



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

MAY 2022

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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'I AM' is coming quickly

In the concluding chapter of the book of Revelation, Jesus declared, 'Behold, I am *coming quickly!* Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.' **Rev 22:7**. He further declared, 'And behold, I am *coming quickly*, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work. I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.' **Rev 22:12-13**.

Jesus made this statement as 'I AM', indicating that what He was saying applied equally to the past, to the present, and to things that were to take place in the future. **Rev 1:8**. In other words, Christ comes to His people this way, in every generation. He comes quickly to give to each one according to their works. Those who keep the words written in His book are blessed in Him as they obtain the inheritance of their sonship; those who do not, are condemned.

When Jesus comes *quickly*, He comes *suddenly*, and at an hour when He is not expected. We note, for example, that Jesus comes to the overseers of His house – those whose work it is to give His household food in due season – on a day when they are not looking for Him, and at an hour of which they are not aware, when they begin to beat their fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunkards. He rewards them for their carnal ministry and corruption by cutting them in two and appointing them their 'portion with the hypocrites.' **Mat 24:45-51**.

Having communicated Christ's directives to the church, the apostle John then said, 'Blessed are those who do His commandments, *that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city*. But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practises a lie.' **Rev 22:14-15**.

The gospel proclaimed

A foundational point for us to recognise is that the book of Revelation is the gospel that Christ, by the Spirit, is proclaiming to every church, for the whole church age. It is calling every person to enter the gates of the city and to partake of the tree of life, which provides them with the food of their eternal sonship.

Rev 22:14. To enter and remain in the heavenly city, we must *heed* what the Spirit is saying to the seven churches, *turn in repentance* to overcome our fallen practices and proclivities, and walk in obedience to Christ's commands. **Rev 2:16-17.**

The apostle John warned all believers, 'If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.' **Rev 22:18-19.** John was referring to the bride city that was established on the day of Christ's crucifixion, which was first manifest as 'the New Jerusalem' coming down out of heaven, on the Day of Pentecost. He was speaking to every generation of the church.

We recognise that John was referring to the church in this age, because he distinguished between those who were in the city, and the dogs, sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters and liars who were outside of the city. **Rev 22:14-15.** In the new heavens and earth, those who are not part of the bride company will not be living outside the gates of the city; they will have been taken away and forgotten in the lake of fire. **Rev 21:7-8.** Further illustrating that John was referring to the church in this age, Paul said that we have *already* 'come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.' **Heb 12:22-23.**

The invitation to come

Jesus Christ's personal admonition to each presbytery will be relevant and applicable for all lampstand churches. However, each admonition will be particularly pertinent to certain churches, depending on their situation. For example, there are some churches who are experiencing severe political persecution, for whom Christ's letter to Smyrna is especially relevant. Jesus said to them, 'I know your works, tribulation, and poverty (but you are rich) ... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.' **Rev 2:9-10**. He is saying this to those who are suffering in a similar manner, today.

Other churches may be beset by alternative doctrines that promote sacramentalism and undermine their access to the *agape* fellowship at the tree of life. To these churches, He is specifically saying, 'I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. ... Repent [of encompassing these alternative doctrines], or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.' **Rev 2:13,16**.

There are no other gospels, or religious practices, by which we can obtain the promises that Christ outlined to the churches. **Gal 1:6-8**. This is why John was so strong, warning that God would add plagues to those who add to the content of the book of Revelation; and would remove from the Book of Life, and from the heavenly Jerusalem, those who take words from the book. **Rev 22:18-19**.

As we receive and respond to the call to 'Come', we will be able to proclaim this invitation to others. We recognise the urgency in the Spirit to hear and respond to this word of restoration, for the time is short and the end fast approaches. **1Co 7:29**.

The right to eat

In the book of Revelation, John declared that those who are in the city have the *right* to the tree of life and to enter through the gates of the city. **Rev 22:14**. John also referred to this 'right' in the opening statements of his Gospel, writing, 'But as many as received Him, to them He gave *the right to become children of God*, to those who *believe* in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God'. **Joh 1:12-13**.

The tree of life is in the midst of the New Jerusalem. It is the centrepiece of the *agape* meal, and its fruit is the bread from heaven. The right to eat from the tree of life in the heavenly Jerusalem is the right to live as a son of God.

