



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

APRIL 2022

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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April 2022

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Illuminated to know

In his letter to the church of Ephesus, the apostle Paul was rejoicing in their faith in the Lord Jesus and in their love for all the saints. **Eph 1:15-16**. Evidently, they had been born of the divine nature, which is love, and were abiding together in Christian community. However, Paul was praying that the Father would enlighten the eyes of their hearts so that they would know and apprehend the full extent of their calling as sons of God. **Eph 1:17-19**. Paul described this fullness as 'the width and length and depth and height' of the love of Christ. **Eph 3:17-19**.

The 'width' and the 'length' of the love of Christ encompasses the reality of our 'human experience' as sons of men on this earth. Solomon explained that the limits, or boundaries, for each person are already known; for these limits have been set by God. **Ecc 6:10. Act 17:26**. He described this as our reality 'under the sun'. **Ecc 1:9**. This includes the abilities, temperament and frailties of our identity, as well as the evil and 'madness' that is in the heart of every person. **Ecc 9:3**.

The 'depth' of the love of Christ describes the endpoint of our iniquity. 'Iniquity' is simply our helpless addiction to going our own way. **Isa 53:6**. And, finally, the 'heights' of the love of Christ describes our calling as sons of God and the culture of fellowship in which we are to abide.

It is important to recognise that the capacity for fellowship is not innate within *any* person. Rather, it needs to be learned from Christ through our participation in a lampstand church. The apostle John described our participation in a lampstand church as 'fellowship with the presbytery'. **1Jn 1:3**. Understanding and participating in the fellowship of the presbytery, as part of a lampstand church, requires *illumination*. This is because it is a spiritual reality, which Jesus describes as 'a mystery'.

Choosing a lampstand church

Jesus said to the apostle John, 'The *mystery* of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the [messengers] of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.' **Rev 1:20**. We can see that the mystery of which Jesus spoke, contains two aspects: 'lampstand churches' to whom Jesus is speaking; and 'star messengers' *through whom* Jesus is speaking.

It is important for each of us to 'take heed' to the things which we have come to know and believe. **1Jn 5:20**. And, in particular, have we *chosen* to be a participant within this lampstand church? Many of us have been 'born into' this church. This reality is on account of the faith of our parents or grandparents, who responded to the call of the Lord to be planted in a specific Christian community where the word of God is being proclaimed. In relation to our own families, many of us can bear witness to the testimony of the generations that went before us, in this manner: 'They may not have exactly known what they were searching for; however, they knew it when they found it!' What they had searched for, and found, was *a lampstand church!*

The administration which Christ established for the fulfilment of the will of God is symbolised in Scripture as seven golden lampstands. **Eph 1:10. Rev 1:20**. A lampstand church comprises many local congregations who are joined in a genuine fellowship of one Spirit. In that sense, a local congregation can never be sufficient by itself; it should always be part of a fellowship of churches.

Having 'come of age', every young person must choose to belong to the lampstand church where *the Father* has planted them. **Isa 61:2-3**. In truth, we cannot choose to plant ourselves in whichever Christian community 'takes our fancy'. As Jesus said, 'Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.' **Mat 15:13**. God the Father places us in the body *where He wishes*. **1Co 12:18**.

Choosing to abide

Speaking about every member of the body of Christ, the apostle Paul declared that 'God has set the members, *each one of them*, in the body just as He pleased'. **1Co 12:18**. However, a further step is required. That is, we need to choose what He has chosen for us. When we believe and obey the word that calls us to abide, the Lord establishes us so that we are like a tree which 'spreads out its roots by the river'. **Jer 17:7 8. Psa 1:3**.

The question we need to answer is, 'Will we choose to abide in this church, when our choice is put under pressure through offence?' Jesus said that offences will most certainly come, but 'blessed is he who is not offended because of Me'. **Luk 17:1. Luk 7:23**. To become offended because our sense of 'right and wrong' is violated, means that we are beginning to stumble because of our iniquity. **Hos 14:1**. The *choice* and accountability to either press in or to draw back is a *personal* one. In this way, Jesus asks every one of us, 'Does this offend you?' 'Do you also want to go away?' **Joh 6:61,67**.

Jesus asked this question of the twelve when many other disciples went back and walked with Him no more. **Joh 6:66-67**. His disciple Peter confessed, by faith, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' **Joh 6:68-69**. Jesus later explained to Peter that this illumination did not come from men but from the Father who is in heaven. **Mat 16:17**. The Father wants to illuminate us concerning the specific context in which Christ is speaking to us. Like Peter, we each need to confess, by faith, that the word of our salvation is found only here, in this lampstand church.

