

Teaching E-mail 61

Are You Our Lord's Intervener in the Life of Others?

“Calling the Twelve to Him, He sent them out two by two (Mark 6:7). “After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two” (Luke 10:1).

(February 18, 2012)

As you study Scripture, you may recognize that the goals and responsibilities of parenting, grandparenting, and discipling others are amazingly similar. In each case our Lord uses *people* as His means to intervene in the life of someone. ***To intervene is to alter the way of life of another person.*** In this Teaching E-mail we'll discuss our Father's desire for **Christ-like intervention** by parents, grandparents and disciples—particularly His desire that *love-grounded mutual cooperation* underlays the relational responsibility in these interactions.

Parents especially need to appreciate God's design that both a father and a mother *together* brought about their child. It was a *cooperative* conception! And the biblical commands for child-raising are given to parents *and* to grandparents to cooperate in raising a godly child. Our Father's view is *intergenerational*; He purposes that wisdom and testimony of His faithfulness be passed along and reinforced as a child grows and hears it year after year from those who love him (Psalms 22:30,31; 78:4-6; Malachi 2:15).

The same *collective responsibility* applies to discipleship. Jesus sent His disciples out *two by two* to witness to others of the veracity of His good news. Paul as well, traveled and discipled with companions. It was a *cooperative* endeavor, which means at least one other person was involved. And *more* than two working side by side can be even more effective: *“Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken”* (Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Christ-like Intervention & Mutual Cooperation

Parents, grandparents and disciples who are responsive to our Lord's commands to carry out their responsibilities must first work through their own differences *motivated by love* (see Philippians 2:1,2). They need to be in accord with one mind and one heart concerning both their goals and methods in their particular spheres of intervention, as this “journey” is for the long haul: *“Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?”* (Amos 3:3).

Mutual cooperation and role modeling of a Christ-like relationship is enhanced as *together* you pursue an understanding of each other's giftings, personality traits, gender differences, and wisdom gained from experience. Often the loving cooperation among the parents, grandparents and disciples has far more powerful an influence on the lives they're intervening in than any one individual can convey by functioning alone.

Being willing to collectively work through differences means also recognizing that some people are more mature in their walk than others. And God is well able to reveal *His* perspective on matters so that His will can be accomplished: *“Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you”* (Philippians 3:15). Ultimately, each person is called to *put into practice* whatever they've received (v.16) so that others may benefit by it.

It's a sad commentary on our times that individualism reigns. Each person does whatever seems best to them, allowing their own mind and will to become their idol. Receiving input or correction

from others is viewed as intrusive. You can see how countercultural even within contemporary Christendom is the biblical process of *mutually cooperating* to work through differences to achieve agreement and conviction about goals and methods. The predominance of one-person ministries as well as the multitude of single parents are signs of a curse on this nation in its lawlessness and self-absorption.

God has made clear in His Word that parenting is the responsibility of both a father and a mother, supported by other family members, especially grandparents. That's why so many children of divorce suffer severe consequences that plague them throughout their lives—especially a sense of expendability and a guardedness that keeps them from letting themselves fully belong to others. Not only do they find themselves unable to share in relational intimacy; few are able to ever fully trust the God Who allowed this to happen to them.

Body life in Christ is a plurality of “parts”! There are no Lone Ranger Christians in the Kingdom of God; those who are His are *interconnected* by His Spirit. The concept of a “one-person ministry” is an offshoot of European monarchies and ecclesiastical clergy rule. The *synergy and mutual cooperation* exemplified by the disciples of Christ and the elder leaders of faith communities in the Newer Testament were snuffed out in Europe, and thus in the Western World.

For more on the negative influence of monarchies and clergy systems that produce one-person ministry, see *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 21. Hellenism and Romanism Today, a free download at our website.