Jesus wrote to the church of Ephesus, saying to those who repent and return to the fellowship of first love, 'I will *give to eat from the tree of life*, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God'. **Rev 2:7**. Furthermore, to those who overcame the synagogue of Satan, the doctrine of Balaam and the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, He promised, 'I will give some of the *hidden manna to eat*. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no-one knows except him who receives it'. **Rev 2:17**.

John warned that whoever takes anything away from the prophecy contained in the book of Revelation, the Father will take away their part from 'the Book of Life', from 'the holy city', and from the things written in the book. **Rev 22:19**. Significantly, the term '*Book of Life*', in which our names as sons of God are recorded, can equally be translated '*tree of life*'. This point provides us with insight as to how we eat of the tree of life, and its implications for our sonship now, and in the age to come.

Names in the tree of life

The papyrus of the Book of Life, in which are written the names of the sons of God, is taken from the inner rind of the trunk of the tree of life. Importantly, the names recorded in the Book of Life are not simply identifiers. Each name is the substance of one's sonship. This *substance*, which is necessary for one's expression as a son of God, is fed to them through the fruit of the tree of life, which Jesus described as 'the hidden manna', or 'bread from heaven'. **Rev 2:17**.

The Father is the source of this substance, and it is fed to us from the mouth of Christ, who is the Bread of Life. **Joh 6:48**. It is the fruit of His lips. Jesus Himself testified that 'man shall not live by bread alone, but by *every word that proceeds from the mouth of God*.' **Mat 4:4**. He also declared, 'The *words that I speak to you are Spirit, and they are life*.' This 'Spirit and life' is ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. **Joh 6:63**.

The name of every son of God was a seed of identity that was given to Yahweh the Son when He was *begotten* by the word of the Father, before. **Heb 1:5**. When He was begotten as the Son of God, we were begotten as sons of God, in Him, and our names were written in the Book of Life.

The identities of all the sons and daughters of men were passed on to Adam in a *creative* action, when the Son of God breathed into man 'the breath of lives', and he became a living soul. **Gen 2:7**. This was not a 'begetting' initiative, but a 'creative' initiative. While the identities were given to Adam, which would be brought into being through a *procreative* action, the name and works of each identity were in the tree of life.

Grace from the tree of life

The sonship expression of every person will, forever, be dependent upon an ongoing fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. Even when the name of a son of God has been written on their heart and forehead through new birth, they continue to receive grace for the expression of their sonship through their ongoing participation in the *agape* meal at the tree of life. **2Co 9:8**.

Once created as a living soul, Adam had identity, but did not yet possess his name as a son of God. It was not yet written upon him. *Through adoption*, Adam had access to the works that belonged to his name, and he obtained grace to fulfil these works as he fellowshiped with Yahweh, each day, at the tree of life. **Gen 3:8**. He was to continue to live and work from the basis of this fellowship as an adopted son, until the name that was written, as in a scroll upon the bark of the tree of life, was written in his heart and mind by new birth. **Gen 2:15**. His expression as a son of God would continue to be fed to him from the tree of life in the fellowship of Yahweh, forever.

It is important to recognise that while the fruit of the tree of life was given to Adam to be the food that enabled the exercise of his dominion over the creation, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil belongs *only* to Yahweh *Elohim*. **Gen 2:16-17**. Yahweh Father, Son and Holy Spirit are the sum of all diversity; the sum of everything that could ever be expressed. They, alone, are the origin of all things. **Gen 1:1. Isa 40:26**. The creative initiative of God from this fellowship is symbolised by the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam had no right to this tree because he was not the origin of anything; nor was he predestined to be a creator.

Created for fellowship

Adam was created for the purpose of *fellowship with Yahweh*, through which life would be multiplied, by offering, to the creation over which he had been given dominion. **1Jn 1:3. 1Co 1:9.** Participation in this expression of Yahweh's Everlasting Covenant initiative is symbolised by the tree of life.

When Jesus Christ was lifted up on the cross, He was the sum of both trees. In the course of His redemptive journey from Gethsemane to the cross, Jesus was bringing the old creation to an end under the judgement of God, and He was establishing a new heavens and earth. **Isa 65:17-18.** He was also multiplying His life so that it would become the new creation life that belongs to the sons of God, which is the divine nature. **2Pe 1:3-4.** Through this work, which culminated on the cross, we see the two aspects of Yahweh's Everlasting Covenant initiative – *creation* and the *multiplication* of life through offering.

