

Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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APRIL 2026

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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A Five Day Devotional Guide

April 2026

Contributing Authors

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

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Our first labour

One of the designations that Jesus gave to His disciples was '*labourers*'. It specifically relates to the work of tending the Father's vineyard, and to gathering His harvest. **Mat 20:1-2. Luk 10:2.** For example, Jesus said to His disciples, 'The harvest truly is plentiful, but the labourers are few. Therefore, pray the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers into His harvest.' **Mat 9:37-38.**

Although ministry in the church and evangelism appear to be the primary focus of one's labour as a disciple, *this is not the case*. Paul was clear that our first labour is to *enter God's rest*. He wrote, 'For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains, therefore, a rest for the people of God. For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His. *Let us therefore be diligent [literally, 'let us labour'] to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.*' **Heb 4:8-11.**

In the Scriptures, the term 'rest' refers to an inheritance that is given by God. He called it 'My rest'. **Psa 95:11.** This inheritance is promised to those who receive God's initiative to establish them in His kingdom. 'The kingdom of God' is the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is revealed to us through the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom. We labour to enter this rest by receiving and walking in the light of the gospel of the kingdom. By receiving and walking in these commands, we are being disciplined and are abiding in the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. **Mat 28:18-20.** This is the basis of our testimony and is essential to our labour for the sake of others so that they might enter this same rest.

Further reading: Hebrews 4

Believing to enter rest

Highlighting the significance of how we hear and respond to the word of present truth that is ministered in and from the presbytery, Paul said, *'For we who have believed do enter that rest.'* **Heb 4:3**. Believing is the fruit of faith, which is received by hearing and receiving the commands of Christ the King. **2Co 4:13. Rom 10:17**. Our relational obedience, through which the glory of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is revealed, *is the evidence of faith*. This is because faith is the substance of the glory that we hope for. **Heb 11:1. Col 1:27**.

Our ministry as labourers is *the proceeding word*. This is *the word of faith*. It is not an endless pursuit of religious, mystical knowledge in order to discover ourselves through talk or through preaching. The word is substance both here and now. The word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. **Psa 119:105**. If we are receiving the word in this manner, we will have fellowship with one another, for the apostle John said, *'If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.'* **1Jn 1:7**.

In fellowship, and from fellowship, we minister to one another and give counsel. Living in this way is the culture of rest that belongs to the kingdom of God. Giving and receiving in this fellowship is how we *'look diligently'* lest we fall short of the grace of God. The indication that a person is falling short of God's grace is a root of bitterness and discontent that springs up in their heart causing trouble and defilement. **Heb 12:15**.

Further reading: John 6

The conversation of faith

In the conversation of faith that belongs to fellowship in Christ, we look diligently at the word and its application for our lives; and we encourage one another so that each person in our community – be it in our marriage, our house, or in the local network of houses to which we belong – is appropriating the grace of God.

By this grace, children within our families are able to grow up into the same fellowship in which we are being established. This fellowship is necessary so that children who have been born with the divine nature can grow and mature as sons of God. By grace, they are able to bear the fruit of faith that belongs to the fellowship of the Spirit, and they are not limited by the thorny, familiar cultures that thrive in independent households. Those who receive the gospel are able to mature through repentance and faith as they reorient their priorities in life so that the kingdom of God is their focus.

The evidence that we are receiving the gospel of the kingdom, and that we know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is our focus on marriage, our house, and our connection to the body of Christ. We are able to find proper and open connection with one another in these relational settings as we are coming to Christ to be built together on Him through obedience to His word. **1Pe 2:4,7.**

Our motivation for connection and relational engagement in our marriage, family, and church, is not an endless need to be serviced or affirmed. Our relationships are not encompassing, controlled or controlling. Rather, each person is able to meet in Spirit and in truth, and is never endeavouring to conquer another to satisfy their own wanton desires.

Further reading: 1 Peter 1

Delivered from wantonness

A woman is freed from wantonness as she acknowledges and forsakes her desire for control that is informed by romance and anxiety. The Lord identified the basis of this fallen and native orientation to life, saying to the first woman, 'Your desire shall be for your husband.' **Gen 3:16**. It is the desire for others to 'be for her'. He further described its effect in a house, and in the church, as 'the spirit of Jezebel'. Admonishing the presbytery in Thyatira, He said, 'You allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality [through mixture] and eat things sacrificed to idols.' **Rev 2:20**.

A man is freed from wantonness as he acknowledges and forsakes his pursuits that compete with the labour that belongs to diligently entering rest. This is why Jesus said, 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' **Luk 18:24-25**. This form of wantonness may be apparent in those who are colloquially described as 'workaholics', who prioritise work and business opportunities over the relational works that are associated with fellowship in the kingdom of God. It may also describe a man's pursuit of worldly, or fleshly, pleasures, where he confuses these experiences and opportunities with the blessing of God.