Restored to heavenly places

The ministry of star messengers is depicted in the Scriptures as 'flashes of lightning'. **Deu 33:2**. Each flash of lightning refers to a point of illumination that comes from the word being proclaimed by messengers who are full of the Holy Spirit. **2Pe 1:20-21**. Their message is the gospel of God, declaring the sonship of every believer. We know that this church is a genuine expression of a lampstand, because the word of God the Father is being proclaimed by those who are relationally connected to Christ. **1Th 2:13**.

Jesus called the star messengers of the Ephesian lampstand to remember, by illumination, the heights from which they had fallen. **Rev 2:5**. Helpfully, Christ deals with each presbyter according to His call upon them. As individual presbyters are obedient to repent when confronted by Christ in this way, they are restored to the work appointed to them by Christ. **Mar 13:34**. Having been restored, they establish the fellowship of the presbytery so that all who receive their message can be joined in fellowship with them. **1Jn 1:3**. In this way, the presbytery, or star, is restored to the heavenly places from where they have fallen. **Rev 2:5**.

We need to be obedient to a word, or message, from heaven, that is in the mouth of a presbytery, for that word is necessary for our development as a son of God. **Heb 12:25**. **Heb 13:17**. A presbytery is a fellowship of overseers, elders and deacons whom the Father has called to care for the church. Jesus described them as 'faithful and wise stewards'. **Luk 12:42**. Their foremost role is to proclaim the word of present truth as spiritual nourishment to the church.

Jesus said that, in the season ahead of us, '*false* christs and *false* prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect'. **Mar 13:22**. Indeed, Christ said that we will not find Him in the religious organisations of this world. **Luk 17:22-23**.

Repentance from other modes

As believers receive the word that is proclaimed by God's messengers who are part of a presbytery, the Holy Spirit joins them to *the fellowship of the presbytery*. This fellowship is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. **1Jn 1:3**. Importantly, there can never be any true sonship expression that functions *apart* from this fellowship. That is, we cannot use the word as a personal 'resource' in an attempt to live independently of the *fellowship* from which that word proceeds.

If presbyters are illuminated to the depths of their own iniquity and the heights of their calling as sons of God, and are repenting in submission to Christ, then *will I also obey the call of Christ to repent?* The Lord wants to illuminate all of us regarding how far we have fallen from first love. **Rev 2:4-5**. The single most dangerous issue for our lampstand church is the loss of first love among the presbytery, and among the flock. That is why the Lord calls us to repent quickly.

For us to be joined in first love to the fellowship of the presbytery, we need to be delivered from all alternative modes of relating together. It is important for us to be able to identify the alternative modes from which Christ is calling us to repent.

Jesus explained that it is *what proceeds out of our mouth*, having come from the abundance of our heart, which *makes us unclean*. **Mat 12:34. Mat 15:17-18**. There is a certain mode of conversation that maintains a pedantic 'argument over words' – being concerned over the semantics of what was said and what was not said – and, by this mode of conversation, a person maintains their own right to judge the messenger and to judge their brethren. The Scriptures describe this conversation as 'spreading like gangrene' and causing ones to become oppressed and to stray from the faith. **2Ti 2:16-17. 1Ti 6:20-21**. We are to 'shun' this kind of conversation.

Three generations

It is helpful for us to consider the first three generations of the children of Israel whom the Lord redeemed out of Egypt. Each generation had specific lessons that they needed to learn in order to be overcomers within their generation. Importantly, the things which happened to them have been written in Scripture for the purpose of *our* instruction and learning. **1Co 10:11.**

Each generation among the Lord's people has unique lessons to learn. For example, the younger generation of the children of Israel who were born *in* the promised land, had to learn how to wage war, since they had not encountered the battles which their parents had experienced in the process of possessing that land. As we read, 'This was only so that the generations of the children of Israel might be taught to know war, at least *those who had not formerly known* it.' **Jdg 3:1-2.**

This draws our attention to one fundamental truth which we must be careful not to overlook. That is, each generation must take heed to learn the lessons which *the previous* generations have learned. **Jer 3:8-10.** It is for this reason that each generation is charged to *ask* the generations who have gone before them, concerning the ways of the Lord. The Lord expressed this charge through the prophet Jeremiah, when he said, 'Stand in the ways and see, and *ask* for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.' **Jer 6:16.**

The Scriptures instruct younger ones to ask the older generations concerning the statutes and lessons which the Lord has taught them. They are not to remove the limits learned and set by their fathers. 'Do not remove the ancient landmark [boundary] which your fathers have set.' **Pro 22:28.** The Lord instructs us, in our generation, to 'ask for the ancient paths.' **Jer 6:16.** There is an obligation upon each one to be *asking*; just as much as there is an obligation upon the generation before to be *teaching* them. **Deu 32:7. Deu 4:9.**

The first generation

The first generation died in the wilderness because of their *disobedience and unbelief*. As the apostle Paul stated, 'Those to whom [the gospel] was first preached did not enter because of *disobedience*.' **Heb 4:6**. They did not believe the word of the Lord – even though 'the works were finished from the foundation of the world'! **Heb 4:3**. As a result of their unbelief, they did not enter the promised land, and failed to enter the promised rest.

