

Growing Dads God's Way-26 The Most Powerful Tools in Godly Parenting: Prayer – 8 “PRAYING THAT THEY LOVE THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS”

Are you wearing your ID Tag this morning? Jesus said in John 13 that each of His children has an ID badge. “By this shall all men know that YOU are My disciples...” What is that ID? By THE LOVE we are to have. Are you wearing that badge in your marriage? In your home? In your family? It is of utmost importance that we do!

Young Gandhi With a Christian Family¹

While attending a university in London, Mahatma Gandhi the future leader who would sway the hearts of hundreds of millions of his own people in India, became almost convinced that the Christian religion was the one true, supernatural religion in the world. Upon graduation, and still seeking evidence that would make him a committed Christian, young Gandhi accepted employment in East Africa and for seven months lived in the home of a family who were members of an evangelical Christian church. As soon as he discovered that fact he decided that here would be the place to find the evidence he sought.

But as the months passed and he saw the casualness of their attitude toward the cause of God, heard them complain when they were called upon to make sacrifice for the kingdom of God and sensed their general religious apathy, Gandhi’s interest turned to disappointment. He said in his heart, “No, it is not the one true, supernatural religion I had hoped to find. A good religion, but just one more of the many religions in the world.”

Loving one another is not optional, it is the way that all the world will know that we are Christ's disciples! Gandhi’s conclusion is a sad but shockingly true reminder of the neglected power of a Christian family. This morning in a very real way the way you live, the way you talk, and the way you respond

¹ Evangelical Illustrations as quoted by Tan, Paul Lee, Encyclopedia of 7,700 Illustrations, (Garland, Texas: Bible Communications, Inc.) 1996.

to your brothers and sisters reflects who you really are as a believer. Do you really love your brothers and sisters that God has placed all around your life?

God's Plan for brothers and sisters is loving one another.

God's Method for brothers and sisters to love one another is His Spirit.

God's Word tells us what it means for brothers and sisters to love each other and that love must start in our homes. This is most clearly laid down in 1st John. Let us turn there and survey what John says this morning.

In the widest sense of God's Word, 1st John is a message to all believers - that is the meaning of brethren, little children, and brothers and sisters.

But in a strictly literal sense Christians are in God's Family and are brothers and sisters LIKE A CHRISTIAN FAMILY SHOULD BE! So in a most powerful way we are looking this morning at what God expects from us as members of individual families.

In fact God says if you can't love your very own flesh and blood brother He can't dwell within you! Pretty strong stuff from the Lord, and we need to be aware and praying that our families be geared towards loving one another!

What does John say God expects from us? Here is a quick survey:

1. **In God's family we are all His children.** 1 John 2:1 My little children (this word occurs 20 times in the Bible and NINE of them are here in 1st John), these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.
2. **Hatred towards our brothers or sisters disqualifies us for membership in God's Family.** 1 John 2:9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.
3. **Loving our brothers and sisters demonstrates that we are in God's Family.** 1 John 2:10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.
4. **Hatred blinds us to God's Word and His will.** 1 John 2:11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.
5. **Not loving our brothers and sisters is un-GODly.** 1 John 3:10 In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother.

6. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,
7. **Not loving our brothers and sisters is like being attached to a corpse.** 1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death. (Romans often punished murderers by tying them face to face, body to body with the corpse of the person they murdered until the death of the corpse permeated their living body and killed them. So an unloving member of the family is a living, walking poisonous corpse that deadens those around them.)
8. **An unloving person that hates their brother or sister is like a MURDERER in God's sight.** 1 John 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
9. **Love means we are willing to die to our plans, our desires, our agenda – an serve our brother or sister.** 1 John 3:16 By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
10. **A loving family member responds to the needs of their brother or sister.** 1 John 3:17 But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?
11. **Really loving our brothers and sisters is an action and a way of life.** 1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth.
12. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 3:23 And this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another, as He gave us commandment.
13. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 4:7 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.
14. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.
15. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 1 John 4:12 No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us.
16. **The test of genuine Christianity is in whether you genuinely love your brothers and sisters.** 1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?

17. **Loving our brothers and sisters is not optional, it is commanded.** 1 John 4:21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God must love his brother also.
18. **Loving our brothers and sisters is just obeying God.** 1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.
19. **We are to LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** 2 John 5 And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.

Prayer is the key to raising, nurturing, and launching children that please the Lord is learning how to pray for our children.