We are being delivered from the bondages that are associated with wantonness, into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. **Gal 5:1. Rom 8:21**. Our interactions with others are no longer for the purpose of identity verification, but are an opportunity to serve one another through love. **Gal 5:13**. This is because we are receiving our identity expression from the Son, who is the substance of our sonship.

Further reading: Galatians 5

Walking in the light

We are entering rest by entering the kingdom of God. This we do by receiving faith from the word. **Rom 10:17**. Our faith then becomes substantial as the expression of our Christian life from day to day. Accordingly, we do not seek fulfilment by any means other than by walking in the Spirit. **Rom 8:14**. This is 'the rest and refreshing' that belongs to those 'with stammering lips and another tongue', who are edifying themselves in their most holy faith by praying in the Holy Spirit. **Isa 28:11-12. Jud 1:20**.

Those who are responding to the invitation to walk in the light of the word are coming out of darkness. They are sons of light and sons of the day. **1Th 5:5**. In contrast, Jesus said that 'everyone practising evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed'. **Joh 3:20**. These people are not willing to walk openly with their brethren regarding the process of reformation and cleansing that is happening in their life, their marriage, or their house, because they are ashamed. Simply, this means that they love their projections rather than their sanctification. Our sanctification is ministered to us by the Spirit through the proclamation of the word, and it is established in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Jesus explained that people who are reticent to engage in a conversation in the light actually love the darkness, because their deeds are evil. **Joh 3:19**. That is, their expression is self-defined, proceeding from an evil heart of unbelief. **Heb 3:12**. They are deceived, thinking that their darkened perspective, sourced from the law of their mind, is 'light'. This is a presumptuous and perilous condition that is manifested by their weariness and discontent, and by their inability to give and receive openly and easily in the light of the word. **Mat 6:23**. This inability to meet in the light will be apparent in the content of the conversations between a husband and a wife, as well as between couples from house to house, and in the church.

Further reading: 1 John 1

Confessing out faults

Many people claim to walk in the light of the word; however, their engagement with the word, and the content of their conversation in *agape* settings, reveal otherwise. For example, some people often prioritise their own devotional focus or burden as they reflect with their spouse or friends. Others commentate on the word, communicating their own recollections of notable point, or their reflections on a point that they believe is relevant to their life. Often, these expressions are nominated as their testimony. However, this is not the speech that establishes fellowship.

Improving the focus and content of our conversations does not inevitably lead to fellowship in the light. The most basic foundation of fellowship is confession. Confession is the expression of the truth in the light of the word. It requires illumination, and is the fruit of our conviction of sin, righteousness and judgement, as the word, by the Spirit, makes a breach upon our heart. **Joh 16:8. Heb 4:12.** In this regard, confession involves *giving an account*. **Heb 4:13.**

We are first directed by the Scriptures to confess our faults to one another. As James wrote, 'Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed'. **Jas 5:16.** Similarly, the apostle John taught, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.' **1Jn 1:8-9.** By directing us to confess our sins, James and John were not advocating confidential confession with a clergy figure. The expectation of confidentiality is, by definition, a desire to keep matters in the dark. However, they also were not suggesting that we engage in self-assessment and self-recrimination in relational settings. Rather, we are to confess our faults to one another in the contexts in which our sin, which is illuminated to us by the word, has impacted upon those with whom we live.

Further reading: James 5

Confessing Christ before men

Our willingness to confess our faults to one another will be an inevitable fruit of our application to the word and will have an expression in our marriage, our house, and in relational settings in the church. In these contexts, we are able to pray for one another and obtain healing and grace for our pilgrimage together in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **1Jn 1:7**.

Inasmuch as we are to confess our faults, we are also to confess our obedience, or righteousness. This is a 'good confession' that we share as those whom Christ has made to be kings and priests to God the Father. **Rev 1:6**. It is the expression of a believer who no longer belongs to the kingdom of darkness, but who has been delivered to the kingdom of light as a son of God. **Col 1:13**. Paul explained that Jesus made this very same confession before Pontius Pilate, writing, 'Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing.' **1Ti 6:12-14**.

By confessing our faults to one another, and also making 'a good confession' through faith obedience, we are confessing Christ before men. This is because Christ is the substance of our repentance and of our obedience. Emphasising the importance of confession, Jesus Himself said, 'Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven. But whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven.' **Mat 10:32-33**.

Further reading: Matthew 10

Confession before testimony

The confession of Christ before men is not only the confession that we make before unbelievers. It is referring to the confession that we make before others in all contexts of life, including in our marriage, our household, in the church, and in the world.