Speaking of this fullness, which Christ embodied, the apostle John wrote, 'And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth'. **Joh 1:14.** John then explained, 'And of His fullness we have all *received*, and grace for grace'. **Joh 1:16.** We *receive* of this fullness through fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings as we eat and drink of the tree of life. However, we never become the source, or origin, of this life. Inherent in our creation, and essential to our predestination as sons of God, is fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. We will, forever, live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God in the *agape* meal. **Deu 8:3.** God's word will always provide us with the grace of life that is necessary to fulfil the works that belong to our name as a son of God.

Connection to our name

Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, presuming that he could exercise dominion over the creation apart from fellowship with Yahweh. That is, he did not recognise, or believe, that the expression of his identity was dependent upon connection to the fellowship of Yahweh. When Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he was disconnected from the tree of life, in which resided the substance of his name. His eyes were opened, and he knew that he was naked. **Gen 3:7**. Adam's nakedness meant that he had no capacity within himself for the exercise, or expression, of dominion. Disconnected from his name, Adam's only alternative was to craft and project a name for himself. He did this, figuratively, by sewing fig leaves together as a covering to conceal his nakedness. **Gen 3:7**.

Adam and Eve were restored to the adoption through the offering of the Lamb of God, before they were sent from the garden. This restoration was signified by the sacrifice of an animal to atone for their sin and to clothe them with garments for the works that they were now to fulfil in obedience to God's word. **Gen 3:21-24**. Adam's predestination as a son of God could now be obtained *only* through participation in the offering of Christ as he made offering each day at the gate of Eden.

Adam was the first man; Noah was the second Adam; and Christ is 'the last Adam'. **1Co 15:45**. The seed of identities that was given to Adam, which was lost when he disobeyed God's word, was *reclaimed in Abraham* and passed on to Christ, the last Adam. Christ did not come down from heaven as a new humanity, apart from man. The word became flesh in Christ through Abraham and David, in the womb of Mary, as an *incarnation*. **Joh 1:14**. The DNA of His body is from Abraham. **Mat 1:1**. Now, in the resurrection, the spiritual body of every son of God is from Abraham, through Christ.

Obtaining the promise

Until the Son of God became flesh, died on the cross, and rose again, a believer could only meet their name as *an adoption*. They received faith by hearing the word of God, by believing in God, and diligently seeking Him. **Heb 11:6**. Their name, or the substance of their sonship, was in the tree of life in the midst of the heavenly city. Although they did not possess their name, *they saw the city from afar*. **Heb 11:9-10, 13**. They did the works of their sonship, because the faith that they received in the word of God was the substance of this inheritance, for which they hoped. **Heb 11:1**. They lived by faith as strangers and pilgrims on this earth, considering themselves to be citizens of the heavenly city, which God had prepared for them. **Heb 11:13-16**.

In the New Covenant, a believer can now obtain the promise of sonship. On the first evening, following His resurrection, Christ appeared to the disciples in the upper room. He breathed on them and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit.' **Joh 20:22**. Through the action of breathing on them, the disciples were strengthened in the inner man so that Christ could dwell in their hearts through faith. **Eph 3:16-17**. By receiving the Holy Spirit, Christ, the Seed, was able to germinate in their hearts and they were *born of God's life*. **Gal 3:16**. Through new birth, their name as a son of God was written in their heart and on their forehead.

When a person's name is written in their heart and on their forehead, the word of their testimony is from the tree of life. This testimony is fundamental to overcoming Satan, and to obtaining one's salvation as a citizen of the kingdom of God. **Rev 12:10-11**. We note that they 'overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death'. **Rev 12:11**. We have this testimony, and overcome Satan, only as we continue to eat from the tree of life.

Abiding in fellowship

The parable of the sower and the seed teaches us that unless a son of God is baptised into Christ and they continue to live in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, they will lose their sonship. They will have no root in themselves, and will endure only for a while. When tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, they stumble and fall away. **Mat 13:20-21.**

Those who are baptised into Christ's body, the church, have obtained entrance to the bride city, the heavenly Jerusalem. **Eph 5:23.** Unlike the Old Covenant believers who saw the heavenly city from afar, they have come into the heavenly Jerusalem, which Paul described as 'the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven'. **Heb 12:22-23.** Their name as a son of God, which is written in the Book of Life, has been written upon their heart and forehead. However, unless they continue to eat the fruit of the tree of life, which provides the energy for the works that belong to their sonship, they will die again.

