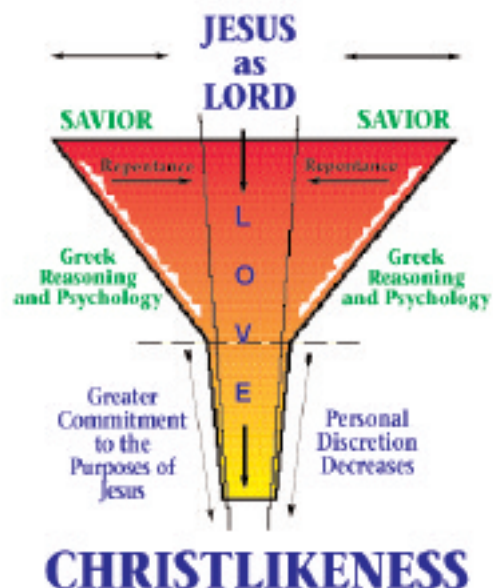
If your children see that you’re quick to repent because you long for intimacy with our Lord, they’ll understand that His holy nature can’t abide tolerated sin:

Nevertheless, God’s solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and, ‘Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness’ (2 Timothy 2:19, apperceived from Numbers 16:5,26).

A wholehearted desire to share heart communication with their Lord will help safeguard them from giving in to their sin nature too quickly. Instead, they’ll learn how crucial resisting temptation is. And, through repentance, their personal accountability to God will strengthen, reducing the temptation to give excuses or blame others when they do yield to temptation.

Teach them about the funnel:

Only repentance can bring them to the center of the funnel where by love they can journey downward through the Spirit into greater Christ-likeness.



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The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth: *Godly Parenting*

5. Show The Importance Of Communal Righteousness

One of the important goals of early believers was to have their prayers answered. Why? Because answered prayer resulted in wonderful testimonies to our Father's faithfulness! Their answered prayers got their trust in Jesus noticed by those who had yet to believe. This is a crucial faith component for your children to see in your own home—answered prayer.

The Book of Acts begins with a small band of disciples who "*all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers*" (Acts 1:14). When these followers of Jesus prayed, things happened!

For instance, after Peter and John were released from prison, the gathered disciples came before God in the authority of the name of Jesus. After they prayed, "*the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly*" (Acts 4:31).

Miraculous answers to prayer among those who walked uprightly continued to abound. Peter's release from prison, recorded in Acts, chapter 12, was testimony to our Father's response to the pleas of His children: "*So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him.*"

When God responded to those prayers, neither chains nor guards could hold him!

Then Peter came to himself and said, 'Now I know without a doubt that the Lord sent His angel and rescued me from Herod's clutches and from everything the Jewish people were anticipating.' When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying (Acts 12:5-12).

We introduced you in Lesson 1 to the the early Church's understanding of **communal righteousness**. Before the coming of Jesus, the Hebraic stream of those who loved God fellowshiped in homes to support each family in upholding communal righteousness.

They knew from the Older Testament (Psalm 14:5, Psalm 32, Proverbs 15:29, Malachi 3:18, and affirmed again in the Newer Testament, 1 Peter 3:12) that God refuses to hear the prayers of the unrepentant and unrighteous. But, as noted earlier, those who confess their sins and turn from them are restored through God's forgiveness. Then He readily answers their prayers.

As you're well aware, our Lord wants His children to trust Him completely as they come before Him with petitions, praise and intercession. As with the widow who persevered with her just cause before the unjust judge (see Luke 18:1-8), we too must be diligent when the cause we plea aligns with our Lord's Word and His will.

Picture yourself and your family as precious pieces on our Lord's chessboard. As you pray with clean hands and pure heart, He hears and sets into motion His response.

But remember, when your prayer involves an outcome that will affect oth-

ers, *they* have free will as to how they will respond to the encounters and circumstances He puts before them. God's will will ultimately be accomplished. But don't give up interceding just because the target of your prayer hasn't moved into the right space on the chessboard yet!

Early followers of Jesus knew from the Hebrew Bible that one person's sin and unrepentance impacted the lives of others.

The Hebrew Scriptures demonstrated that God prevented the entire nation of Israel from conquering the tiny city of Ai because of the hidden sin of one man, Achan (see Joshua 7). King David's sin of counting his troops (2 Samuel 24) brought three days of plague upon all the people.

Help your children to understand this important lesson:

Their unrepentance hinders the prayers of everyone else in their home from being answered. Without answered prayer, there is no testimony to our Lord's faithfulness.

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6. Impart A Forgiving Heart Through The Spirit

"If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins"
(Matthew 6:15).

Help your children understand how paramount it is for them to have forgiving hearts. Bitterness and unforgiveness

bait the most widespread trap of Satan, and so many who claim to be "Christian" but are fruitless in their walk are ensnared.

Jesus warned soberly against the evil of unforgiveness and the barrier it raises against being forgiven by our Father. Your children need to know that:

- **To hold on to unforgiveness is to place yourself on par with God by refusing to submit to His command.**
- **To refuse to forgive discredits God's sovereignty over the events in your life and the people who hurt you.**
- **Unforgiveness creates spiritual blindness that evidences distrust in Jesus as Lord.**
- **Clinging to unforgiveness keeps you from receiving our Father's Covenant of forgiveness in His Son's blood.**

Consider this question yourself, then ask your children: Can they be forgiven of *anything* by our heavenly Father if they *do not forgive* those who have sinned against them? According to Jesus, NO!