Paul wrote concerning this generation, '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**.

Clearly, the key lesson for this first generation was *believing and obeying* the word of God. Furthermore, we see that the nature of their *conversation* was an intrinsic part of this fundamental lesson. Instead of joining the conversation of faith which Caleb and Joshua exemplified, having returned from spying out the promised land, this whole generation joined and multiplied *another conversation*. **Num 13:30**. This was a conversation of complaint.

The Scriptures indicate that this complaint occurred within the marriage and family contexts. 'Then they despised the pleasant land; they did not believe His word, *but complained in their tents*, and did not heed the voice of the Lord.' **Psa 106:24 -25**. The Lord heard their complaint and swore an oath that they would not enter the promised land. **Deu 1:34-38**. **Psa 106:26**.

Before coming out of Egypt, the first generation had been instructed by the Lord to teach their children the meaning of the Passover. **Exo 12:26-27**. This was so that their children would know how the Lord had delivered them from the hand of the Egyptians. *This was the conversation which they should have been multiplying*.

The second generation

In the fortieth year of their wanderings in the wilderness, the Lord addressed the grumbling and complaining of the second generation. This was the very issue which had provoked the anger of the Lord towards their parents' generation. Evidently, the Lord intended to purge this mode of conversation from them *before* they could possess the promised land. In response to the second generation's complaint against God and Moses, the Lord sent fiery seraphim among the people, and many died. **Num 21:5-6**. However, for those who looked upon the bronze seraph on the pole, the sanctifying of their conversation became a key cultural foundation within their lives. **Num 21:9**.

Before entering the promised land, the second generation was instructed to diligently teach their children all that the Lord had said to them. **Deu 6:6-7**. Importantly, they were to read the book of Deuteronomy every seven years, so that their children would hear, and would learn to fear the Lord. **Deu 31:10-13**. Furthermore, after they had crossed the Jordan River, they were instructed to teach their children concerning the significance of the stones that had been taken from the middle of the river and been established as a memorial. **Jos 4:5-7**.

After Israel entered the promised land, the Lord gave to them all the land which He had sworn to give to their fathers. **Jos 21:43**. This land was divided as an inheritance among each tribe. **Jos 13:7**. However, as time progressed, they became lukewarm, or half hearted, toward the inheritance they had received. **Rev 3:16**. Joshua said to the tribes who had not fully possessed their allotted portion, 'How long will you *neglect* to go and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers has given you?' **Jos 18:3**. Furthermore, they did not obey the Lord by driving out the inhabitants of the land, but *became yoked to them*. **Jdg 1:27-33**. **Jdg 2:2-3**. The second generation did not fully *possess* the land; nor did they properly *sanctify themselves from* the people of the land.

The third generation

The third generation of the children of Israel failed to enter the rest promised to them, because of *pride and presumption*. In their presumption, they believed, fundamentally, that they were the source of their own abundant provision. Moses said that once they had entered the promised land, they would say in their heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.' **Deu 8:17.** This was an extraordinary presumption among this third generation, considering that they were either too young to fight or had not even been born, at the time when their parents had entered and possessed the land. They literally had done *nothing at all* to receive their provision. It had all been handed to them!

While it is true that their parents *did* possess the land, the inheritance itself was not from their parents' hand either; it was from the Lord. As Moses had stated, 'So it shall be, when the Lord your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant – when you have eaten and are full – *then beware, lest you forget the Lord* who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. You shall fear the Lord your God and serve Him.' **Deu 6:10-13.**

The issue for the third generation was that they did not experience the slavery in Egypt; they did not see the lessons learned in the wilderness; and they were not appreciative of the promised land, but had become presumptuous toward it. Moses commanded the priests and elders of the second generation to read the book of Deuteronomy to their children every seven years, so 'that their children, *who have not known*, may hear and learn to fear the Lord your God.' **Deu 31:10-13.**

Pride in a generation

The Scriptures record that, 'Israel *served the Lord* all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the Lord which He had done for Israel.' **Jos 24:31**. However, after Joshua (first generation) and the elders (second generation) had died, the people (third generation) rebelled, and every person did what was right in their own eyes. **Jos 24:31. Jdg 17:6**. They forsook the Lord God and followed the gods of the people who were around them. **Jdg 2:11-12**.

The apostle Paul addressed the attitude of pride whereby a generation *presumes to be the source* of the word. He said, 'Or did the word of God come originally from you? Or was it you only that it reached?' **1Co 14:36**. 'For what makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed *receive* it, why do you boast as if you had not *received* it? You are already full! You are already rich!' **1Co 4:7-8**.

