RELATE
CHURCH

Your Journey With Christ · Discipleship · Lesson 26 of 27

Establishing

Relate Church • Foundations for a Growing Faith

That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love.

EPHESIANS 3:17

Introduction

What a privilege we have to help young believers become established in experiencing God's fullness! This encouragement of others toward spiritual transformation is a responsibility for all followers of Jesus. Some call it establishing or mentoring or discipling or follow-up after a new spiritual birth, but whatever term we use, it means partnering with God and other believers in Christ to help another become spiritually mature. While the whole community should be a part of this transformational process, we will focus here on one-to-one relationships. There is always someone who needs your help.

> [14]*For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,* [15]*from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,* [16]*that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,* [17]*that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love,* [18]*may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height 19 to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.*
>
> **Ephesians 3:14-19 NKJV**

What Is Establishing?

Let's look at what Paul wrote to the Thessalonian believers.

> [7]*Although we could have been a burden as Christ's apostles, instead we were gentle among you, as a nurse nurtures her own children.* [8]*We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.* [9]*For you remember our labor and hardship, brothers and sisters. Working night and day so that we would not burden any of you, we preached God's gospel to you.* [10]*You are witnesses, and so is God, of how devoutly, righteously, and blamelessly we conducted ourselves with you believers.* [11]*As you know, like a father with his own children,* [12]*we encouraged, comforted, and implored each one of you to walk worthy of God, who calls you into his own kingdom and glory.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 CSB**

- Verses 7-8 describe how Paul sought to establish the Thessalonian believers in their relationship with the Lord Jesus.
- Verses 7, 9, and 11 describe Paul's relationship with the believers.
- Verse 10 describes the model Paul walked in.
- Verse 11 shows that he was a spiritual father to his spiritual children.
- Verse 12 tells us what Paul's goal for his spiritual children was.

- Verses 8-11 Paul says that he not only loved the believers in Thessalonica but also demonstrated this love for them.

Notice Paul didn't limit his influence with them to just instructing them. This is particularly important. The foundation for instruction is genuine love. Love comes first, then instruction.

> [8] *I will instruct you and show you the way to go;*
> *with my eye on you, I will give counsel.*
> [9] *Do not be like a horse or mule,*
> *without understanding,*
> *that must be controlled with bit and bridle*
> *or else it will not come near you.*
>
> **Psalm 32:8-9 CSB**

One of the mistakes made in person-to-person ministry is the assumption that young believers are ready for a structured and intense approach. But this approach can make them view Christian growth as burdensome rather than fulfilling. Remember that most people have never received spiritual help regularly in a person-to-person way. Rather than challenge, most of them need the encouragement of a "caring mother." Others who have a stronger foundation will be more eager for challenge and instruction as implied in the father-child relationship. Still others should be treated as mature brothers in the ministry.

Why Establishing is Needed

Establishing is like spiritual pediatrics care, which involves giving continuous help to a young believer to stimulate healthy growth toward maturity and usefulness in the kingdom of God and the Body of Christ.

Peter compared spiritual growth to physical growth.

> [1] *Therefore, laying aside all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander,* [2] *like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,* [3] *if you have TASTED THE KINDNESS OF THE LORD.*
>
> **1 Peter 2:1-3 LSB**

- Why do babies need help?
- Do you consider yourself a baby in Christ or a more mature follower? Explain.

Jesus Christ wanted His love to be multiplied, so He gave His followers the Great Commission to reach the world with His gospel.

> [18] *And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.* [19] *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and*

> *the Son and the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to keep all that I commanded you; and behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*
>
> **Matthew 28:18-20 LSB**

What did He command them (and us) to do as part of that commission?

Paul was concerned about establishing those he had reached.

> *[5] For this reason, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid that in some way the tempter had tempted you and that our labors might have been in vain.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 3:5 NIV**

> *[13] May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 3:13 NIV**

Paul was intense and energetic about seeing people transformed in Christ.

> *[28] Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. [29] To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*
>
> **Colossians 1:28-29 NKJV**

Why do you think this was so important to Paul? (Hint: it is important to us too.)

The Worth of Each and Every Person

God endowed every person He created with value and dignity. Humanity was made in the image and likeness of God. In the entire universe we alone have the distinct privilege of reflecting godliness. Genesis 1:26-28 reveals our origin.