The Spirit, through whom the seed of sonship germinates in a believer's heart, enables a person to be baptised by one Spirit into Christ's body, where they are set by the Father according to His good pleasure. **1Co 12:13,18.** The access of a son of God to the tree of life, which is the source of food for the *agape* meal, is contingent upon their connection to this fellowship.

The key point is that unless a son of God continues to eat the fruit of the tree of life, their sonship will die. Saying it another way, a person's sonship depends upon eating the fruit of the tree of life at the *agape* meal. They do this by receiving the word proclaimed from the presbytery, and by participating in their fellowship, which is the fellowship of Yahweh. **1Jn 1:1-3.**

Rejecting the great feast

A believer is rejecting the *agape* meal, as the ongoing source of their expression as a son of God, when they seek to validate their identity through any means other than obedience to God's word in the fellowship of Yahweh. This principle was exemplified in Jesus' parable of the great feast. He identified various people who did not partake of the supper because they were pursuing identity verification elsewhere.

Jesus said, 'They all with one accord began to make excuses. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of ground, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused." Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."' **Luk 14:18-20**. He described these ones as 'not worthy'. **Mat 22:8**.

The excuses that were given by those who disregarded the great *agape* feast, prepared by the Father, need to be considered and applied in many situations. **Heb 11:24-26**. As one example, it is helpful to recognise that the implications of 'marrying a wife' are not limited to the confounding effects of a fallen marriage culture on one's connection to the *agape* meal. It also includes young people who forsake the communion in pursuit of romantic attachments outside the church communities in which the Father has placed them.

Driven by lust, and emboldened by alternative 'gospels', these young people relinquish their eternal inheritance for the passing pleasure of a carnal liaison. **Isa 47:8-9**. They are spiritually short-sighted, and are unable to perceive the true romance that belongs to marriage in the image and likeness of God. The apostle Paul warned of this wantonness, writing, 'But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Christ, they desire to marry, having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith'. **1Ti 5:11-12**.

The fruit of the Spirit

The fruit of the tree of life is the energy for the expression of our name as a son of God. The Father is the source of our name and works as a son of God. Our name is written in Christ, who gives to us the substance of our sonship through His word. This food is fed to us by the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who gives life. **Joh 6:63. 2Co 3:5-6.**

The apostle John observed that the tree of life in the New Jerusalem, which was coming down out of heaven, *yielded twelve fruits every month*. The leaves of the tree of life were for the healing of the nations. **Rev 22:2.** Significantly, these fruits are the divine nature, given by the Spirit. **2Pe 1:3-4.**

The apostle Peter specifically identified eight aspects of the divine nature that belong to a son of God, in Christ – faith; virtue; knowledge; self-control; perseverance; godliness; brotherly kindness; and love. **2Pe 1:4-8.** He said that we are to give diligence to adding to, or multiplying, these qualities, indicating that a son of God already possesses the divine nature, albeit in a ‘seed’ measure. Paul described such diligence as ‘working out our own salvation with fear and trembling’, saying, ‘For it is *God who works in you* both to will and to do for His good pleasure.’ **Php 2:12-13.** Peter explained that if these qualities are ours and abound, it is the evidence that we are ‘partakers of the divine nature.’ **2Pe 1:4,8.**

Similarly, the apostle Paul identified nine fruits of the Spirit that are exhibited by those who walk according to the Spirit – love; joy; peace; longsuffering; kindness; goodness; faithfulness; gentleness; and self-control. **Gal 5:22-25.** He said that these fruits belong to those who are Christ’s and who have crucified the flesh, with its passions and desires. That is, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings.

Twelve fruits

The apostle Peter identified eight aspects of the divine nature that belong to sons of God who are participating in the fellowship of Christ's offering. **2Pe 1:4-8**. Similarly, the apostle Paul identified nine fruits of the Spirit that are exhibited by those who walk according to the Spirit. **Gal 5:22-25**. When *considered together*, Peter and Paul nominated twelve fruits of the Spirit, which are the divine nature: (1) faith, or faithfulness; (2) virtue; (3) knowledge; (4) self-control; (5) perseverance, or longsuffering; (6) godliness; (7) brotherly kindness; (8) love; (9) joy; (10) peace; (11) goodness; and (12) gentleness.