Significantly, a person's testimony will always be preceded by confession. Without confession, our testimony will be little more than a commentary on the word of present truth or the expression of the self-righteous 'despiser'. **Act 13:40-41.** Our testimony should be the fruit of faith that we have obtained as we have responded, with confession, to the illumination and conviction of the Spirit. Such a testimony overflows with life to others because it comes from our experience of fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. We join this fellowship by the faith that we receive as we 'confess with [our] mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in [our] heart that God has raised Him from the dead'. **Rom 10:9.**

There are 'multitudes', even among us, who are in the valley of decision, choosing to receive or to reject the repentance and faith that Christ is offering to us in 'the house of Caiaphas'. **Joe 3:14.** Two apostles were in that house as Jesus was bruised for our iniquities and chastened for our peace. One proceeded from there mourning, and finding repentance and faith. The other found only self-defined penance. Thereafter, he defined his life and ministry as being worthless, judging himself, and then executing himself by suicide. His 'mourning' was the self-indulgent attitude of a person who views themselves as being a victim, which only led to death.

Mourning for Christ our Firstborn with godly sorrow 'produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted'. **2Co 7:10.** We mourn for the Son and for the inheritance that we have lost. And in the place where it was said, 'You are not My people', there we are called 'the sons of the living God'. **Hos 1:10.**

Further reading: 2 Corinthians 7

How you hear and speak

In relation to how we interface with the word of present truth, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Take heed *how you hear*.' **Luk 8:18**. There are many people who agree with the word with their mind, but they never receive the conviction of the Holy Spirit that leads to godly sorrow and repentance. To the despisers who engage with the word through the law of their mind, the apostle Paul gave this warning: 'Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: "Behold, you despisers, marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, a work which you will by no means believe, though one were to declare it to you".' **Act 13:40-41**.

From this passage of Scripture, the Spirit is saying today, 'You despisers, behold the word that is coming to you. Wonder at it, but find repentance, for the fearful and the unbelieving have no place in the kingdom of God.' From now on, do not speak or pray from unbelief. 'All things are possible to him who believes.' **Mar 9:23**. That is, do not speak the assessments and judgements that come from your other law through the law of your mind. To the level of faith for sonship that you have attained, speak from there. **2Co 4:13**. This is the expression that belongs to those who are growing to maturity as disciples.

Establishing this point, the apostle Paul testified, 'Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. 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. Nevertheless, *to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule*, let us be of the same mind.' **Php 3:13-16**.

Further reading: Philipians 3

Believing is discipleship

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained that 'if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved'. **Rom 10:9**. Gospels that are ignorant of, or fail to acknowledge, the need for a person to be born of God's divine nature, and to be baptised in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit through discipleship, give rise to a form of 'believism' that can impede a hearer's entry into the kingdom of God. Christ Himself is addressing this alternative to the gospel of sonship that persists in the church.

The first point to note is that believing is not our agreement with, or even appreciation of, the word. Nor is it just a personal acknowledgement, or declaration, that Jesus is the Son of God, or that God is one. **Jas 2:19**. Believing is not only our personal relationship with Jesus, as important as this is to salvation. In fact, it is a deceived and damnable error to set our claim of personal relationship with Christ over, or separate from, being built on Him with others as part of the temple of His body. **1Pe 2:4-5**. A person who truly knows Christ loves His word and the fellowship from which it proceeds. They will desire to be built on Christ, the Rock, as they let go of relational offences which are the evidence of their disobedience to the proceeding word. **1Pe 2:7-8**.

The apostle John was patently clear that *believing is discipleship*. He said, 'Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.' **1Jn 4:15**. Equally fundamental is the reality that believing in Jesus is demonstrated by *obedience* to His word. This is the expression of a person who is spiritual, and who is entering the rest that belongs to obtaining their eternal inheritance as a son of God and a member of the body of Christ.

Further reading: 1 Peter 2

Believing through illumination

We are believers if we are obedient to the word of present truth spoken by the Holy Spirit *'today'* through messengers in the right hand of Christ. As Paul explained, 'For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to *those who did not obey?* So we see that they could not enter in *because of unbelief.* **Heb 3:16-19.** Significantly, believing is our obedience to the word of Christ, the King!

Believing is only possible through the illumination of our spirit by the Holy Spirit. Believing does not spring from the law of our mind as the fruit of reason. Accordingly, true obedience is not the outcome of the exercise of this law. It is not the works proceeding from the self-centred rationalisation of the implications of the word, even if we are in agreement with the word. **Rom 7:15-16.**

Faith is the illumination of our spirit to the kingship of Christ and the integrity of the Father and the Son from whom the word proceeds by the Holy Spirit. This establishes *trust* as being beyond the capacity for understanding with our mind. Emphasising this principle, Solomon said, 'Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths.' **Pro 3:5-6.** When we trust in this manner, we do not stumble at the word through the disobedience that is informed by 'the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life'. **1Jn 2:16.**

Further reading: John 3

The Shunamite woman's hospitality

The account of the Shunamite woman, and the resurrection of her son, vividly illustrates the importance and implications of receiving the word of faith from the Lord's messengers. The Scriptures record that when Elisha went to Shunem, a town situated in the plain of Megiddo, a notable woman persuaded him to come to her house to eat some food. **2Ki 4:8**. Most commentators agree that this Shunamite woman was notable, or great, on account of her wealth. However, her notability was also attributable to her hospitality and spiritual sight as she recognised, distinguished, and honoured Elisha as a holy messenger.