WE MUST PRAY FOR REALITY IN THEIR SPIRITUAL LIFE:

1. **SEEING THEM GENUINELY SAVED.**
2. **SEEING THEM LOVING GOD'S WORD.**
3. **SEEING THEM LIVING IN VICTORY.**
4. **SEEING THEM THINKING OF HEAVEN.**
5. **SEEING THEM FINDING SIN REPULSIVE.**
6. **SEEING THEM STAY TENDER TOWARD GOD.**

WE MUST PRAY FOR INTEGRITY IN THEIR PERSONAL LIFE:

1. **SEEING THEM MAINTAINING A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.**
2. **SEEING THEM LEARNING TO STAND ALONE.**
3. **SEEING THEM SEEKING TO STAY PURE.**
4. **SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A SERVANT'S HEART.**
5. **PERSONAL INTEGRITY MEANS SEEING THEM NEVER BECOMING BITTER IN TRIALS.**

WE MUST PRAY FOR STABILTY IN THEIR RELATIONAL LIFE

1. **RELATIONAL STABILITY MEANS SEEING THEM CULTIVATING A LOVE FOR THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS.**
 - o John 13:35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you **have love for one another.**"
 - o 1 John 3:11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning, that **we should love one another,** (NKJV);
 - o 1 John 4:11 Beloved, if God so loved us, **we also ought to love one another.** (NKJV);

- o 1 John 4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for **he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?** (NKJV)

This is the "eleventh commandment," that we love one another. Certainly the Christian who abides in Christ ought to get along with other believers! Love for the brethren is a mark of a disciple. How is it possible for Jesus to command us to love one another? Can true love be commanded? You must keep in mind that Christian love is not basically a "feeling"; it is an act of the will. The proof of our love is not in our feelings but in our actions, even to the extent of laying down our lives for Christ and for one another (1 John 3:16). Jesus laid down His life for both His friends and His enemies! (Rom. 5:10) While the emotions are certainly involved, real Christian love is an act of the will. It means treating others the way God treats us. 2

So God wants me to love the people I live with, bump into, and have to sacrifice for all the time? Sounds impossible! In fact, when you and I sit and read these New Testament passages we are often overwhelmed at what amazing things those saints lived and did for God. In fact as I read over some of the more vivid parts of the New Testament some of the words that came to my mind were unbelievable, incredible and unattainable. Isn't that where most of us get to after a while? Unbelievable, incredible, but alas, unattainable for me!

Yes, the answer to the question of how to live an unbelievable, incredible life is found in our text this morning. In fact, one word sums up Peter's life, Paul's life and John's life. This same word summarizes how the galaxy of 1st through 20th century saints has stood alone triumphantly for Christ. In fact, one word tells all there is about walking in the Spirit this morning.

Please turn with me to Ephesians 5:18-19, and as we stand and read, may we find the secret they knew and followed and like them, do the same! So God Almighty commands all of us to let His Spirit continuously be filling you!

To illustrate this joy, Paul used the familiar image of drunkenness: "Be not drunk with wine... but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). When the believers at Pentecost were filled with the Spirit, the crowd accused them of being drunk with new wine (Acts 2:13-15). There was such a joyfulness about them that the unbelievers could think of no better comparison. But some practical lessons can be learned from the

2Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

contrasts. To begin with, the drunk is under the control of another force, since alcohol is actually a depressant. He feels a great sense of release—all his troubles are gone. He can "lick anybody in the house!" The drunk is not ashamed to express himself (though what he says and does is shameful), nor can he hide what is going on in his life. Transfer this picture to the believer who is filled with the Spirit. God controls his life, and he experiences a deep joy he is not afraid to express to the glory of God.³

It is certainly not difficult to live or work with someone who is filled with the Spirit and joyful. He has a song in his heart and on his lips. The drunk often sings, but his songs only reveal the corruption in his heart. The Spirit-filled Christian's song comes from God, a song he could never sing apart from the Spirit's power. Christians who are filled with the Holy Spirit enjoy being together and experience a sense of joyful oneness in the Lord. They do not need the false stimulants of the world. They have the Spirit of God—and He is all they need. ⁴

Being filled with the Spirit is living in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, letting His mind, through the Word, dominate everything that is thought and done. Being filled with the Spirit is the same as walking LIKE Jesus did on earth!

There are 15 manifestations of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21. Of these 8 are dealing with interpersonal problems. It is not enough to say that we have always struggled in these areas. Or, to say I sinned and go on. The Scriptures show us that a truly spiritual person will be growing in a visible way in each of these areas.

1. LOVE is the absence of selfishness. It is the product of the Holy Spirit present in our lives Rom. 5:5 says. And it even "flowers in the presence of the unlovely and hostile".⁵ THE WORD *agape*, is the love of choice, referring not to an emotional affection, physical attraction, or a familial bond, but to respect, devotion, and affection that leads to willing, self-sacrificial service (John 15:13; Rom. 5:8; 1 John 3:16, 17).
 - Can others trace my progress in expressing God's love? Am I less selfish and self-seeking than I was last month?
2. JOY is the spiritual quality that releases us from circumstances. A happiness based on unchanging divine promises and eternal spiritual realities. Christian joy is not a shallow emotion that, like a thermometer, rises and falls with the changing atmosphere of the home. Rather,

³ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

⁴ Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.