Most of the generation of young people within the church in our day have not come out of the world; nor have they come out from various religious organisations that were bereft of the present truth word. As such, they have not yet personally *learned* the precious lessons of being restored to a lampstand church. Instead, they have been *born into* a lampstand church and, to a certain extent, are unaware of the great treasure which they have inherited as a gift.

The Lord desires that we take heed to the miraculous provision which we have received. It did not originate from us; nor was it the work of our hands. Importantly, we cannot *presume* to be 'better' and 'more knowledgeable' than the generations that have gone before us. In fact, if we fail to follow their faith, and *fail to learn the lessons which they have learned*, we will make the same mistakes and not obtain the promised rest. **Heb 4:1**.

Grace for friendship

The first point that we need to appreciate regarding the subject of friendship is that *true friendship* is a capacity that is not naturally resident within us. As with every aspect of our culture as sons of God, the fellowship of Yahweh gives to us the grace, or capacity, to be a friend of Yahweh. Abraham was called 'the friend of God' because he believed the word and, through his obedience, his faith was made complete, and he was called 'the friend of God, eternally'. **Jas 2:23. 2Ch 20:7.**

Because of the fall of man in Eden, men, women, children, animals, and vegetation were all subjected to time and chance 'under the sun'. **Ecc 9:11.** The competition for resources for self preservation through 'the other law in our members' means that we are always promoting ourselves and our agenda first, and above our fellow man. **Rom 7:23.** This is not friendship.

Proverbs teaches us that there is a community of 'friendship' that has a happy compatibility. However, the Scriptures continue to instruct us that there is a friendship that is closer than that of a brother. **Pro 18:24.** This is, of course, the friendship of the Father, which we come to know through our obedience to His word proclaimed to us through His Son, Jesus. This word is spoken to us through the headship word of Christ in the presbytery, so that we receive faith and grace to stand on the ground of fellowship. On this ground, we understand our sanctification (name and works) and, therefore, our obedience to the will of the Father proclaimed to us in Christ. Jesus said to us, 'You are My friends if you keep My commands.' **Joh 15:14.**

True friendship comes to us as a capacity, or grace, from the Father as we fellowship in the light of His word.

Grace to the humble

The apostle James declared, 'Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.' **Jas 4:4-7.**

This is a confronting passage of Scripture. It is encouraging, however, to notice that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are interested in being our Friend. Notice that the passage above refers to God (the Father), who resists the proud regarding their friendships; the Holy Spirit who yearns jealously for true and eternal friendship; and the Son, who is the Bridegroom, to Whom we have been unfaithful in our friendships. While this might sound a little negative, remember that this word is intended to 'give grace to the humble'. What kind of grace is this? It is the grace to receive the friendship of God the Father and, therefore, friendship with one another.

The point is this: when, with God's help, we humble ourselves in response to His word of prevenient grace, we are able to receive the faith of His word. His faith coming to us is His friendship, teaching us to mourn and to turn to Him in grace and supplication so that we might obey His word and truly be His friend. **Pro 22:11.** Further to this, we need to receive His faith, and the faith capacity of obedient love, to lay down our life for our friends, esteeming them as our friends, and our brothers and sisters, in Christ. **Joh 15:13.** This might be a new thought for us. Friendship begins with mourning alone in response to the word of the Father! **Zec 12:12.**

The ground of fellowship

When we receive the word of Christ, we are able, by faith, to stand in His grace on the one ground of fellowship and friendship. There is only one friendship that is eternal. It is friendship found in the word of faith obedience on the one ground of fellowship. Remarkably, Abraham was not only declared to be a friend of God, but was proclaimed to be eternally so! **Jas 2:23. 2Ch 20:7. Isa 41:8.**

When we stand on this ground of fellowship, we are able to participate in offering according to our unique sanctification, or name, as a son of God. The evidence of our friendship faith will be obvious as we lay down our life for our friends. **Joh 15:12-16. 1Jn 3:16.** We will always encourage each other into the fellowship of light; and will not foster a friendship that is in darkness. **Pro 12:26.** This kind of friendship can only be a compromise through self seeking idolatry.

So, we understand that the foundation of our friendship with anyone should be the word of the Father, causing us to turn to Him. Every expression or engagement with one another comes from that friendship faith.

From time to time, all of us have complained about the obedience that the word of the Father is asking of us. When we are offended, we need the faithfulness of our friends to speak to us, and perhaps to wound us with 'the goad' of the word of the Father. For instance, they might hear us vocalise our disaffection when we are offended at Christ's obedience. **Luk 7:23.** They are faithful to us when they say, 'Don't speak like that. You are doing yourself an injury. I believe that word, and I am found in that fellowship. Why don't you let that go and come and join in a conversation of faith?' This may cause a wound, but it is the faithful wound of a friend. **Pro 27:6.** A true friend in Christ will speak and testify to the word of the cross, which is a sword.