As often as he would pass through Shunem on his ministry circuit, Elisha would turn in at the Shunamite woman's house to eat. The woman entreated her husband to add a small upper room to their dwelling, fitted with a bed, a table and chair, and a lampstand, so that Elisha could stay with them. Evidently, they were a 'worthy house of peace' on account of her entreaty of, and care for, this messenger. **Mat 10:11-14. Luk 10:5-7**.

During one particular stay, Elisha directed his servant, Gehazi, to call for the woman and inquire what he could do for her on account of the hospitality that she had shown to him. The authenticity of this woman's hospitality and care was manifest as she asked for nothing in return, confessing that she was content to dwell among her own people. **2Ki 4:12-13**. Clearly, she was not cleaving to the messenger with deceit or for advantage. In fact, it was Gehazi who observed that her husband was advanced in years and she did not have a son. **2Ki 4:14**. Hearing this, Elisha personally addressed the woman, saying to her, 'About this time next year you shall embrace a son.' **2Ki 4:16**.

Further reading: 2 Kings 4

The Shunamite woman's unbelief

When Elisha proclaimed to the Shunamite woman that she would have a son, she immediately replied, 'No, my lord. Man of God, do not lie to your maidservant!' **2Ki 4:16**. Clearly, the woman did not believe the word of the messenger proclaiming the miracle of resurrection life for sonship. It was beyond her understanding and sight. Nevertheless, the woman conceived and bore a son at the time appointed by Elisha. Significantly, this child was born according to the faith of the messenger; he was not born according to the woman's faith, for she did not believe the word concerning her house, accusing him of lying.

When the boy was still young, he took ill while out in the field with his father. Later that day he died in the embrace of his mother. She put him in the upper room, on Elisha's bed, and shut the door. She then asked her husband to direct one of their servants to ready a donkey that she might 'run' to the man of God and return. **2Ki 4:20-22**. It seems as though the woman's husband was unclear concerning the boy's condition (be it physical or spiritual), for he asked her, 'Why are you going to him today? It is neither the New Moon nor the Sabbath.' **2Ki 4:23**. But the woman assured him, 'It is well.' **2Ki 4:23**.

The man's ignorance of the boy's condition may have been the consequence of a vacancy in his headship. If this was the case, the Shunamite was not dissimilar from a woman who was married to a man who does not obey the word, as described by the apostle Peter. **1Pe 3:1**. The Shunamite woman honoured her husband, as she did not lay blame upon him, nor demand that he take action on her behalf. This is because the woman recognised her own culpability for the situation, which she attributed to her unbelief concerning the word of the messenger.

Further reading: Genesis 18

The Shunamite woman's repentance

As the Shunamite woman approached Mount Carmel, Elisha sent Gehazi to ask her about her family. She responded by saying, 'It is well.' **2Ki 4:26**. The woman's response does not mean that she was 'in denial' or disconnected from the reality of her situation. Rather, her statement demonstrates that she was not fearful or neurotic. She was not demanding an intervention. This was an expression of her chaste conduct accompanied by the fear of the Lord. **1Pe 3:2**.

When she came before Elisha, the messenger, she caught him by the feet and said to him, 'Did I ask a son of my lord? Did I not say, "Do not deceive me"?' **2Ki 4:27-28**. The Shunamite's response was the same as the woman who washed Christ's feet with her tears in the house of Simon the Pharisee. **Luk 7:37-38**. It was an action of repentance, as she reminded the messenger of the response that she had made when the word had *first* been proclaimed to her. She was confessing that the word had died in her house, and the promise had been consumed *because of her unbelief*.

This was now a *second-time* opportunity for the woman to obtain and express faith for her predestination and for the predestination of her son. The child would not be healed through Elisha's faith; he would be healed through the faith of the woman. To this end, she would not leave Elisha, even though he sent Gehazi to raise the child. The woman confessed her faith in relation to the messenger by saying, 'As the Lord lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you.' **2Ki 4:30**. Significantly, the child was not recovered to life through the actions of Gehazi under the direction of Elisha. Rather, Elisha came to the house *with* the woman and ministered resurrection life to the child. He then delivered the child back to his mother.

Further reading: Luke 7

The first and second time

The account of the Shunamite woman teaches us that when the Lord first proclaims a word of faith, He requires us to make an adequate response. The word that we first heard tries us, through tribulation, so that the faith that belonged to this 'first-time' visitation is apprehended and adequately exercised. **Psa 105:19**. The difficulties that arise because of the word deliver us to a choice. **Mat 13:21**. In this 'second-time' opportunity, we can continue in unbelief, leading to depression and bitterness, or we can accountably acknowledge, and turn from, our unbelief, and demonstrate faith through the works of repentance that belong to our obedience.