The sense of the *collective responsibility* called for by our Lord Jesus among His

followers also encompasses mutual cooperation in parenting, grandparenting and discipleship. His “Great Commission”, below, was assigned to a collective group of people—His disciples—and its cooperative purpose is just as pertinent for us today:

“All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Me. GOING therefore, DISCIPLE ALL THE NATIONS, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE all things that I COMMANDED you; and behold, I am WITH YOU all the days until the completion of the age”
(Matthew 28:18-20, literal translation).

Too many have confined the intent of this passage to sending people away to the mission field, but this is far from the truth! Jesus was collectively telling His disciples that *wherever* they went in their daily lives together—whether nearby or afar—and *whomever* they encountered especially among the gentile peoples, they were to jointly *intervene* in their lives as His loving representatives.

That intervention included coming alongside them in His Name to disciple through baptism (public identification with Jesus in His death, burial and resurrection), and through making clear the life of ongoing obedience to His Word and trust in His Presence through His Spirit.

Followers of Jesus for all time are commanded to minister in making disciples as they go about their daily lives no matter where they are. This means that they *intervene*, that is, they get involved so that by word and/or deed they present God's view. Through intervention they can address the person who is pursuing sin. If he or she is

responsive, the intervention may result in humble repentance and change. If not, perhaps a seed was planted for further watering. Each day provides an new opportunity to reveal God's Word and the Person of Jesus to children as well as to adults.

If your intervention is to deepen their life in Jesus, you must aim at helping them alter their path or course of action to align it with the way our Lord would have them live.

The command to *cooperatively intervene* is the true essence of Jesus' command in Matthew 28:18-20. The goal of Christ-like intervention is to alter the way of life of another person out of love. Lord Jesus is calling each of us to be diligent in our heart to His goal to bring sinners to Himself and teach them His ways: *"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil"* (Ephesians 5:15,16; see also Colossians 4:5,6).

The distinguishing factor between those who are content to just call themselves "Christian" and a true follower of Jesus is that the latter are consumed by His heart and by what burdens Him. Responsive to His Spirit in them, they are actively involved in the lives of others and living out His goal for people to put their trust in Him and to obey His commands. This is a mutual endeavor accomplished only through the cooperative participation of His followers intervening together, whether among children or adult disciples.

For more on why Christianity isn't filled with interveners, please see the Introduction to our book, *Restoring the Early Church: The Current Plight of the Church in the United States*, a free download at our website.

"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29,30)

Notice the key priority of our Lord's discipleship pattern: *An authentic discipler first of all willingly takes upon himself the yoke of the One Who put it on him.* In Jesus's time the "yoke of Heaven" was well understood to be the wholehearted commitment of a person to trust in God. By submitting to the yoke of Jesus in wholehearted loving trust, we're able to keep learning from His Spirit and from one another as His Body the way to walk His pathway in righteous living.

At the same time, a yoke implies that we are drawing a burden. And what burdens Jesus is that for which He sacrificed Himself: the salvation of mankind (see John 3:16-18). Our Lord's heart burden for a heavenly welcome of the redeemed must be the driving force behind the motives of parents, grandparents, and disciplers.

The love and character of Jesus prompts within His own a deep willingness to be inconvenienced, that is, to carry the burden of the person in whose life you're intervening. While that word "burden" may seem negative to you, by definition it can refer to *"the main responsibility for achieving a specified aim or task."* Being yoked together with Lord Jesus makes this shared burden a *labor of love* for His people, not a heavy obligation (Matthew 11:30). The hand of Jesus undergirds our lives as we cooperate out of love for Him to bring to fruition this "specified aim": to raise a godly generation and/or disciple people into His Lordship. By His words, see how far our willingness to *be inconvenienced* must go:

“If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you” (Matthew 5:41, 42).

The willingness to *not get annoyed* by the needs of others has diminished greatly in this overly scheduled, electronically-connected society. People are perhaps willing to extend a “random act of kindness” on their own terms. But being intruded upon by the needs of children and/or disciples must be a “burden” which the love of Jesus causes us to perceive as light.

Lord Jesus unhesitatingly described the Greatest Commandment as being fulfilled when you exercise a *sacrificial love* toward both God and others : *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’*” (Luke 10:27). He then went on to show the connection between *love* and the *willingness to serve* someone in need even when it’s inopportune: the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37).