A portion of the Spirit

The term 'remnant of the Spirit' is introduced to us in the book of Malachi. To us, this term 'remnant' sounds like something that is 'left over'; like the last piece of cake at a birthday party or off cuts from a piece of fabric for a wedding dress. The term can, however, be more simply understood as a 'portion'. We could read Malachi 2:15 like this: 'But did He not make them one, having a portion [remnant] of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth"'

The remnant of the Spirit is an anointing of grace that is specifically tailored to the new name that a couple receives as husband and wife as they finalise their covenant on their wedding day. This is not a one-off transaction. The couple continues to receive the grace that is unique to their marriage covenant as they meet daily with the Lord in the fellowship that belongs to the tree of life. This grace enables them to walk blamelessly, and to bring forth godly seed. Does this mean, then, that single disciples are missing out on something that is necessary for them to walk blamelessly while not married? Certainly not!

It is important to remember that a man and woman should be *individual disciples* before moving into a marriage. The remnant of the Spirit is a unique portion of the divine nature that belongs to a married couple. However, the capacity to walk blamelessly already belongs to a single person when they receive the divine nature and are born of the Spirit. **2Sa 22:24. Job 1:8. 2Pe 1:2-4.** This is a portion of the Spirit. Then, as an individual son of God, they call the name of Yahweh upon themselves in baptism to become a specific member of Christ's body. **Rom 6:4-5.** Furthermore, when they are baptised into the Holy Spirit, they receive another portion of the Spirit, which is the firstfruits of the sevenfold Spirit of Yahweh. **Rom 8:23.**

Walking blamelessly as a disciple

Being born of the Spirit and baptised in the Holy Spirit means that a single disciple has access to the tree of life and is joined to the fellowship of Yahweh by His headship coming to them through the word in the presbytery. This word illuminates their name and works to them so that they understand the culture of circumcision in which they are to walk. **Rom 2:28-29**. They also understand how to turn to the Lord in order to have their other law cut from their heart, through their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

Disciples who desire to walk blamelessly, need to learn how to set their mind on things above and walk in the Spirit. **Col 3:2**. Every son of God has been born again of the Spirit of God. **Joh 3:6**. John further explained that those who are born of God do not sin, because the seed from which a Christian is born remains in them. **1Pe 1:22-23**. This Seed is the Spirit of Christ.

We know that Christ, who dwells in us, does not sin. **1Jn 3:9**. We have received the Spirit of the Son. **Rom 8:15**. **Gal 4:6**. This means that we can know, understand, and receive all of the things that the Father has given to us as His sons and daughters. **1Co 2:12**. This is the knowledge of 'the deep things of God'; the spiritual things. **1Co 2:10,13**. It is the knowledge, life, and fellowship of God Himself – how They live together and make offering to each Other. And this is the model of how we are to live with Him, and together, as the body of Christ.

As we participate in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, we respond to His word by turning to Him in repentance. In faith, we share the testimony of what we have heard and received as His word to us. Learning to walk in this fellowship, which is being established among us by His word, is an essential element of what it means to be blameless.

Heirs together of grace

Through his fellowship with Yahweh, Abraham was trained in the way of faith. Abraham and Sarah received a portion of the Lord's name as a remnant of the divine nature, as an anointing that they did not previously have. Abraham's response of faith established him to walk blamelessly before the Lord. **Gen 15:6.** His response was to accept, receive, and learn his new name.

Further to this, he was to love his wife as Christ loves the church, and to sanctify her to her name, and cleanse her by the washing of the water by the word. **Eph 5:25-26.** It is interesting that the sister verse to this one, noted in the book of Colossians, focuses on the impact of the Fall in a marriage. **Col 3:19.** The desire for verification by a man looking into the face of his wife, causes him to become embittered towards her, and himself, as he despises his own true name and hers.

When Abraham continued to respond in faith, he believed the Lord, who brought fellowship and illumination to him concerning his works. This was, for him, a new culture called 'circumcision'. His works were the works of obedience, defined in his name by the Lord. As he walked in these works, they were accounted to him as righteousness, and he became a friend of God, and the father of all who believe. **Jas 2:23. Rom 4:11.**

Abraham and Sarah's change of name also meant that the nature of their relationship and culture, or conversation, also needed to change. It is helpful to note that this conversation is actually a meeting point in prayer. The evidence that the conversation, or prayer, of a married couple's fellowship with the Lord is not hindered, will be the multiplication of the life of God in their family and in the body of Christ. They will be abounding as 'heirs together of the grace of life'. **1Pe 3:7.** This is the evidence that the remnant of the Spirit has been received in their marriage.