It is important to recognise that the Lord has been calling us to become a lampstand church for just over fifty years. Many people in our congregations heard the word on lampstand churches when it was *first* proclaimed. However, the dysfunction and degeneration in many marriages and houses, including the rebellion and departure of children born in these houses, has revealed the lack of faith and their unbelief concerning this message, which belongs to the gospel of God.

The Lord is requiring an *adequate* response of faith as He comes among our congregations *a second time*. In order to avail ourselves of the faith that belongs to this word, let us receive the example of the Shunamite woman, and take account for our unbelief. The Lord can restore our sanctification, our marriages, and our houses, as we acknowledge our sin and turn in repentance to the obedience of faith to which He is calling us. Through faith, the resurrection life in the word can bring healing and recovery where the sin of our unbelief, and its accompanying works, has otherwise borne destruction and death. If we respond with repentance and faith, when the word is proclaimed to us *a second time*, we can be recovered to our inheritance as households who belong to the heavenly Jerusalem.

Further reading: Joel 2

Christ's ministry to Mary and Martha

It is important for us to understand what it means to meet Christ as the King, for this is essential to both *becoming* a believer and to *living* as a believer. The first point to note is that we can only know Christ through the way in which He makes Himself known to us. When Christ makes Himself known to a hearer, and they truly meet Him, they *know Him as their Lord and King*. Unless we receive and respond to Christ in this way, *we are not a believer*.

Jesus sent the seventy-two before His face into every city and place where He was about to go. Their work was to find sons of peace; to heal the sick; and to declare, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' **Luk 10:1-12**. After the seventy-two had returned, Jesus entered a certain village where a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house. She had a sister named Mary and a brother named Lazarus. As Jesus spoke in the house, Mary sat at His feet and heard His words. Mary was washed through her encounter with Christ. We know this because Jesus had earlier taught, 'You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.' **Joh 15:3**. He applied the water of the word to her feet, addressing the way in which she was to *walk* and *express* the gospel.

Jesus also washed Martha on this occasion. Martha was distracted with much serving, struggling under the burden of catering for such a large company of people. She approached Jesus, saying, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore, tell her to help me.' **Luk 10:40**. The Lord washed Martha with His word, saying to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her.' **Luk 10:41-42**. In doing so, He washed her feet for her particular expression of the gospel from the house, through hospitality.

Further reading: Luke 10

Walk before Me and be blameless

Luke did not record any of the conversations that occurred between Jesus and Lazarus when He first visited their household; however, Jesus evidently developed a close relationship with Lazarus. The apostle John noted that, later, when Lazarus became sick, the two sisters immediately sent word to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, behold, *he whom You love* is sick.' **Joh 11:3.**

The point to note is that through this initial encounter, Jesus connected these 'sons of peace' to the command that *El Shaddai* gave to Abraham, when He said, 'I am Almighty God; *walk before Me and be blameless.*' **Gen 17:1.** Blamelessness refers to walking by faith, with Christ, in the fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection. This is the circumcision of Christ. **Col 2:11-14.**

We know that Christ's death, burial and resurrection was the focus of His message at this time. The apostle Matthew recorded that after Peter had confessed that Jesus was the Christ, He 'began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.' **Mat 16:21. Luk 9:18-22.** Later, just prior to sending out the seventy-two, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.' **Luk 9:44.** It was in the context of this word-focus that He explained, 'If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.' **Mat 16:24.**

In the same way that Abraham and Sarah were commanded to walk blamelessly in order to be made 'exceedingly fruitful' and 'a mother of nations,' Christ's initiative towards this worthy house was to establish it as a context of fruitfulness and multiplication through fellowship in His death and resurrection.

Further reading: Colossians 2

The resurrection and the life

In His next interaction with the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus, Jesus ministered faith for their participation in His death and resurrection, typified by Abraham's offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah. They were to be joined to the faith that Abraham demonstrated when he offered up Isaac on Mount Moriah, 'concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.' **Heb 11:19**. Through faith, Mary and Martha were to believe to receive Lazarus back from the dead and believe for Christ's resurrection, which He had *already* proclaimed to them.

Jesus provided them with the opportunity to receive and join this faith when He allowed Lazarus to die after hearing of his illness. Establishing this point, the apostle John recorded, 'When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, *He stayed two more days in the place where He was.*' **Joh 11:4-6**.

When Jesus arrived in Bethany, Lazarus had been dead for four days. **Joh 11:17**. As soon as Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him. It became apparent that Jesus had fallen short of Martha's expectations of Him when she said, 'Lord, *if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.*' **Joh 11:21-22**.

Jesus responded by saying, 'Your brother will rise again'. Yet, Martha's response remained faithful to her former gospel understanding pertaining to the resurrection, saying, 'I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day'. But Jesus said to her, '*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*' **Joh 11:25-26**.