A Jewish man journeying to Jericho from Jerusalem was in desperate straits. Laying along the road, he’d obviously been severely beaten and robbed even of his clothing. Both a priest and a Levite went out of their way to not be inconvenienced by him. But a Samaritan, despised by most Jews, not only was stirred in his heart by the man but took inconvenient action. He went the “second mile” and beyond to ensure the comfort and recovery of the victim.

The Samaritan exemplified the love Jesus requires of His own as we intervene in the lives of others, whether children or disciples. Our “second mile,” as with his,

can never be shrouded by a veneer of inconvenience. The active roles of parenting, grandparenting and discipling can’t be accomplished without the depth of love Jesus showed us through the Samaritan’s response. And while the Samaritan didn’t personally know the victim, we who represent Jesus as His heart and hands must develop firsthand close knowledge of the one in whose life we’re intervening.

For example, this classic instruction on parenting isn’t a cause and effect set of rules presented to a child: *“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it”* (Proverbs 22:6). Rather, from ancient times this verse meant that parents should get to know the particular bent of each child so they can guide him or her into a life goal and vocation that will glorify our Father.

Knowing a person’s motivations and bent is the best way to help them apply God’s Word to their lives. With the help of the Spirit you’re able to individualize for them the commands and teachings of God as a *way of life*. For too long the Bible has been taught like an academic subject with a “one size fits all” approach. But God has created each person uniquely.

Out of love Father has purposed that each be guided and accompanied along the way by someone to whom they’re personally accountable, whether parent, grandparent, wise relative or discipler. In that way, by role modeling and loving, consistent instruction, they’ll learn to live a life pleasing to Him.

In parenting, grandparenting and in discipleship, the child or disciple learns far more from watching your *way of life* than from anything you say. Your *walk* in what you talk authenticates for the younger person whether what you say is important or not. Keep in mind that a child or disciple often evaluates parents

or disciplers by the close relationships they have. Who we choose to be our close friends reflects greatly the values we have in our hearts. *What do your close relationships say about you?*

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40)

Every follower of Jesus must be able to role model a Christ-like way of life to whomever you’re coming alongside to intervene. You want the ones you’re discipling to encounter Jesus as you did, in repentance and wholehearted grateful love that lives to please Him and do Father’s will. Your life is a mirror to those you’re discipling. Your aim is to help him identify Christ’s likeness in you and want that to become real in himself through His Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 4:17). You’ve been redeemed and are becoming more like Jesus for a purpose—to intervene so that the children and disciples in your life can follow your example as you follow the example of Christ! (1 Corinthians 11:1)

Again, parenting and discipling others to follow Jesus as you are doing requires your intervention beginning with those in your home, your relatives, your close acquaintances, and so forth. Learn to see yourself as our Lord’s servant/ambassador, instilling in them the life you live for Jesus out of grateful love for Him. As your relationship deepens, your own life of ongoing transformation into the character of Jesus will give them hope that His Spirit can change them too.

Consider this point:

Keep the generational aspect in mind. As a parent, make sure you’ve worked out with your own parents or with your adult children the biblically-based goals and methods you have for raising a godly

generation. ALL of you need to agree on the same goals for each child’s future, and the methods you’ll use to train and correct the child.

Again, you are ultimately looking for each child to respond to the Spirit’s conviction and encounter Jesus as their Lord. As you have experienced yourself in following Him, your child also needs to know His forgiveness and to hear from the Spirit and want to do Father’s will.

As a grandparent, be absolutely sure that you’re not undermining or nullifying the biblical goals and methods your adult children have for their offspring. Their God-given responsibility in child-raising is a difficult one, given the spiritual warfare and the worldly sinfulness arrayed against them. You have a vital role to play! That’s why it’s so important that in-laws work through any differences they have regarding goals and approaches.