These twelve fruits are not simply general qualities that are expressed by a son of God. Rather, the Spirit feeds them to a believer as the food that is 'convenient', or necessary, for the expression of their name and works as a son of God in every context of life. **Pro 30:8**. They are tailored to each person's unique pathway of sonship, so that they can overcome Satan and walk blamelessly in the circumstances of life that are particular to them – be it a difficult marriage; a contrary political or social environment; a challenging work situation. With this understanding, we see that one person may require more knowledge for the expression of sonship in their unique context, while another may need peace.

Jesus spoke of this unique work of the Holy Spirit, saying, 'Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.' **Luk 12:11-12**. In these instances, the fruit that the Spirit feeds to us becomes the fruit of our lips as the expression of our sonship. The evidence that we are eating from the tree of life is that these qualities of the divine nature are being increasingly expressed by the Spirit within us, as we fulfil the works that belong to our sonship in Christ.

An entrance into the everlasting kingdom

The food that we are eating at the tree of life will be revealed through *our speech and conduct* as we fellowship each day in Christ's offering and sufferings. We are being delivered from our carnality and are growing up in our sonship. Describing this reality, the apostle Paul said, 'Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' **Heb 13:15-16**. We see that 'freewill' offering, as an expression of thanksgiving, is the evidence of a person's fellowship in the *agape* meal at the tree of life. It is the mark of those who are spiritual.

Alternatively, a person who is choosing to walk according to the flesh, rather than according to the Spirit in Christ, will be in bondage to the deeds of the flesh. Paul said these are evident: 'Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.' **Gal 5:19-21**. Those who practise these things will not inherit the kingdom of God, because they are already outside of the heavenly Jerusalem, as the sorcerers, sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, etc. **Rev 22:15**.

Notably, Peter said that if these fruits of the Spirit are ours and are being multiplied in us, and from us, through offering, an entrance will be supplied to us into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. **2Pe 1:8-11**. In other words, it indicates that we are entering through the gates into the heavenly city, where the tree of life is planted. It also means that we will be assured of our eternal fellowship with Yahweh, as part of the bride city in the new heavens and earth, once our mortal life expires and we fall asleep in Christ.

Wisdom is a tree of life

In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul distinguished between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God, which is fed to a person as fruit from the tree of life. Summarising the wisdom of this world, Paul asked, 'Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer [debater] of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?' **1Co 1:20**. The wisdom of the world is demonstrated by those who presume to have wisdom in themselves; by those whose qualification to teach others is based on their accumulation of knowledge; and by those who debate others to establish a point of 'truth'.

In contrast, Paul was clear that the wisdom of God does not originate in anyone, but is *received* when a person receives the message of the cross, preached by messengers who are *speaking in Christ*. **1Co 1:18,21. 1Co 2:2-5. 2Co 12:19**. By receiving this message, a hearer receives the wisdom of God as the fruit of the tree of life. In doing so, they exemplify the principle described by King Solomon, who said that wisdom 'is a tree of life to those who take hold of her'. **Pro 3:18**.

Through His offering journey, which culminated in Jesus Christ being lifted up on 'a tree', He '*became for us* wisdom from God – and righteousness and sanctification and redemption'. **1Co 1:30**. That is, Christ was revealed as the Tree of Life through His offering on the cross. Christ ministers to us the fruit that belongs to this tree, which is His body and blood, by the preaching of His word. This fruit is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, to those who receive it.

The wisdom from above

Our name and works as sons of God are in the tree of life. Through the word of the cross, Christ ministers to us the wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption that is necessary for our expression as sons of God. Paul described this expression as 'glorying in the Lord'. **1Co 1:30-31.**

Christ's messengers do not feed the fruit of the tree of life, which is the bread of heaven, to their hearers, by preaching with persuasive words of human wisdom. Rather, they, in Christ, demonstrate the Spirit and power of God as they maintain their fellowship in His offering and sufferings. **1Co 2:4-5.** Paul noted that, from this fellowship, they speak 'hidden wisdom' *among* those who are mature. The 'hidden wisdom' is the 'hidden manna' that belongs to those who have overcome the synagogue of Satan and their 'leavenous' doctrines in the church. **1Co 2:6-7. Rev 2:13-17.**