> *[26] Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." [27] God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. [28] God blessed them; and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth."*

Genesis 1:26-28 NASB95

Based on these verses, how valuable are people to God? From where does this worth come?

Psalm 8:3-8 wonderfully expresses the worth of each of person.

> [3] *When I observe your heavens,*
> *the work of your fingers,*
> *the moon and the stars,*
> *which you set in place,*
> [4] *what is a human being that you remember him,*
> *a son of man that you look after him?*
> [5] *You made him little less than God*
> *and crowned him with glory and honor.*
> [6] *You made him ruler over the works of your hands;*
> *you put everything under his feet:*
> [7] *all the sheep and oxen,*
> *as well as the animals in the wild,*
> [8] *the birds of the sky,*
> *and the fish of the sea*
> *that pass through the currents of the seas.*
>
> **Psalm 8:3-8 CSB**

Paul mentioned people by name in Romans 16.

> [1] *I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church in Cenchreae.* [2] *So you should welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever matter she may require your help. For indeed she has been a benefactor of many — and of me also.* [3] *Give my greetings to Prisca and Aquila, my coworkers in Christ Jesus,* [4] *who risked their own necks for my life. Not only do I thank them, but so do all the Gentile churches.* [5] *Greet also the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epaenetus, who is the first convert to Christ from Asia.* [6] *Greet Mary, who has worked very hard for you.* [7] *Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews and fellow prisoners. They are noteworthy in the eyes of the apostles, and they were also in Christ before me.* [8] *Greet Ampliatus, my dear friend in the Lord.* [9] *Greet Urbanus, our coworker in Christ, and my dear friend Stachys.* [10] *Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the household of Aristobulus.* [11] *Greet Herodion, my fellow Jew. Greet those who belong to the household of Narcissus who are in the Lord.* [12] *Greet Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who have worked hard in the Lord. Greet my dear friend Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord.* [13] *Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother — and mine.* [14] *Greet Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, and the brothers and sisters who are with them.* [15] *Greet Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, and Olympas, and all the saints who are with*

them. [16] Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send you greetings. [17] Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, to watch out for those who create divisions and obstacles contrary to the teaching that you learned. Avoid them, [18] because such people do not serve our Lord Christ but their own appetites. They deceive the hearts of the unsuspecting with smooth talk and flattering words. [19] The report of your obedience has reached everyone. Therefore I rejoice over you, but I want you to be wise about what is good, and yet innocent about what is evil. [20] The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you. 21 Timothy, my coworker, and Lucius, Jason, and Sosipater, my fellow countrymen, greet you. 22 I, Tertius, who wrote this letter, greet you in the Lord. [23] Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church, greets you. Erastus, the city treasurer, and our brother Quartus greet you. [25] Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation about Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery kept silent for long ages [26] but now revealed and made known through the prophetic Scriptures, according to the command of the eternal God to advance the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles — [27] to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ — to him be the glory forever! Amen.

Romans 16 CSB

Why do you think this is significant? (Hint: consider each named person from the perspective of their relationship with Paul and Paul's relationship with them. In Christ.)

The Lord Jesus teaches us about the importance of the individual in Luke 15.

[1] All the tax collectors and sinners were approaching to listen to him. [2] And the Pharisees and scribes were complaining, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." [3] So he told them this parable: [4] "What man among you, who has a hundred sheep and loses one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open field and go after the lost one until he finds it? [5] When he has found it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders, [6] and coming home, he calls his friends and neighbors together, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, because I have found my lost sheep!' [7] I tell you, in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous people who don't need repentance."

Luke 15:1-7 CSB

Look at what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4.

[15] For you may have countless instructors in Christ, but you don't have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

1 Corinthians 4:15 CSB

Why do you think Paul felt personally responsible for the Corinthians? Consider the difference between the heart of a guardian and the heart of a father. As you consider your worth and the worth of others, how does your heart connect with these truths?

Helping Others Grow to Maturity in Christ

Paul and his companions helped those who had recently come to a belief in Jesus Christ.

> [21] *And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch,* [22] *strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith, and saying, "We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God."*
>
> **Acts 14:21-22 NKJV**

> [11] *And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.*
>
> **Acts 18:11 NKJV**

Look at the prayers of Paul and his coworkers for new believers.