Applying diligence to our faith

We are learning the same culture of faith that Abraham and Sarah learned, when we participate in the same conversation of faith and receive the blessing of Abraham, which is the promise of the Spirit. **Gal 3:13-14**. We are blessed sons of Abraham when we walk by this faith and speak in this same manner. **Gal 3:7,9**.

This conversation of faith joins us to *that* offering fellowship by which Jesus was raised from the dead, and we are raised with Him. **2Co 4:13-14**. This *agape* fellowship is the context for our ongoing conversation, and for the testimony of our conduct, or culture, to be appreciated by others. It is confirmed, or established, by God, so that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord. **1Co 1:4-8**.

Every person, whether single or married, young or old, should understand how to present and invest themselves into the fellowship of the *agape* meal and its word, confession, testimony and ministry, multiplying life. This is what it means to make our '*call and election sure*'. **2Pe 1:10**. Our *diligence* to give attention to the divine nature within us means that, as individuals (even married individuals), we will continue to break open and consume the 'food' of the word in the apostles' teaching, or doctrine; the apostles' fellowship; the breaking of bread; and prayers.

The content of our conduct and conversation as sons of God is our expression through the whole context of our life. It is most important that this is our expression at the *agape* meal, where we receive the messenger word calling us into a fellowship in the light. We are drinking the cup as we believe the word and then testify of the faith that we have received for our unique participation in Christ's offering and sufferings. **Mar 10:38-39**. Further to this, as we gather to hear the word proclaimed by Christ's messengers and receive it from the mouths of our brethren at our fellowship meal, we are eating the bread of Christ's obedience as it is being fed to us by our brethren.

The virtue of Christ

When we present ourselves for participation in the *agape* meal, we believe that the word, and its fellowship, is helping to nurture the divine nature in us. As we learn to encourage others to the testimony of their sonship, we also are building ourselves up 'in our most holy faith'. **Jud 1:20-21.**

We are expressing the *virtue* of Christ when our testimony reflects our joy in receiving the resurrection life of God, even as our suffering exposes us to humiliation caused by others. We rejoice, as we participate in faith, that we have resurrection life to help us to be the son we are called to be. **2Pe 1:2-11.** We can demonstrate the qualities of Christ's sonship in the midst of suffering because we live by 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. **Rom 8:2.**

We are beginning to fulfil the righteousness of God, even as the wickedness of the world is being destroyed in our members. This is the *virtue* of Christ being ministered to us so that we can also be virtuous. **Psa 45:7-8.** Even as wickedness is being circumcised from our hearts, the Holy Spirit is pouring the love of God into our hearts. We are being strengthened through this offering, which multiplies His strength in us, as we receive the joy of the Lord. **Neh 8:10. Jas 1:2.** These tribulations test our faith and multiply, or produce, endurance within us, because offering transfer is at work. **Psa 133:1-3.**

As we give ourselves to the *agape* meal, we can further testify to the *knowledge* of the obedience that we are learning as we follow Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. We learn and testify of our illumination and the conviction of faith that we are receiving as a son of God. His obedience becomes our obedience because He has walked this way before us. **Isa 26:12.** Christ learned the obedience of His, and our, sonship, through suffering. We add this knowledge of obedience to the virtue that we have received.

The multiplication of virtues

Looking further at our commitment to the *agape* meal, we should note that, during our conversations, we need to exercise *self-control* and *perseverance*. **Rom 5:3-4**. 'Self control' means that we accept who we are as a son of God. We are learning our sanctification (name and works) and, more importantly, we can worship in the fellowship of prayer that is the *agape* meal and, thus, appreciate the sanctification of another person. Our commitment to fellowship means that we would not violate the sanctification of another person for our own gain or promotion. We are learning to carry the accountability of relationship (even when it is hard), and to encourage others so that our 'knees' are strengthened, and we are not turned aside from fellowship. **Isa 35:3**.

Our conversation and conduct at an *agape* meal will demonstrate *godliness*. This is the culture of God's house. A godly person is a firstfruits person, and their family will be a firstfruits family. **1Co 16:15**. The way in which they live will reveal the life and culture of God Himself. **1 Co 11:1**. Through offering, they can multiply the life of God to others. Because they are godly sons of God, brotherly *kindness* is multiplying in their relationships at the *agape* meal as they understand how to reveal others. They are less focused on revealing themselves, their own name and works and, instead, are giving their life in order to foster, and promote, the sanctification of their brethren. This is what it means to be 'spiritual'. **Gal 6:1**. Sanctification in the fear of the Lord is the source of our friendship in the body of Christ.

When we add *love* to brotherly kindness, we realise that God's eternal purpose is that many sons would come to know His love. Through the Eternal Covenant of God, many sons have, and will, become established in the love of God. They will know God, who is love and, therefore, they will know themselves in relation to Him. They will be established in the love and righteousness of God and can love their neighbour as themselves. **2Co 5:21**.