Be on guard against allowing interpersonal tension to permeate your conversations as in-laws. Children can sense any underlying hostility between you, and the foundation of love and forgiveness you’re trying to instill in them will be fractured by bad-mouthing.

Consider this point:

You may find as a parent or grandparent that over the years you’ve acquired much Bible knowledge without any corresponding change in Christ-like character. Does this describe you? Maybe *now* is the time in which our Lord is prompting you to actively and intentionally pursue Him to transform aspects of your character into His, and to set aside leisurely or temporal pursuits to be fully available for His Kingdom purposes. If you spent too much energy and focus on the ways of the world when you were raising your own children, please humble yourself

and repent. Then ask them for forgiveness.

Through your repentance and asking forgiveness, you're opening a new door in your relationship with them. You're asking them for a second chance to allow you to come alongside them and *lead the way into Christ's likeness and pursuit of fulfilling His purposes in your lives collectively.*

But this can't be a matter of "teaching at" through mere talk. YOU must purpose to change through His Spirit, and YOU must lead the way in your love-grounded obedient trust. Far too many parents of adult children ask forgiveness, but refuse to lead their families into life purposes that bring glory to God. If you ask forgiveness but refuse to *change* and *lead the way*, you're only showing remorse. You're sorry you let them down, but aren't willing to sacrifice anything of yourself on their behalf. How sad for them *and* for you!

For more on positive intervention for parenting see Lifebyte 71. *Scripturally Reliant Fathers and Grandfathers Guiding the Destiny of Generations*

Consider this point:

If you're discipling someone who has come out of the religious system, take a lesson from the sheep flock.

Years ago we began to raise sheep on our farm retreat center after Mike was asked to counsel religious leaders. Not being a pastor, he thought he would train himself by shepherding sheep since the biblical references to sheep and shepherds are many. Most people aren't aware that sheep are subject to internal parasites from their own stools if they aren't moved to new pastures regularly. This reality applies to discipleship as well.

There are two ways to move a flock along. You can *drive* them with a sheep dog or loud noise. Or, you can *lead* them by your familiar voice. Through daily interaction our sheep learned to respond to our voices; they trusted us to lead them to good pasture.

There's a lesson to be learned if the person you're discipling has come out of a religious system, especially one that was a longstanding part of their life. We addressed in Teaching E-mail 60 a hindrance faced by many who leave organized religion: "After they've left, they're vexed by a taste of bitterness and trapped by memories of how poorly they were treated or by what they felt was wrong with their former faith community."

If you're going to help them press forward into all the love that the Spirit of Christ would produce in them (Philippians 3:12-14), you need to help them see how our Lord, the Great Shepherd, moves people along in life.

First, He works to get people out of the comfort zone of their "old pasture", disrupting their complacency. Think of the situation of the Israelites in Egypt, held in bondage for over 400 years. But even after Moses returned to them after his 40-year preparation time in the desert, they weren't yet ready to be led out.

So God hardened Pharaoh's heart, and things got worse for Israel! He wanted to make sure they *really wanted to leave*. Only after they were driven out of Egypt did He lead them for forty years with a cloud by day and light by night. God used distress to shake them out of their stupor and stir them to pursue the promise He'd made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob over four centuries earlier.

It's the same for those whom our Lord shakes out of complacency within religious systems. They need to take

ownership of their inner turmoil and flee what's holding them in bondage! If you're going to disciple them into everything Jesus desires of them, don't let them focus on the wounds they received in the pews of "Egypt." The Lord made sure they were "driven out."

Now that they have the opportunity to live a Kingdom way of life and a heart eagerness to do that, the Spirit of Christ wants to lead them. Is it any wonder the Bible affirms the *leading* the Spirit of Jesus gives His own?

"For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God" (Romans 8:14).

"Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25).

For more on positive intervention in discipling others, see Teaching E-mail 44, Are You Prepared To Equip The Saints For Service?

"But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" (James 2:20,26).