Further reading: John 11

Christ's indignation at their unbelief

When Martha was directly asked by Jesus, she did not confess her faith that He was the resurrection and the life. Rather, she deflected His question by stating her belief that He was the Son of God who had come into the world. She then excused herself from the conversation with Jesus. She went her way and *secretly* called her sister, saying, 'The Teacher has come and is calling for you.' **Joh 11:28.** Martha's actions were manipulative as she knew that Mary's expectations of Christ mirrored her own. Indeed, when Mary arrived at the place where Jesus had spoken with Martha, she fell down at His feet and said to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' **Joh 11:32.** These were the same words with which Martha had earlier addressed Christ.

When Jesus heard these words and witnessed her weeping, John recorded that 'He groaned in the Spirit and was troubled.' **Joh 11:33.** This translation does not adequately reflect the nature of Christ's response. He was moved to indignation, and literally shook with rage, at her unbelief. As He then came to the tomb, Jesus made this same response to the Jews who said, 'Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?' **Joh 11:37-38.**

Even after Christ had declared that He was the resurrection and the life, Martha was reticent to move the stone away from the entrance of the tomb because of the likely stench that is associated with a corpse that was four days old. Christ's response to Martha indicated that their *unbelief* concerning resurrection life in mortality, and in relation to their house, *was the source of His indignation.* Their unbelief, and the hardness of their hearts, was getting in the way of resurrection life coming to their brother. He said to her, 'Did I not say to you that *if you would believe* you would see the glory of God?' **Joh 11:40.** Evidently, they were not yet believers!

Further reading: Hebrews 3

Anointed for burial

Having received illumination through the fiery indignation of Christ, and having thereby witnessed the glory of God in the ministry of *exanastasis* to Lazarus, the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus obtained faith for the *anastasis* of Christ. They were now believers, even though they had previously received Jesus and loved Him.

Six days prior to the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where He lodged at the house of Martha, Mary and Lazarus. **Joh 12:1-2**. At the meal table, Mary anointed Jesus' feet with very costly oil of spikenard, and wiped His feet with her hair. The value of this fragrant oil was 300 denarii – the equivalent of a year's wages.

Witnessing this expression of *agape* fellowship and worship, Judas vocalised his discontent, asking, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' **Joh 12:5**. Jesus responded to Judas' query, declaring, 'Let her alone; she has kept this *for the day of My burial*.' **Joh 12:7**. This was Mary's work of faith to honour Christ as King and her Head, for she understood that Christ was about to die and would rise again!

Significantly, John noted that when Mary anointed Christ in this manner, 'the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil'. **Joh 12:3**. There was an overflow to the house resulting from the acknowledgement of Christ's headship towards Mary.

Two days prior to the last Passover, Jesus dined at another house in Bethany. This house belonged to Simon the leper, who may have previously been healed of his leprosy through the ministry of Jesus. **Mat 26:1-2,6**. During this meal, an unnamed woman came to Him with an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil which she poured upon His head as He sat at the table. **Mat 26:6-7**. The anointing oil ran down His beard and to the edge of His garment as it draped His feet. **Psa 133:2**. Through this woman's action, His anointing for burial at the hands of Mary was extended to His whole body.

Further reading: John 12

Faith for His resurrection

It is likely that the woman who anointed the head of Jesus was the wife of Simon. Supporting this view, we observe that, in contrast to the other women who washed and anointed Jesus' feet, she had the liberty to approach the table and to anoint Christ's head with oil. Again, Jesus explained that this woman had poured the fragrant oil on His body *for His burial*. **Mat 26:12**. Furthermore, Jesus declared, 'Wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world [proclaiming the resurrection], what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.' **Mat 26:13**.

These two women had a participation in the burial of Jesus. The fragrance of these anointings remained on Him right through to His resurrection, when He was presented to the Father as the Firstfruits of men in the image and likeness of God. For this reason, the participation of these women in the burial of Christ belongs to the proclamation of the gospel.

We know, of course, that after Jesus' body was taken down from the cross, it was anointed and wrapped for burial by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. **Joh 19:38-42**. Furthermore, after three days and nights, certain other women, including Mary Magdalene, came to the tomb bringing spices for burial. **Luk 24:1-12**. All these people were connected to the same work initiated by Mary and Simon the leper's wife.

It is notable that after He had risen from the dead, Jesus appeared to the women first. In this regard, the Bible teacher, W.W. Patterson, noted, 'They saw Him first, because they loved Him best'. Their commitment to anointing Christ revealed that they did not love Him best because Christ had met their expectations. Rather, they had been illuminated that He is the resurrection and the life. They were exercising faith for His resurrection, and to receive this resurrection in their lives and houses under His headship.