Having root in ourselves

The psalmist proclaimed, 'The righteous man will flourish like the palm tree, he will grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Planted in the house of the LORD, they will flourish in the courts of our God.' **Psa 92:12-13**. Bearing fruit in the body of Christ is the evidence that we have been born again. It demonstrates that we have, what Jesus called, 'root in [our]selves'. **Mat 13:20-21**. 'Having root in ourselves' means that we do not draw back under the pressure of affliction. We understand that the Father disciplines us and, as we remain joined in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are trained by this discipline. As a result, we bear the 'peaceable fruit of righteousness'. **Heb 12:11**. Having root in ourselves and bearing the fruit of righteousness are essential for us to be able to truly meet another person in the body of Christ. **Pro 12:12**.

An aspect of this fruit is 'the fruit of our lips'. We testify of the goodness of the Lord and the illumination that He has brought to our heart. A fundamental testimony, which must belong to every son of God, is our joy in meeting the Lord to have our iniquity taken away. The testimony of Isaiah is most instructive on what this looks like. He declared, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips.' **Isa 6:5**.

We must allow the words of Isaiah to sink in. When he said that he had 'unclean lips', he didn't mean that he was given to swearing or to the occasional inappropriate outburst. He meant that the motivation, tone and content of his speech was corrupt because it was sourced from his iniquity. We know this is the case, because the seraph who ministered to him declared afterwards that he had touched Isaiah's lips with a coal from the altar: 'Behold, this has touched your lips; and *your iniquity is taken away* and your sin is forgiven.' **Isa 6:6**.

I am a man of unclean lips

The prophet Isaiah's cry reveals some vital points of spiritual self understanding. His cry reveals that Isaiah had understood the *depths* of his iniquity. These depths are not simply something like, 'I know that my heart is wicked' or 'I know I could be really bad'. When we see the depths, we see the horror of our other law's self determination to govern our actions, and we see that this iniquitous way of living *permeates everything that we say and do*.

That is why Isaiah was undone. He saw the depths, or the reach, of his iniquity. His iniquity ran through all of his attempts to be obedient, and it drove the way he spoke to other people about himself and the word of God. By illumination, he saw that he could not continue to speak with unclean lips, even about the fact that he had unclean lips! He could only cry out in poverty of spirit – as a man undone and unable to bridge the gap between himself and God - for the grace and mercy of God. This is much like the assembled Jews, who heard Peter's Pentecost sermon, and cried out saying, 'Men and brethren, what must we do to be saved?' **Act 2:37**.

Isaiah could only continue to look at the Lord and wait for the ministry of His deliverance. This was a fiery ordeal. The same can be said for the apostle Peter, whose deliverance, also, came as he held the gaze of Jesus in the court of Caiaphas and received the ministry of His eyes as a flame of fire. **Luk 22:61-62**.

Our point here is that a person, who has met the Lord in this way, has learned to mourn their iniquity. **Mat 5:4**. This makes them a person who has understanding. **Pro 15:32**. They have understood who God is, because they have seen Him in the heights of His glory; and they understand themselves, having been illuminated to the wretchedness of their iniquity. **Rom 7:24**. They testify that they have looked upon Christ, and mourned for having been a transgressor who laid Christ's seven wounds upon Him.

Meeting around a projection

King Saul harboured a deep desire to be ‘numbered among the prophets’. He was not content to have the crown of Israel; he also coveted a prophetic ministry. **1Sa 10:11**. In other words, he did not accept his naming by the Father. When Saul was instructed by the Lord to wipe out the Amalekites, he reinterpreted what the obedience of this word looked like. He obeyed his own iniquitous interpretation of the word. **1Sa 15:20-21**. He fell for the temptation of Satan, who constantly asks, ‘Did God really say that?’ **Gen 3:1**.

Saul believed in the image of his projection. As a result, when he returned in triumph from defeating the Amalekites, he expected the prophet Samuel to receive him as a hero. Instead, Samuel castigated him for his disobedience. Saul’s response revealed his lack of accountability. He said, ‘I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the Lord and your words, *because I feared the people and listened to their voice*. Now therefore, please pardon my sin and return with me, that I may worship the Lord.’ **1Sa 15:24-26**.

Three things stand out here. First, Saul agreed with Samuel superficially, but only after being caught out. The second thing was that he blamed the people for his disobedience in an attempt to avoid accountability for his iniquity. Third, he attempted to tie Samuel to his iniquity by helping him to save face in front of the people.

We can draw three conclusions from this. First, we are not to self-righteously agree with the word. Agreement is not enough. Our works are to believe the word; and the evidence of our belief is that we obey the word. **Joh 3:36**. Any deviation from simple faith obedience only indicates that we still harbour an iniquitous agenda. Second, when our iniquity is exposed, we must be accountable. We are without excuse. **Rom 1:20**. Third, we must not bring another agenda into our conversation. **Jud 1:16**. This will make our lips unclean, causing us to hide our idolatry (which is our iniquity) from others in our attempt to achieve the fallen motive of our heart.