Your children, grandchildren, and those you would disciple need to observe you *living out* God's Word. When you actively make the commands of God your way of life, you're demonstrating that essential connection between *loving God* and *obeying Him*. It's critical in both parenting and discipleship that hypocrisy have no part in your life. Too many throughout Christendom who have been taught the Bible *without* developing Christ-like love and character have far more talk than they have walk.

Again, through the Spirit at work *in you*, your way of life will flow out of your heart motive of love. That's the living example others need to see in you so

their hearts will long for that same kind of intimacy and obedience. If you can't demonstrate your love for Jesus as a *way of life*, then don't talk about it. He's not a concept!

Every intervention in another person's life will have either positive, neutral or negative consequences.

On the following two pages you'll find various aspects of parental and discipling intervention. As you'll see, *intervention* can have a positive outcome, a neutral outcome, or a negative outcome. Use these sheets as a point of discussion with those who are intervening alongside you whether in parenting, grandparenting, or discipling. Then purpose to collectively eliminate the neutral and negative aspects, and help one another walk in the positive, Christ-honoring ways.

“Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it” (Proverbs 22:6)

- Godly parenting and grandparenting requires consistent, Biblically-based intervention.
- Your intervention must be motivated by your love for Jesus and the child.
- To *intervene* is to alter a child's way of life.
- You're training them to live, as you do, hearing the Spirit of Jesus and obeying God's Word.
- All intervention by a parent (grandparent) will have either *positive, neutral or negative consequences*.



If you're a parent or grandparent, place a ✓ next to the lines that best describe you.

Positive Parenting and Grandparenting Intervention

- Your inner motivation as you intervene in your child's life is that God holds you responsible to raise them up to be *Christ-like*, not just “good.”
- Your intervention must be Scripturally-based and undergirded in love, knowing it will take earnest prayer and patience for your input to take effect.
- You must view your child as being born with a sin nature; you are responsible to help them resist it, encounter Jesus, and develop Christ-like character.
- Because you recognize your child's sin nature, you are prepared to use biblically-based corrective measures with love as He calls for.
- Godly intervention is a means for your child to follow your example as you follow Jesus in loving obedience, seeking His guidance and doing His will.
- Godly intervention requires you to know the bent of your child so you can guide their life into an occupation that brings God glory.
- You take seriously the intensity of Deuteronomy 6:5-9 and other scriptures on child-raising as the Spirit of Christ in you directs you to practice these.
- Authentic love for your child from God's perspective calls you to actively pursue and practice all the biblical commands on parenting.
- Your child must see you intentionally avoiding worldly values and whole-heartedly pursuing Christ's character as you fulfill your part in His Kingdom.
- As first interveners in your child's life, you must help them see their way of life as a pilgrimage ultimately leading them to a heavenly welcome.

Neutral Parenting and Grandparenting Intervention

- Your inner motivation toward your child centers on them being accepted by others and/or being successful by worldly standards.
- Your intervention in their lives has little biblical basis; rather, you seldom pray *for* them to know Jesus as their Lord, and rarely pray *with* them.
- You're lax about your child's character development, and are satisfied as long as they stay out of trouble.
- Raising your child according to biblical standards means little to you since you're unfamiliar with them; neither do you seek or rely on the Holy Spirit.
- Your life is a mix of Christian good works and worldly values. Growing in Christ's character and leading your child to Him hardly enters your mind.
- You correct your child out of annoyance rather than perceiving correction and discipline as part of their character development.

Negative Parenting and Grandparenting Intervention

- Your child sees you intensely pursuing worldly goals and values, even if it means regularly robbing them of meaningful time with you.
- You view your child as being basically good, and excuse or overlook their sin nature.
- Any correction of your child breaks down into parent-child negotiations in which you repeatedly try to cajole or bribe them into obeying you.
- Your child often sees you frustrated and angry, venting your emotions on them.
- You outsource your child to others for spiritual training and character development.
- As a couple you bad-mouth each other (or your inlaws) where the child can overhear, and use the kids to keep secrets: “Don't let Dad/Mom know!”