⁵ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Discipleship* p. 118.

Christian joy is a deep experience of adequacy and confidence in spite of the circumstances around us. The Christian can be joyful even in the midst of pain and suffering. This kind of joy is not a thermometer but a thermostat. Instead of rising and falling with the circumstances, it determines the spiritual temperature of the circumstances. Paul put it beautifully when he wrote, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11). Joy is a gift from God, and as such, believers are not to manufacture it but to delight in the blessing they already possess (Rom. 14:17; Phil. 4:4).

o Do those that know me and watch my life see me as a joyful person?

3. PEACE is the internal serenity that only God can give. "Peace is love in repose, with no borrowing of tomorrows troubles today."⁶ Troubles are not absent. Rather, God is present! "When the Holy Spirit is not grieved the dove of peace is able to alight on the heart." PEACE. The inner calm that results from confidence in one's saving relationship with Christ. The verb form denotes binding together and is reflected in the expression "having it all together." Like joy, peace is not related to one's circumstances (John 14:27; Rom. 8:28; Phil. 4:6, 7, 9). Has peace become more and more a way of life for you this year?
4. PATIENCE (KJV LONGSUFFERING) is the absence of personal irritation at the actions of others. It is that bearing long with people that Paul spoke of in I Corinthians. Patience is also one of the Supreme attributes of God. It is His character that is revealed as being gracious and longsuffering. See Exod 34:6; Num 14:18; II Peter 3:9. This is patience or the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1 Tim. 1:15, 16).
 - o Ask yourself, am I more patient than I was three months ago? or less?
If we are not increasing in patience it is only that we are not yielding and submitting to the Holy Spirit.
5. KINDNESS is a beautiful reflection of God in our lives. It is the absence of an abrasive manner in my dealings with people. It is a chosen reflection of Ephesians 2:8 and 4:32 in my life. "Kindness is seen as that sensitivity toward others that issues into deeds of self sacrifice and love even toward the unlovely and undeserving ones. Kindness will soften any word or act that might hurt another."
 - o Is my character showing an increasing tendency toward personal kindness in my way with others?

⁶ Ibid.

6. GOODNESS is being Godlike! It is the opposite of fallen humanity. Look at Jesus in Acts 10:38. When the Holy Spirit anointed His life, what came out? As one author wrote -- "Ecstatic utterances? Spectacular Miracles? Flamboyant Sermons? No! He simply went about doing good. " Believers are commanded to exemplify goodness (6:10; 2 Thess. 1:11).
 - o Am I a visibly better person than last year? Do people see me doing good to all those around me?

7. FAITHFULNESS is the idea here. A trustworthy and dependable life. The kind of person that keeps their own life in order so that you can count on them. Like Psalm 15 speaks of, they make and keep their word. faithfulness. Loyalty and trustworthiness (Lam. 3:22; Phil. 2:7-9; 1 Thess. 5:24; Rev. 2:10).
 - o Am I making strides in reliability and dependability?

8. MEEKNESS is the opposite of asserting ourselves. GENTLENESS. Better translated "meekness."The Lord said that the Meek were the ultimate winners. [Matthew 5:5] Those who are Servants of the Lord must not strive II Timothy 2:24. They resist selfish ambition [James 3:16] because it is a reflection of Satan not God.
 - o What shape is my personal agenda in? Is it intact and my rights being defended? Or, is it in hopeless shape, crucified with Christ and fading?

9. DISCIPLINE (KJV SELF-CONTROL). This refers to restraining passions and appetites (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Pet. 1:5, 6) and is defined by the Greek Dictionary as "a virtue, which consists in mastery of the appetites and passions, especially the sensual ones." The only force that can control or flesh is the Holy Spirit. When yielded to Him we become vessels that are worshipful sacrifices to Him no longer to self. Self cannot control self. Flesh is not able to harness flesh. Only the Spirit can discipline us.
 - o Do others see me as graciously under the control of God's Spirit of Discipline? Are you beating under and giving knockout blows to your flesh? Paul was in I Cor 9:27. Can we do any less?

There is every reason why we should love one another. We trust the same Savior. We will one day enjoy the same heaven! We belong to the same Father and seek to do the same work of witnessing to a lost world that Jesus Christ alone saves from sin. We believe the same truth, even though we may have different views of minor doctrinal matters; and we follow the same example that Jesus set for His people, to live a holy life. Yes, believers do have their differences; but we have much more in common, and this should encourage us to love one another and promote true spiritual unity. 7

7Wiersbe, Warren W., *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books) 1997.