The divine nature, expressed as twelve fruits of the Spirit, is the *fruit* of the tree of life. How is it, also, wisdom, establishing righteousness, sanctification and redemption? Helpfully, the apostle James explained this point, writing, 'But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.' **Jas 3:17-18.**

The wisdom from above is, first, pure, because it is the word of Christ that proceeds from His finished offering, through the ministry of a presbytery fellowship that has been restored to His hand. **1Jn 1:1-3. Rev 1:20.** This is 'fellowship in the light', where the blood of Christ is active to cleanse and purify from sin, those who abide in this fellowship. **1Jn 1:3,7.** The word of the cross, which is 'the wisdom from above', ministers the fruits of the Spirit to those who hear and receive it, and walk in its light. As James noted, the word is 'peaceable, gentle and full of good fruits'. **Jas 3:17.**

The fruit of light

Paul explained that the fruit of light, which is the word, is the fruit of the Spirit. He exhorted us, saying, 'Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit [equally, light] is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord.' **Eph 5:8-10**. A son of God does not presume to express their name apart from fellowship in the light. Rather, they are 'finding out' what are the works that belong to their acceptable offering in Christ, as they receive the word that is light, ministered by the Spirit. As they walk in the light, they are equipped with the grace of life necessary for their participation in the offering of Christ. What they have eaten is now becoming the fruit of their life. **Rom 10:6-10**.

Receiving wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption by eating the fruit of the tree of life is fundamental to leadership and pastoral care in the church. This is the only legitimate basis for the exercise of dominion, or authority, that belongs to a person's sanctification. This authority is not exercised as dominion over another's faith. **2Co 1:24**. That would be an expression of worldly wisdom.

Nevertheless, those who have been called to shepherd the church need to faithfully speak the word without fear or favour so that the word of the cross is effective in the lives of their hearers. Testifying of this work, Paul wrote, 'Him we preach, *warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom*, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. *To this end I also labour*, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.' **Col 1:28-29**. Paul's speech was enabled by the wisdom that he obtained for his labour as a messenger, by eating the fruit of the tree of life that was fed to him by Christ. His access to this food was the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as part of a presbytery. **1Co 4:11-13**.

Freedom to choose

Freedom is fundamental to our creation as sons of men, and to our predestination as sons of God in the fellowship of Yahweh. We are chosen by God to be free. **Rom 8:20-21**. Essential to the principle of freedom is *choice*. In other words, if there is no choice, we have no opportunity for the expression of our freedom. This choice is not our own right to decide who we are or how we will live; nor does it entitle us to choose what word does, or does not, apply to us.

Our only choice is, whether we will forgo our presumed right to determine our own life and destiny, which indicates our slavery to sin, and instead, lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of us – our sonship as part of His body. **Php 3:12**. When we make this choice, we are delivered into the glorious liberty, or freedom, that belongs to the sons of God. **Rom 6:22-23**.

Pain is an implication of choice. By choosing one thing over another, something must be foregone. Drawing attention to this reality, Jesus said, 'No-one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.' **Mat 6:24**.

Having chosen the sonship and fellowship that God has chosen for us, we are free either to 'speak' or to 'remain silent' in relation to the various relational matters that we encounter in life. In this regard, we are not under the obligation of good and evil to assess, react to, or justify others. When our food is the fruit of the tree of life, the choices that we make in the midst of these circumstances are an exercise of the dominion that belongs to our sonship. This dominion is enabled by the resource of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption, that is made available to us, by Christ, from the tree of life. **1Co 1:30**.

Wisdom for every situation

Our name and works as a son of God are written in the tree of life. From this tree, through the fellowship of offering, comes the fruit that sustains and equips us in the administration of priesthood that is given to us as a son of God. **1Pe 2:5,9**. It provides us with the energy necessary to 'labour' and to fulfil the works that belong to our name as a son of God in Christ. **Eph 2:10**.

When fellowship at the tree of life is the basis of our conversation, the determination to remain *silent* or, alternatively, to *entreat* a brother, as well as the content of our communication, is enabled by the wisdom of God. **Luk 12:11-12**. Moreover, it is sanctified because it is commensurate with our sonship. Engaging in this manner demonstrates the dominion that belongs to our sonship as we remain in the fellowship of Yahweh.