Further reading: John 20

The ministry of godly women in houses

A woman can find deliverance from her carnal demands and expectations of the Man, Christ, concerning her life and house. This happens when the word confronts these expectations, illuminates to her the resurrection of Christ, and then ministers to her, and to her house, *exanastasis* from Christ. Like Mary, and Simon the leper's wife, a woman who has been illuminated in this manner will be submitted to the headship of Christ, recognising His kingship and priesthood. She will learn from Him her obedience, which includes how to be 'of her husband' as one who professes 'godliness, with good works'. **1Co 11:8. 1Ti 2:10.**

Established in this order of headship under the Father in her marriage, and the Son in her house, she will be motivated and able to wash the feet of those in her house. She will also, figuratively, anoint them with the fragrant oil for their sanctified participation in the offering and suffering journey with Christ, through which God is glorified. This is a ministry of the seven Spirits of the Lord in the order of headship.

On the day after His anointing by Mary, Jesus entered Jerusalem as the King, riding on a donkey. **Joh 12:12-15.** It is notable that the people who were with Christ when He called Lazarus out of his tomb, revealing that He is the resurrection and the life, bore witness of His kingship. Their testimony was the reason for the response of the multitude. **Joh 12:17-18.** Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as the King was the fulfilment of the prophetic word of Zechariah, who wrote, 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! [Symbolising the expression of an elect lady, comprised of a network of worthy houses in a locality.] *Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.* **Zec 9:9.**

Further reading: 1 Timothy 2

The manifestation of the kingdom

In the final year of His earthly ministry, Christ's focus shifted towards His impending offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. **Luk 9:22**. In addition to this, He said to His disciples, 'I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.' **Luk 9:27**. Jesus was specifically referring to Peter, John and James whom He took with Him up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, He was transfigured. The appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah about His impending decease in Jerusalem. **Luk 9:28-31**.

Significantly, although they witnessed Christ's glory and the glory of Moses and Elijah, the three disciples were *heavy with sleep*, indicating the weakness, or infirmity, of their flesh. **Luk 9:32**. **Mat 26:41**. Engagement in this conversation, on the basis of their carnal reasoning, affected their understanding of what was happening and the response that was required. This was demonstrated by their keenness to establish three tabernacles – one for Christ, one for Moses, and one for Elijah - marking a sacramental, religious, and self-centred response to this manifestation of the kingdom of God. **Luk 9:33**.

The next day, when they had come down from the mountain, a man from the midst of the crowd implored Jesus to 'look on' his son, saying 'for he is my only child'. **Luk 9:37-38**. The father of the possessed child explained to Jesus, 'A spirit seizes him, and he suddenly cries out; it convulses him so that he foams at the mouth; and it departs from him with great difficulty, bruising him.' **Luk 9:39**. The demonic spirit was only able to do this through the misappropriation of authority. It may well have been a familiar spirit that was misappropriating the very authority that belonged to this man in his house on account of his iniquity, for we know that Jesus was 'bruised for our iniquities'. **Isa 53:5**.

Further reading: 2 Peter 1

A faithless and perverse generation

When a family rejects the shepherding fatherhood of the presbytery in the right hand of Christ, their children wend their way through life, and in the church, in trouble, for they have no Shepherd, having been trained to take no heed to the Shepherd's voice. As the prophet Zechariah declared, 'The people wend their way like sheep; they are in trouble because there is no shepherd.' **Zec 10:2. Zec 12:2.** Christ the Shepherd is to them only a resource to support them as they are taught to rely on the law of their own mind. Because of this, they are Satan's prey. **1Pe 5:8-9.**

The man said to Jesus regarding the unclean spirit, 'I implored Your disciples to cast it out, but they could not.' **Luk 9:40.** Jesus responded by saying, 'O faithless [lit: unbelieving] and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?' **Luk 9:41.** Christ's statement was not an expression of impatience or exasperation. Rather, it was the word of a King rebuking a generation that was unbelieving. Their unbelief was the cause of their perversity as they continued to go astray in their hearts. **Heb 3:10.** Unbelief was the cause of stumbling for the disciples, and the reason for the inadequacy of their ministry. **Mat 17:19-20.** His wrath was kindled towards them, but this was, in the first instance, for the purpose of establishing them in faith.

Jesus also addressed the man himself. He said to the man, 'If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes.' **Mar 9:23.** Having received this word, 'the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!'" **Mar 9:24.** Jesus then directed the man to bring the son to Him. As the father approached Christ, the demon threw the boy down and convulsed him. It was as if the demon spirit was endeavouring to *rebel* in the presence of Christ. The King rebuked this insubordinate spirit, healed the child, and then gave him back to his father. **Luk 9:42.**

