

“I Speak As To Children”

Introduction. The Bible occasionally contains passages of dual application. An example of this would be in Ephesians 5:22-32 where Paul teaches about the relationship of husbands and wives, which he likens to Christ and the church.

A similar passage is in 2 Corinthians 6:11-18 where Paul makes several comments to the Corinthians where he acts toward them as a spiritual father. In v. 13 Paul said, “I speak as to children” which obviously shows Paul’s concern and love. In this text we can find several instructions that’ll benefit the children with whom God has blessed us (Psalm 127:3-5).

He exhorts them to “enlarge their heart” or have an open mind to his instruction. In vv. 14-18 he warns them against having fellowship with evil. God would be with the Corinthians if they abstained from sin. His discussion in 2 Corinthians 7 reveals five necessities our children must learn.

I. Independence

- A. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:1 that we must “cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”
- B. Children must learn that they have to do for themselves. Just as the Corinthians had to “cleanse themselves”, so our children have to learn to do the same.
- C. Rather than coddling and sheltering them well beyond their years, we should teach them how to stand on their own two feet regarding truth (Ephesians 4:14).
 - 1. Coddling and sheltering works against them, for we can’t believe for them, nor can we act righteously for them — they’ve got to do that on their own (Job 11:15; 1 Corinthians 15:58; 16:13).
 - a) It’s wonderful to see children who obey Christ because of the godly example of their parents (Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15).
 - b) But they must not remain faithful because of their parents; they remain faithful because their faith grows deeper (2 Peter 1:5-8).
 - 2. They learn to get rid of excuses and rationalizations and take responsibility for their choices and actions (Matthew 27:24; 1 Timothy 5:8).
- D. A firm foundation will help our children avoid sin later in life and will thereby allow their parents and the church to avoid great misery.

II. Togetherness

- A. Paul said in 2 Corinthians 7:2-3 that the Corinthians were in his heart to die together and to live together. He obviously grew very close to them during his long stay of eighteen months (Acts 18:11).
- B. Parents and children need to be together. There’s simply no other way to fulfill the obligation in Ephesians 6:4 without being together. How do you suppose Lois and Eunice were able to teach Timothy (2 Timothy 1:5; 3:14-15)?
 - 1. Christians receive tremendous strength by assembling together (Acts 11:23; Hebrews 10:24-25). The same is true with children: Love spells T-I-M-E, not M-O-N-E-Y.

2. When children understand that you'll face anything with them together, it's easier for them to understand and accept the need of parental authority.
- C. Although the Israelites had God with them, they rebelled, setting a poor example (Joshua 24:8; Isaiah 1:2; 1 Corinthians 10:11).

III. Communication

- A. In 2 Corinthians 7:4-7, Paul emphasized the comfort that he received when Titus arrived and told him of their longing, mourning, and zeal.
- B. The only way to build trust and teach is to communicate.
 1. We communicate to our children the ways of God and of the world before they learn the wrong way from their friends and everything else around them (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, 17).
 2. Children need to be taught, but that's hard to do when they come home and sequester themselves in their room or keep their eyes glued to the television.
- C. Instead, diligently teach your children something worthwhile:
 1. Teach them to seek God's kingdom first (Matthew 6:33; Joshua 24:15).
 2. Teach them how to worship God in spirit and truth (Hebrews 11:4; John 4:24).
 3. Teach them to maintain moral purity (2 Timothy 2:22; Hebrews 11:24-26).
 4. Teach them to marry someone who will inspire spirituality (Matthew 6:24; 1 Peter 3:1-7; cp. 1 Kings 21:25).
- D. Maybe there's no greater example than what David told Solomon before his death (1 Chronicles 28:9-10).

IV. Forgiveness

- A. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 7:8-10 about the true nature of repentance in reference to his previous "severe letter".
- B. Children must learn to be humble and say they're sorry. If they never learn humility and are never impressed with the consequences of bad behavior, they won't learn to seek forgiveness (Isaiah 55:6).
- C. When children learn about forgiveness, they'll necessarily learn other important truths as well:
 1. They'll learn that repentance means to turn away from sin and be converted to walking a righteous path (Acts 3:19).
 2. They'll learn that confession means to agree with God, whether it be a confession of faith (Matthew 10:32-33) or a confession of sin (1 John 1:9; Acts 8:22).
 3. They'll learn to forgive and be forbearing with others, even if they've acted with great wickedness (Matthew 6:14-15; Ephesians 4:31-32).
- D. Can we teach our children to forgive others like Joseph forgave his brothers (Genesis 50:15-21)?

V. Discipline

- A. Paul's comments in 2 Corinthians 7:11-12 suggest that the Corinthians had responded very favorably to the truth after Titus' visit. They knew they had to be disciplined enough to remove the tendencies toward falsehood.

- B. Discipline is required by God and produces great benefits (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; Hebrews 12:11). Why do some parents not discipline their children?
1. Some parents may be reluctant to discipline because they want to avoid conflict or because they don't want to have their child be angry at them.
 2. Some parents may be unable or unwilling to devote time and energy to the task of disciplining children.
 3. Some people may have unpleasant memories of being disciplined when they were children and may want to make things easier on their own kids by relaxing rules and giving them more free rein.
 4. What many parents who are reluctant to discipline may not understand is how damaging it can be for a child to lack boundaries. Without discipline, children will be deficient in important life skills, including the following:
 - a) They'll be more likely to engage in negative behaviors that are harmful and even potentially dangerous for themselves as well as others.
 - b) They'll be unhappy.
 - c) They'll be willful, selfish, and generally unpleasant company.
 - d) They'll lack self-control.
 - e) They'll not have social skills that are important for making friends such as empathy, patience, and knowing how to share.
 - f) They'll not know what's appropriate behavior.
 - g) They'll not respect their parents or other authority figures.
- C. Children also need to learn that as they obey the gospel of Christ, they'll be subject to church discipline if they sin and refuse to repent (1 Corinthians 5:5, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14).
- D. Eli's household was brought to ruins because he failed to discipline his children (1 Samuel 3:10-14).

Conclusion. In 2 Corinthians 7:13-16, Paul expressed his great expectations of and confidence in the Corinthians. Likewise, if we teach our children these five important truths, we'll have great expectations of and confidence in them too. Remember it's easier to build up a child than it is to repair an adult. Your words and actions have power in your child's life, so use them wisely!