Remember, the early Church understood that our Father will not enter into Covenant with an unforgiving person. Why? Because in light of the supreme sacrifice of His own Son, our Father refuses to walk through the precious blood that ratifies that Covenant with someone who refuses to forgive. If our God is willing to forgive at the cost of His Son, who among mankind can justify unforgiveness toward *anyone*?

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions
(Mark 11:25).

Keep in mind that our Lord commands *forgiveness from the heart* as well as a willingness to *seek forgiveness* yourself for the attitudes you hold against a perceived offender (see Matthew 18:34,35). That means you don't go up to an unsuspecting person and say "I forgive you for..." That person may have no idea he's offended you and would consider your words (and attitude) arrogant.

Rather, when you forgive *from your heart*, you're ready to bless that person whenever the opportunity arises. The forgiveness doesn't depend on the offender's heart but on *yours*.

Don't let your children lose sight of the fact that bitterness and pride have much in common. Both lack the humility needed to approach our Holy God. And bitterness is an arrogant manifestation of the pride which our Father resists.

Help your children learn early in life the victory of humility and a clean slate toward others:

"To walk in the fullness of Jesus means you can wash the feet of Judas."

You yourself know that only rarely can human effort ever wipe away the hurt you feel from what others have done to you in the past. Only through loving trust in Jesus and the power of His grace can your children forgive the 'Judases' in their own life. And, Jesus is exactly the One to Whom they should turn for the grace to forgive and to find healing from the offense committed against them.

Use those times of sibling squabbles and hurt feelings to help your children grow in forgiveness. *Show* them how to forgive. Too often parents don't know *how* to forgive their children when

they've done wrong and repented. Your intent is not to crush them but to turn their hearts away from the wrong and hurt they've done so they can receive the restoration of true forgiveness from the heart.

Mike: In my late 40's my Mom related her father's biblical pattern of forgiving his children when they'd done wrong:

After he chastised or spanked an offender (if the situation warranted it), he had the child kiss his wedding ring. That was a sign to let the child know he was fully forgiven, and also a sign to the father to not bring up the forgiven offense again. The union of their relationship was still intact.

I can't tell you how much I wish I'd known this earlier in life. As I was growing up, offenses in our home of six were dealt with by screaming, but with no real closure or reconciliation. As a father I regrettably responded no differently with my own son, and failed to pass along the healing power of forgiveness and relational restoration.

How do you carry out forgiveness in your home? Is there full healing and closure, or is the matter brought up again and again?

Examine your own heart, then screen your family. Is there anyone who remains unforgiven among them, whether within your home or outside it? How will you handle this if there is unforgiveness?

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7. Role Model How To Love

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength” (Deuteronomy 6:4,5).

We shared earlier that the Hebrew word for love, *ahav* (ah-HAHV), means that you are filled with desire and delight and passion for the One you love. You long to be with our Lord and to live in ways that please His heart. And, the meaning of the Hebrew letters of *ahav* is “**a window into the Father’s heart.**”

The second of the ten commandments declares that our Father promises to show *His love* to a thousand generations of those who *love* Him and *keep* His commandments. Isn’t this what you want for your own children and for theirs as well—that God would pour out on *them* love and mercy?

It’s up to you to show them how to love, even if you grew up in a home in which love wasn’t expressed. Remember, the kind of love our God desires is the *fruit of the Holy Spirit* manifested through you (Galatians 5:22). If you’ll seek Him and teach your children to seek Him, the fruit of love will be the hallmark of your family.

The love the Holy Spirit gives is *demonstrative*—it is seen through the actions and emotional support it evidences. Remind your children of this important truth that puts feet to their trust:

Everything about living in union with their Father—everything about knowing and experiencing Him, everything about knowing and doing His will—depends on the quality of their *love relationship* with their Father and His Son, Jesus. If their love relationship is not right, nothing in their life will be right. And, *His love* compels them to keep His commands.

On their pilgrimage to salvation, if your children try to keep God’s commands *without* loving Him and depending on the direction of His Spirit, they’ll grow proud and self-righteous. They’ll get trapped in what they *do* for Him, rather than recognizing how needy they are for His loving power to represent Him to the world. An ungrateful heart focuses only on itself, not on how it can serve others as an outflow of His love.

An ungrateful person is an unloving person whose ungratefulness smacks of pride.

One of the great hindrances in loving other people is tolerating **unresolved apprehension** with them. Childhood is a key time to teach your sons and daughters how to effectively confront other people with that which produces apprehension.

Something as simple as an unresolved argument over who gets to pick the next story or sit by the car door is an opportunity to learn how to confront differences in goals, methods, facts or values.

Apprehension between people blocks their ability to love each other as Jesus would have them love. Remember, true love can’t blossom where apprehension

exists.

We must confront others when their actions or attitudes produce apprehension in us. If we tolerate apprehension, our ability to love them as Jesus calls for is hindered.

[For more on the destructive force of apprehension and how to confront effectively, see our book, a free download, ***Growing Relationships Through Confrontation***; also our Teaching E-mails: **10. Apprehension: *The Silent Destroyer*** (June 25, 2005); and **19. *Replacing Apprehension With Love*** (December 22, 2005).]