Further reading: Luke 9

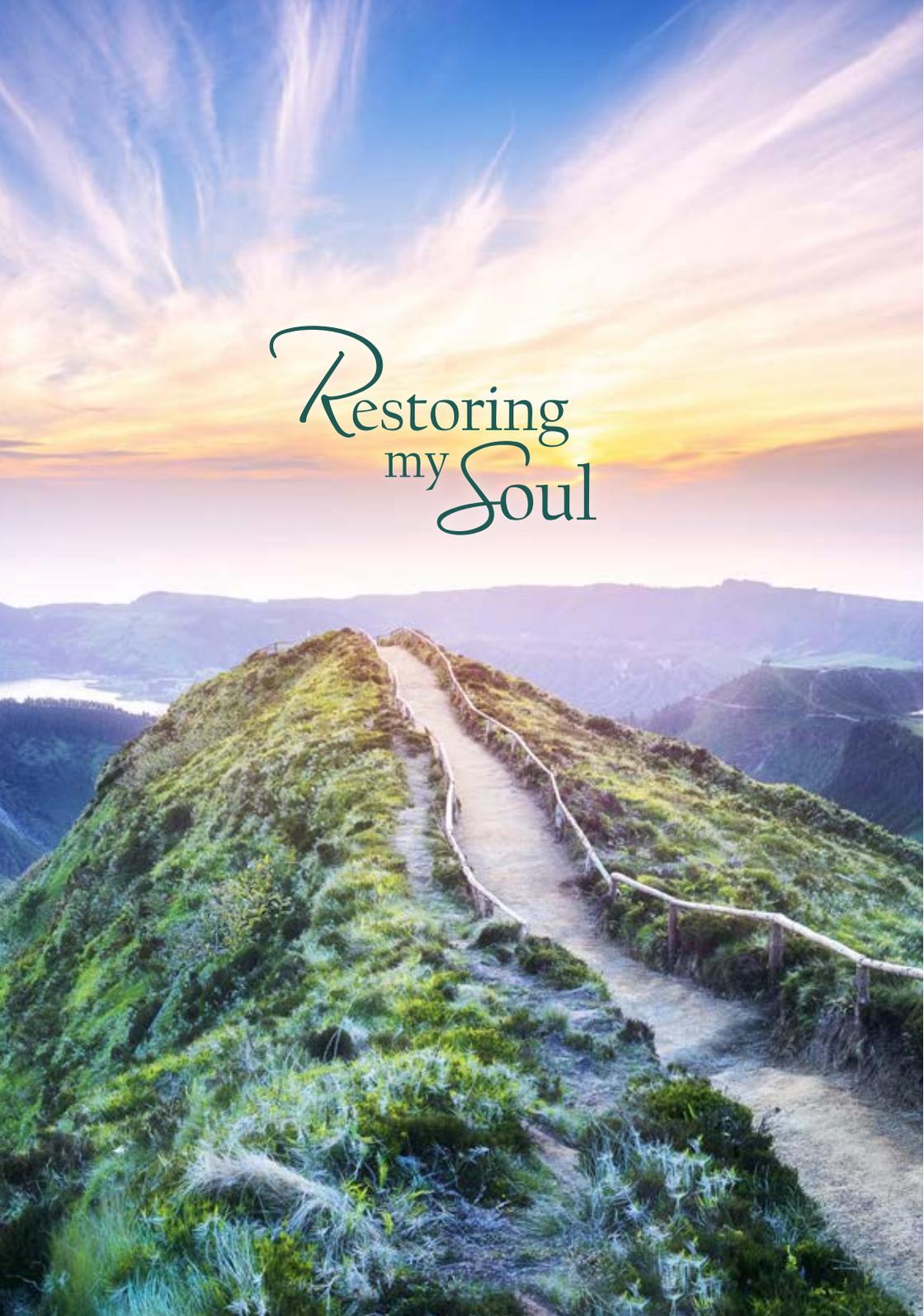
The authority of the King

Rebuking an unclean spirit and commanding it to come out of a person is a kingly action. It addresses the demon's usurpation of the identity of a person through its illegitimate appropriation of authority. The demon has stolen an authority that does not belong to it. It is a thief that comes to steal and misappropriate authority in order to kill and destroy an identity. **Joh 10:10**. However, Jesus came to destroy the power of the devil which is misappropriated through our unbelief. He does this through His death, and by giving to us His resurrection life in the fellowship of His death.

Those who witnessed this miracle 'were all amazed at the majesty of God'. **Luk 9:43**. Christ's majesty was demonstrated through the rebuke of the unclean spirit. However, the rebuke of the demon was the *same* rebuke that Christ directed towards the disciples on account of their faithlessness and deviation from the way of the kingdom. He was addressing the hardness of heart that belongs to rebellion in relation to the word of present truth. **Heb 3:7-8**. Jesus had instructed the disciples in the way of the kingdom, and had revealed the kingdom to Peter, James and John on the mount of transfiguration. It was because of unbelief that the disciples were unable to cast out the unclean spirit.

The Lord's indignation was aroused against the disciples because their unbelief and perversity was impacting the child's predestination coming to pass. The boy's predestination was to be delivered from this oppression in order to join the network of worthy houses that belong to the true Israel of God. Christ, the King, through rebuke, was calling the disciples to faith as believers, so that the authority of His lordship could be properly exercised, and they could rebuke the unclean spirits that ensnared other individuals and houses.

Further reading: Mark 5



Restoring
my Soul