> [9] *For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,* [10] *so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God,* [11] *being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience,* [12] *and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.* [13] *For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves,* [14] *in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*
>
> **Colossians 1:9-14 NIV**

> [12] *Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured.*
>
> **Colossians 4:12 NIV**

Colossians 3 says what you can encourage new believers to do.

> [16] *Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.* [17] *And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.*
>
> **Colossians 3:16-17 NIV**

Other ways you can encourage and establish them are in the verses below.

> [19] *Jesus did not let him, but said, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you."*
>
> **Mark 5:19 NIV**

> [23] *Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me."*
>
> **Luke 9:23 NIV**

> [10] *"If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love."*
>
> **John 15:10 NIV**

> [6] *Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* [7] *And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
>
> **Philippians 4:6-7 NIV**

> [24] *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds,* [25] *not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*
>
> **Hebrews 10:24-25 NIV**

Paul used various methods to follow up with new believers.

He went back to them and visited them to see how they were doing.

> [36] *Some time later Paul said to Barnabas, "Let us go back and visit the believers in all the towns where we preached the word of the Lord and see how they are doing."*
>
> **Acts 15:36 NIV**

He wrote to them.

> [14] *I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 4:14 NIV**

He sent Timothy.

> [17] *For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.*
>
> **1 Corinthians 4:17 NIV**

He said he prayed for Timothy constantly.

> [3] *I thank God, whom I serve, as my ancestors did, with a clear conscience, as night and day I constantly remember you in my prayers.*
>
> **2 Timothy 1:3 NIV**

You can help a new believer in these areas:

- Assurance of salvation and of God's love
- Regular quiet times alone worshipping God
- Scripture memory and meditation
- Bible study—understanding God's reality
- Prayer—personal conversation with God
- Fellowship with other believers
- Sharing Jesus Christ with others
- Growing in love, joy, peace, patience, and so on (the fruit of the Spirit)
- Learning to listen, trust, and obey God in daily life and decisions
- Serving the poor

Being an Example

Look at what Paul said about his example to the Philippian believers.

> [9] *Do what you have learned and received and heard from me, and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.*
>
> **Philippians 4:9 CSB**

The areas we ought to be an example to others in are listed in 1 Timothy 4:12.

> [12] *Don't let anyone despise your youth, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith, and in purity.*
>
> **1 Timothy 4:12 CSB**

> *Jesus' life provides the ultimate blueprint for whole-life discipleship. His disciples shared His everyday life—His highest and lowest moments. They saw Him from all sides, not just as a performer of miracles but also as a man who bore the Father's burdens, got angry, and even wept. His investment in their lives would reap tremendous returns after His departure. We, too, have deposits to make in the lives of our brothers and sisters in the faith. Pamela Toussaint, Homemade Disciples*

Why is being real and authentic important as we touch the lives of others?

Can you say with Paul, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1)?

What aspect of your life in Christ needs to change for you to be a good example?

Think of someone you have had the privilege of leading to Christ or someone you know who is young in the faith. Remember to pray for him and consider what more you can do to stimulate his growth. Should you visit, call, or write to him? What practical resources might help him? Should you take him with you to see a nonbelieving friend or another young believer? Summarize how you can help him and what you intend to do.

> *Life-giving community breeds life-giving followers…. The early churches had a way of allowing the Holy Spirit to spend them on the horizontal, by serving and loving, while simultaneously having their own lives transformed on the vertical, through worship and study. That's the way of the Cross: to go and make disciples while we continue to apprentice ourselves to the Master Jesus. Eric Sandras, PhD*

Memory Verse

> [8] *We cared so much for you that we were pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you had become dear to us.*
>
> **1 Thessalonians 2:8 CSB**

Things to Ponder

Reflect on how you were initially treated by other followers of Jesus as you began your walk with God. How were you cared for or neglected? In what ways did you feel supported or abandoned? What was most beneficial? What was least helpful? What can you learn about helping others follow Jesus from the way others have helped you?

Use Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians as a practical guide to help you establish a younger believer you know. As you read through each chapter consider how you can apply his example.

- What was Paul's attitude and heart (his motivation) for the people in Thessalonica?
- How did he relate to them and share his life with them?
- What did he pray for them?
- What did he do to establish them?
- What did he focus his teaching on?
- What did he not do among them?