Those who leave the fellowship, to which we are called as sons of God, have the *right* to depart. The right to make this choice is essential to the freedom that belongs to their identity. While we dignify others with this choice, we do not justify their reasons for departing by embracing, or endeavouring to understand, them. Such reasoning does not belong to the wisdom from above. **1Jn 2:19**.

If we attempt to justify the reasons that are given for a person's departure from a faith community or we engage in their debates in an attempt to arrest their perspective, we, ourselves, are forsaking the fruit of the tree of life. At this point, we are at risk of departing with them, having come to agree with the reasons that they have expressed for the exercise of their right to leave. In the name of love, we will have chosen, and begun to live, a lie. Consequently, we will forfeit our part in the bride city, for outside the city 'are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and *whoever loves and practises a lie*'. **Rev 22:15**.

Eve's deception

Prior to the Fall, the woman knew that God the Father was the origin and source of creation. Everything has its beginning from Him. The spiritual capacity for this initiative is in the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. What belongs to God, in the fellowship of Yahweh, was viewed by the woman as a way of life that she desired. It was for this reason, prompted by Satan's lie, that Eve saw that the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. **Gen 3:6.**

The fruit of this tree does, indeed, possess these properties – it is good for food; it is pleasant to the eyes; and it is replete with wisdom. Recognising this reality was not the point of perversion for Eve. **Rom 1:24-25.** It was the *basis of her perception* that manifested her corruption. The woman saw herself as being *like God* in the context of a family. That is, she believed that a family would be created from her, in her image and likeness. Consequently, the woman perceived the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as a resource to service this desire.

Eve, representing all women, coveted what belonged to God. She wanted God's unique capacity as the source of creation to be the basis of her motherhood. She ate the fruit that belonged exclusively to God, in order to become the *origin of multiplication*. This was the life that she coveted. We note, in this regard, the words of Jesus, who said, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the *abundance [or multiplication] of the things he possesses.*' **Luk 12:15.**

The fallen marriage

Corresponding with Eve's desire, a woman now believes that, in the family, she is like God. She views herself as the beginning of a house, and believes that a family is created from her. She covets this role as an expression of motherhood, and then she proceeds to live by this principle. This is her delusion. Once a woman becomes a wife and a mother, she feeds this view of herself, with its accompanying wisdom, to her husband and children as a religious philosophy with which she presumes to define their household. **Gen 16:1-2. Gen 30:1-2.**

Husbands, in the same manner as Adam, accept what is put to them by their wives as the model of living that belongs to a family; that is, the family is a discrete entity that is separate from the house of the Father, within which his dominion can be exercised. When Adam did this, he ceased from fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. We know this to be true, because the Father came looking for Adam, crying, 'Where are you?' **Gen 3:9.** The man had not chosen to be a son of the Father and to exercise everything that belonged to his creation and predestination from the Father's house. Instead, Adam heeded the voice of his wife and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thinking that he could exercise dominion over creation without the grace that comes from God.

We know that this was an accountable and deliberate choice that Adam made, because Paul explained that Adam had not been deceived by the alternative word that Satan offered to him through Eve. **1Ti 2:14.** By consuming the proposition for life that his wife offered to him, Adam chose death for himself and for his children, for God had said, 'In the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' **Gen 2:16-17.**

Conflict in a marriage

Prior to the Fall, as Adam and Eve fellowshiped with God each day at the tree of life, they were *clothed with grace*. Grace was the garment that mandated their priesthood over creation. **1Pe 3:7**. Once they departed from fellowship, they were bereft of grace. Consequently, they were naked and without authority. **Gen 3:7**. They were ashamed. Drawing from this account, we note that God's grace never becomes a residual capacity within a person, apart from fellowship with Yahweh.

Now fallen, men and women are slaves to their circumstances, and they struggle for survival. **Rom 6:17**. This innate struggle, involving each one's personal desire for acceptance, and the need for identity validity through the expression of their personal initiative, is a tension within their marriages.

The woman desires her husband to facilitate the agenda that she has for herself and for her household. The man's agenda for life and expression conflicts with this focus. He has his own ambitions and focus that particularly relate to how he is seen by others. He views his household as a resource from which he can initiate and exercise rulership in the contexts of his life, be it in the family, in the church, in the workplace, or in the community. Driven by this motivation, he endeavours to rule over his wife so that she serves his agenda. **Gen 3:16**.

