

Chapter 8

The Fruit of the Spirit: *Modeling for Discipline*

Modeling is a very important principle in teaching. Paul exhorts us to follow his example:

For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you;

Nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you,

Not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us (2 Thessalonians 3:7-9).

Paul called his followers to remember the words that he spoke and the kind of life that he lived among them. He stresses the importance of examples, **“The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you”** (Philippians 4:9).

The idea of modeling is evident in the life of John and Peter and especially in the life of Christ. Jesus modeled servant-hood when He washed the feet of the disciples. He said in Luke 6:40, **“A pupil is not superior to his teacher, but everyone [when he is] completely trained (readjusted,**

restored, set to rights, and perfected) will be like his teacher” (AMP).

Nicholas Wolterstorff in his book, *Educating for Responsible Action*, identifies modeling as a strategy for inculcating a tendency:

The wisdom of the ages tells us children are influenced in what they tend to do by observing what those around them do—especially those for whom they feel admiration or affection. Likewise children are influenced by representations of what others do, in literature and drama, for example. It was on this ground that Plato proposed eliminating from his ideal republic all literature and drama which represented gods of humans doing what they should not be doing.¹

Experiments with school age children in social learning situations clearly illustrate the use of adult modeling as a powerful influence on the behavior of children. For example: yielding to temptation, acts of aggression, patterns of self-reward, performing acts of kindness, to name a few. From the modeling experiments we learn that a key factor in attaining this goal (equipping and training the child for responsible action) is whether that person whom the child takes as a model is himself living a life of responsible action.²

The influence of teachers on the behavior of young people is very evident. They adopt their ways of speaking, their actions and their attitudes. Schindler and Pyle state:

It's how the teacher responds to his own life situations that will be transmitted to the students. It's how the teacher handles his problems, his heartaches, his sins, his mistakes, and those people that despitely use him—that is what is learned by the students.³

It is common for elementary children after they get home from school to find some friends and play school. Everyone

wants to be the teacher. The children's behavior as the teacher becomes a direct mimic of the child's own classroom teacher.

Gene Garrick comments on the influence of teachers:

The influence on students is not just in the classroom but in the total life of the teacher—attitudes, habits, character, associations, interests, priorities, motivations, reactions and relationships.⁴

Of all the ingredients that constitute a Christian, the fruit of the Spirit is paramount. Since students will follow the example of their teacher, it is critical that students see their teacher as a consistent model of the fruit of the Spirit, whether the teacher feels like it or not. It requires a quality decision to be an example in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control: an example that leads teachers to say to their students, "Follow me as I follow Christ."

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When an educator accepts Jesus Christ as Lord and Master of his life, the very nature and character of God become part of his life; he becomes a new creature on the inside (2 Corinthians 5:17). His body becomes the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. As he submits his will to the Holy Spirit, allowing Him to govern his life, the Holy Spirit produces fruits which are qualities of Christian character. Paul identifies this fruit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galations 5:22,23).

Billy Graham says,

The fruit of the Spirit as described in Scriptures is nothing more or less than the character of Christ reproduced in the life of the believer. That fruit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness and self-control—is produced only by the

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working of the Holy Spirit in a Christian's life . . . It is actually God's plan that all believers will exhibit the fruit of the Spirit. The producing and maturing of this fruit in a person's life are an indication of the overall spiritual maturing that is going on. The more obedient one is to the Holy Spirit's presence in their life, the more emphatic will be the maturing of the fruit of the Spirit. God expects every one of His own to be moving in the direction of maturity, appropriating the power of the Holy Spirit to produce the character of Christ.⁵

If we want the fruit of the Spirit to be displayed in our character, attitudes and actions, we must join our lives with Christ just like branches are joined to a vine. Jesus said,

Abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me and I in him bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing (John 15:4,5).

Your task as Christian educators is to model the fruit and to encourage your students in the maturing of their own fruit-filled lives. As the fruit of the Spirit fills the life of Johnny and Susie, their lives will be more disciplined.

Guy Duffield, referring to the fruit of the Spirit, said,

A great many persons are endeavoring to produce the fruit of the Spirit through the entirely natural processes of character building, such as: the exercise of the will, esthetic culture, mental science, the pursuit of philosophy, education in ethics, etc.; all of which is very commendable from the human point of view. It is much better to be moral, ethical, cultured, well-informed, decent, friendly, honorable and patient than

to be the opposite; however these above-named virtues, achieved by purely human efforts, are not the fruit of the Spirit, but an imitation of it. They are wax fruit in contrast to the real fruit; just as beautiful as the real to view from a distance, but immeasurably inferior to the taste. When Christ is fully formed in the believer by the indwelling of the Spirit, true Christlike virtues will be the natural result—a result as natural as that of the growth of apples on an apple tree.⁶

Every believer can experience the fruit of the Spirit. Some will have “fruit,” others “more fruit,” and still others “much fruit” (John 15:1-8). The level of fruit bearing is a direct result of submitting to the lordship of Jesus daily and obeying His Word. Furthermore, the more one is filled with the Holy Spirit the more evident these fruits should be.

Sharon Daugherty in her book, *Walking in the Fruit of the Spirit*, encourages all believers to walk in the lifestyle of Jesus.

You might think that walking in the fruit of the Spirit is difficult and unattainable. However, by renewing your mind to God’s Word you can walk in His fruit and nature. Once you understand that it isn’t you living your life anymore but Jesus in you with you yielding to Him, then you begin to allow Jesus to flow through you. You become conscious of His presence.⁷

Love

A Christian educator who models the fruit of love is a person who seeks the welfare of all, causes no hard feelings and looks for opportunities to do well to everyone. This person will create a classroom environment charged with the love of God, a place where students are loved no matter what they have done. No matter how bad they have fallen, they will be forgiven.

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It is possible to love and accept a student as a creation of God and at the same time confront inappropriate behavior. For example: Profanity is wrong and students who use it must be confronted. But, if a student who uses profanity gets the feeling that he is rejected, even when he is attempting to live above this, he will never be around long enough to be touched by God through the school. The use of profanity is a choice a student makes. When they choose to use profanity, they are also choosing to suffer the consequences of wrong choices. When consequences are ministered (not administrated) out of a spirit of love and compassion, the student will learn to make the right choices and to clean up his speech.

Students relate love to caring. When high school students at Victory Christian School were asked to identify the one characteristic about Victory Christian School that sets it apart from all other schools they had attended, the overwhelming response was, "The teachers at Victory really care about their students." The extent of a teacher's love for his students is directly related to the amount of help, concern and friendship the teacher directs toward the students. Students sense that teachers love them when teachers talk openly with students, trust them and are interested in their ideas.

Teachers who have established a caring relationship with students will have a much better opportunity to minister to their needs. In so doing, they will be able to help them change their attitudes and conduct.

One of the reasons Victory Christian School has grown at a rate of 5 to 12 percent each year over the past five years is a direct result of teachers learning how to minister out of a heart filled with love. Furthermore, schools that are prepared to deal with hurting students will see more of these kinds of students enrolling because God will send them to a school where love, acceptance and forgiveness flow.