A testimony of turning

King David sinned greatly when he took Uriah the Hittite's wife and then had Uriah killed in battle. **2Sa 11:17. 2Sa 11:26-27.** However, when the prophet Nathan confronted him about his sin, David was able to receive the word of the prophet and to enter a process of recovery. Let's note the difference between his simple response to the rebuke of the prophet and to Saul's ducking and weaving. David simply said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord!' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die.' **2Sa 12:13.**

We see here that, even though David's sin seemed much more serious, the Lord was concerned with laying hold of David by the heart. David genuinely did not see his problem until it was exposed. **2Sa 12:5-7.** He received Nathan's rebuke immediately, and made no attempt to excuse himself. Nor did he draw back from the engagement with the prophet. He met the word that identified his sin and began to mourn his transgression.

The words of one of his most well known psalms reflects this process. 'Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me. Behold, You desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part You will make me know wisdom.' **Psa 51:5-6.**

David recognised his iniquity. However, he equally recognised that the Lord was placing 'truth' within him. Every son of God must be able to testify that their iniquity has been exposed to the light, and that the Lord has replaced the lie of Satan – which causes us to project a name for ourselves – with the truth of our name from the Father.

When the truth of our name is deposited within us, we can have fellowship with one another. This is because what is true in the Lord is now true in us. The apostle John tells us that this is the evidence that 'the darkness is passing away, and the true light is shining'. **1Jn 2:8.** This is the evidence that we have root within ourselves.

Rooted and grounded in love

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul referred to being 'rooted and grounded in love'. **Eph 3:14-19**. This describes a whole culture of meeting. It is the culture which nourishes Christian friendship and fellowship in the whole body of Christ. It is, therefore, the culture which must be yours if you seek godly marriage. There is only one ground for a couple to meet: each one must be planted in the same good soil which brings forth fruit. **Mar 4:20**.

When we are rooted and grounded in love, offering is our way of life. We are the aroma of life to another. **2Co 2:15-16**. The aroma of life is the fragrance of obedience. That is another way of saying that meeting is based in offering. If we present ourselves to each other on any other basis, we will be relationally dishonest.

When each one is living in the culture of 'purifying [our]selves for a sincere love of the brethren', we find that we can join in one mind and heart together. We see this in the life of the early church. **1Pe 1:22-23**. In receiving the word together wholeheartedly, their *agape* meal became a context of sincere – that is, genuine – connection and fellowship. The book of Acts records that 'day by day, continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart'. **Act 2:46-47**.

This is a picture of true meeting in the body of Christ. The tone of their fellowship was marked by two qualities: gladness and sincerity. A glad heart is a merry and thankful heart. It works as a medicine upon its bearer and upon those touched by it in fellowship. **Pro 17:22**. A sincere heart is motivated by the love of God and relates only in the truth. These two qualities describe walking in the light of fellowship. **1Jn 1:7**. It is through walking in the light that we understand our way 'together with all the saints'. **Eph 3:17-19**.

Honour and fear in fellowship

The Lord God declared through the prophet Malachi, 'A son honours his father and a servant his lord. Then if I am a father, where is My honour? And if I am a lord [master] where is My respect [fear]?' **Mal 1:6.**

A person can be glad and sincere with their brethren because they are meeting the Lord personally in honour and fear. This is a person who is bringing an offering that is pleasing to the Lord. **1Pe 2:4-5.** This offering is a spiritual offering, which means that it is an offering of what the Lord has given. He has given us His life, and we offer our whole life back to Him. **Rom 12:1.**

Honour comes from the Father. We honour the Father's name in prayer, having regard for the offering of His Son in the sanctification of the Holy Spirit. We honour the Lord when we bring Him 'the first' of what He has given to us, acknowledging that it belongs to Him. **Exo 34:19.** The Father is honoured as we bring the firstfruits of the Spirit that He has given to us. **Rom 8:23.** In so doing, we learn to honour ourselves. A man who is receiving honour from the Lord can consider taking a wife 'in sanctification and honour'. **1Th 4:4.**

A person walking in the fear of the Lord is obtaining wisdom. **Job 28:28.** They also clothe themselves with the demeanour of one who is walking soberly with respect to the matters of life. This is in contrast with a person who is either reckless or naïve. A person walking in the fear of the Lord has been disciplined in the way of the cross and trembles at the word of the Lord. **Isa 66:2.** They are in no way presumptuous about the word of God, other people, or their own obedience. They are able to mature, and to meet their brethren without feeling threatened in any way.



Restoring
my Soul