The conflicting agendas of a man and a woman in a marriage create tension between them. The romance of their affection for each other is, inevitably, insufficient to compensate for this tension. Unless they are recovered to the tree of life, trading will be the basis of their marriage covenant, resulting in conflict and corruption, individually, and within their relationship.

Marriage in one Spirit

The Lord God did not choose fallen romance, based in trading, as the basis for marriage in His image and likeness. What, then, is the true romantic model for marriage which the Lord God has chosen for us? It requires a *remnant of the Spirit* through connection to the order of headship at the tree of life. Speaking of marriage in this order of grace, the Lord said, 'But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring.' **Mal 2:15.**

What does the remnant of the Spirit in a marriage 'look like'? It begins with two sons of God – a man and a woman – who have been born from above, baptised into Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit. They obtain a remnant of the Spirit, as heirs together of the grace of life, as they participate in a dialogue of fellowship at the tree of life. This means that they continue together in the apostles' doctrine, which informs the culture of their conversation and interactions; in fellowship, through which the blood of Christ is operative to cleanse them from sin; in the breaking of bread, as they care for, and nourish, one another; and in the dialogue of prayer. **Col 4:6. 1Jn 1:7. Act 4:32-35. Eph 6:18. Act 2:42.**

Through this dialogue at the tree of life, in the fellowship of one Spirit, they receive a remnant of the Spirit. This portion of the Spirit, which is unique to their marriage covenant, equips them for the works through which the life of God is multiplied in the family to their children, and overflows as a blessing to other houses. That is, from this one-Spirit fellowship, the man is endowed with grace for the diversity of expression that belongs to his identity as a head, as a husband, and as a father. Likewise, the woman, proceeding from this one-Spirit fellowship, is endowed with grace for the diversity that belongs to her expression as the centre of her house, as a wife, and as a mother.

Marriage – believer and unbeliever

Fellowship in one Spirit is not possible in a marriage between a believer and an unbeliever. We note Paul's questions, establishing this point; 'What fellowship has light with darkness? What part has a believer with an unbeliever?' **2Co 6:14-15**. Helpfully, the Scriptures provide instructions to believers who are unequally yoked in marriage, so that their children are not deprived of the blessing of the Spirit that belongs to families in Abraham.

For example, Paul wrote, 'If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him [as he is established in the culture of godliness], let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her [as she is established in the culture of godliness], let her not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy. But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases.' **1Co 7:12-15**.

Many of the marriages in our fellowship of churches are between two sons of God. The biggest issue that these couples must all negotiate is *carnality*. A carnal Christian is a person who has been born of God, but who sets their mind on the flesh. It is impossible for two carnal Christians to meet in one Spirit, because neither person is walking, or living, by the Spirit. **Gal 5:16-17**. Their marriage relationship will have a religious hue, yet will function by the self-centred principles established in the Fall.

Marriage – flesh and Spirit

Fellowship in one Spirit between a carnal Christian and a spiritual son of God is not possible. The Scriptures teach us that ‘the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another’. **Gal 5:17**. Again, the Scriptures provide instruction regarding how a person can live as a son of God with a carnal spouse. The apostle Peter wrote, ‘Wives, likewise, be submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct accompanied by fear’. **1Pe 3:1-2**.

Peter’s instructions to a spiritual woman with a carnal husband equally apply to a spiritual man who is married to a carnal woman. As a believing husband maintains his commitment to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, he will demonstrate the culture of fellowship to which his wife can turn. However, she will not be won through his coercive actions or insistent directions. These are the actions of the flesh, based in the Fall, and they produce only death. **Gen 3:16**.

A spiritual person, whose marriage is marked by enmity between the flesh and Spirit, will maintain their connection to the word and fellowship of the lampstand church community in which they live. Attempting to conceal the dysfunction within one’s marriage is an investment in a projection. The endeavour to present well, particularly by church leaders, only isolates a couple from the fellowship of the *agape* meal. Access to grace for their life and family is hindered as their disconnection persists. **Heb 12:14-15**. Moreover, their capacity to minister to others in the body of Christ is curtailed. Irrespective of the response of their spouse, a spiritual person can fulfil the works that belong to their sonship, as long as they walk in the light of the word, and maintain open-faced fellowship with their brethren in Christ.



Restoring
my Soul