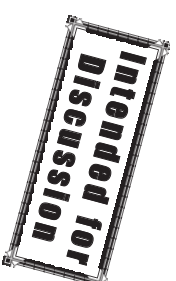
If your intervention isn't all positive, ask our Lord and those you've failed for their forgiveness. Then begin to lead them with positive intervention.

If your parents didn't use positive intervention, *forgive them!* Every parent, no matter how inadequately, tries to do the best they can.

It's more important for you to press forward in love and raise your child with Christ-like intervention.

“A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone who is perfectly trained will be like his teacher” (Luke 6:40)

- Godly discipling requires consistent, Biblically-based Intervention.
- Your intervention must be motivated by love for Jesus and the disciple.
- To *intervene* is to alter someone’s way of life.
- You’re training them to live, as you do, hearing the Spirit of Jesus and obeying God’s Word.
- All intervention by a discipler will have either *positive, neutral or negative consequences*.



If you’re actively involved in discipling others, place a ✓ next to the lines that best describe you.

Positive Discipleship Intervention

- Your inner motivation toward a disciple is knowing that God is holding you responsible to train them to follow Jesus as Lord in their spiritual development.
- The goal of Godly discipleship is to reproduce in another person the motives and character of Jesus you have developed.
- Godly intervention is a means for a disciple to follow your example as you follow Jesus in loving obedience, seeking His guidance and doing His will.
- You base your intervention on Scripture undergirded with love, realizing it may take earnest prayer and time for your input to bring them to maturity.
- You must help them resist their sin nature out of love for Jesus as their Lord, and help them develop Christ-like character.
- Your discipleship must be purposeful and intentional, entailing your willingness to be inconvenienced by the one you’re discipling.
- Your disciple must see you intentionally avoiding worldly values and whole-heartedly pursuing Christ’s character as you fulfill your part in His Kingdom.
- Because of your deep concern for his/her spiritual development, you’re prepared to use biblically-based corrective measures to help them.
- Godly intervention requires you to get to know their inner motives and spiritual bent and gifting so you can help guide their life to bring glory to God.
- Your effectiveness in discipling grows as God’s commands deepen in your way of life because of love-grounded, obedient trust in Jesus as your Lord.
- You intentionally instill in a disciple a view of life as a pilgrimage to their salvation and heavenly welcome, becoming more like Jesus along the way.

Neutral Discipleship Intervention

- Your inner motivation toward your disciple is more focused on being accepted by them as just a friend.
- Your intervention in their lives often lacks a biblical foundation; you seldom pray *for* them to grow in Christ, and you rarely pray *with* them.
- You are lax about your disciple’s character development, and satisfied if they’re “good” and pleasant to be with.
- You spend more time and effort teaching the Bible *at* them than role modeling the humility of a Christ-like, God-honoring way of life.
- Your life is a mix of Christian good works and worldly values; growing in Christ’s character yourself as an example to your disciple doesn’t enter your mind.
- You get annoyed by wrong attitudes and actions you see in your disciple through his/her spiritual immaturity.

Negative Discipleship Intervention

- Your disciple can’t see any difference between your values and way of life and the values and ways the world embraces.
- Helping your disciple resist his/her sin nature and leading them in Christ-like character development have no place in your method of discipling.
- You don’t sense any accountability to, or reliance on, our Lord as you disciple.
- Your disciple often hears you pointing out what’s wrong with other people and lacking a merciful heart to help them.
- By confining your discipling to Bible study and discussing Christian materials, your disciple never sees how you really live when he/she isn’t around.
- Your disciple doesn’t see any growth in Christ-like character in you; his/her desire to become more like Jesus is quenched by your example.

If your intervention isn’t all positive, ask our Lord and those you’ve failed for their forgiveness. Then begin to lead them with positive intervention.

If the person(s) discipling you is not using positive intervention, *forgive them!* If they refuse to change after you discuss this with them, *leave!*

If you can’t find a Christ-like discipler, call upon the Spirit of Jesus within you. DON’T let yourself learn through neutral or negative intervention!