

Walking in the Spirit
in a
Lampstand Church

NATIONAL YOUTH SEMINAR

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WALKING IN THE SPIRIT IN A LAMPSTAND CHURCH

National Youth Seminar - March 2022

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Contents

ARTICLE 1

A lampstand survey	5
Have I chosen to belong to this lampstand church?	6
Do I believe there are messengers in this church speaking the word of my sonship?	7
Am I fully submitted to the fellowship of the presbytery?	8
Our response	10

ARTICLE 2

Three generations of faith	11
First generation	12
Second generation	13
Third generation	14
The generation of this day	15
Shining as lights among a crooked and perverse generation	16

ARTICLE 3

The spiritual man	17
Maturity as a son of God	17
How do we choose the culture of discipleship?	17
The immature, or carnal, man	18
Identity verification	19
A pathway of destruction	20
Pornography	20
Social media	21
Milestones of maturity	21

ARTICLE 4

The routine of a spiritual man	23
Jesus was a man of routine	23
Lifting our eyes to the works of priesthood	24
Setting routines as spiritual sons of God	25
The routine of agape fellowship	27

ARTICLE 5

Case Study: A day in the life of a spiritual man	29
The handbook of life	29
Difficult times have come	30
Initiative; not existentialism	32
Waking early and prayer	34
Devotions	35
Hygiene and dress	36
Health	37
Career	39
Recreation	39
Offering	41

ARTICLE 6

The culture of meeting - Having root in ourselves	43
Having root in ourselves	43
Meeting in the body of Christ	45
Meeting around a projection	45
A testimony of turning	46

ARTICLE 7

The culture of meeting - Being rooted and grounded in love	49
Honour and fear - the hallmarks of offering	51

ARTICLE 8

Preparing to receive a portion of His Spirit	55
Christian marriage	56
Self-love	57
Courtship	58
What kind of marriage will you build?	59
Discipleship	60
Conversion	60
New birth	61
Baptism	62
Conclusion	62

ARTICLE 9

Walking blamelessly - A meditation on friendship	63
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ARTICLE 10

Disciples walking blamelessly	67
Walking blameless - as a member in particular	68
Cultivating the divine nature	70

Article I

A lampstand survey

Luke Pomery

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. 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 1:18. Paul described this fullness as ‘the width and length and depth and height’ of the love of Christ. Eph 3:18-19.

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'.

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. We shall consider these two aspects further.

The purpose of this article is to give an opportunity for each young person to 'take heed' to the things which they have come to know and believe. And, in particular, have they *chosen* to be a participant within this lampstand church? This article is posed as a series of questions, which an individual can personally consider devotionally, and can also share further, in testimony, with others.

Have I chosen to belong to 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. 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. 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. 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. Hence, we began this article by explaining that 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.

Do I believe there are messengers in this church speaking the word of my sonship?

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 had 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 17:23. For this reason, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, 'Depart! Depart! Go out from there, touch no unclean thing; go out from the midst of her.' Isa 52:11. Isaiah was referring to the governing principle of the world, described in Scripture as 'Babylon'. Rev 18:2,4.

Am I fully submitted to the fellowship of the presbytery?

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. 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. Here are some specific alternative modes from which Christ is calling us to repent.

- Am I willing to lay my life down in offering within this community, without grasping to 'find' my own name and expression through self-defined activities?
- Do I grasp for equality with the messenger through socialising initiatives or by seeking their approval through my own 'good', religious performance?
- Do I seek empowerment through my connection to the messenger, believing that the person who is functional is the one 'in charge'?
- Do I consider myself as having 'graduated' from the need for discipleship; and do I now desire the freedom to 'take my own initiatives'?
- Is my connection in this church based on history, mateship or profiteering?
- Have I joined another sub-society within the church that is vocally critical of the presbytery word and the leadership?
- Do I 'float' between congregations within this lampstand without submission and obedience to the overseers and elders within the congregation in which the Father has placed me as a functioning 'member in particular'?
- Is the nature of my connection to others based upon common interests, personality compatibility or worldly pursuits, rather than obedience to Christ's commands?
- Am I actively fraternising with ones who have gone out from among us and have vocally declared that they are enemies of God and of the church because they have rejected His claim on their life?

Finally, 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 15:18. 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. 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.

Our response

We are all being urged by the Lord, through His messengers, to repent quickly and to be restored to first love, each time that He speaks to us. The messengers in the hand of Christ are concerned for each one of us. If we maintain alternative attitudes and modes of relating, we will inevitably do ourselves – and others – a spiritual injury!

In response to this exhortation, we can testify of our choice and commitment to the fellowship of the presbytery within this lampstand church. Also, we can testify of our repentance from the alternative modes which the Lord is highlighting for our deliverance.

Article 2

Three generations of faith

Luke Pomery

In this article, we shall consider the first three generations of the children of Israel whom the Lord redeemed out of Egypt. We will look at the specific lessons 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 3:2.

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. 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.

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*. 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. 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.

Second generation

Now let us consider the unique lessons pertaining to the second generation (i.e. the children of the first generation). The second generation failed to enter the promised rest because of their *mixture*, and because they had become *half-hearted* toward the precious inheritance given to them by God. Heb 4:8-9. This is because they did not truly *possess* the land; nor did they properly *sanctify themselves from* the people of the land. Before we consider these lessons further, let us first look at how the second generation had to overcome the same issues that their parents faced.

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 6:7. 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 31:13. 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, the Lord had instructed them not to make any covenants with the inhabitants of the land but, rather, to drive them out. However,

they did not obey His voice. Jdg 2:2. They did not drive out the inhabitants of the land and, instead, *became yoked to them*. Jdg 1:27-33. In response, the Lord said, 'I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you.' Jdg 2:3. Clearly, they had not sanctified themselves 'from the world'.

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, 'Then you [will] say in your 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. As we discussed earlier, 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 31:13.

Amazingly, for a time, this did happen, because the Scriptures recorded, '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. Although they were instructed by the previous generations, the third generation did not learn to fear the Lord, themselves. They forsook the Lord God and followed the gods of the people who were around them. Jdg 2:11-12.

The generation of this day

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 them to be *teaching* them.

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. In this manner, 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 not obtain the promised rest. And we would most certainly make exactly the same mistakes. As Paul exhorted us,

'Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it.' Heb 4:1.

Shining as lights among a crooked and perverse generation

The apostle Paul wrote to your generation, saying, 'Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a *crooked and perverse generation*, among whom you *shine as lights* in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or laboured in vain.' Php 2:14-16.

The Scriptures describe in detail the nature of the current generation of people who are in the world, *today*. It is an angry and volatile generation who demand the right to 'rule' through the assertion of their own opinions. Isa 3:12. The book of Proverbs describes this. 'There is a generation - oh, how lofty are their eyes! And their eyelids are lifted up. There is a generation whose teeth are like swords, and whose fangs are like knives, to devour the poor from off the earth, and the needy from among men.' Pro 30:13-14.

It is among *this* crooked and perverse generation that we are to shine as functioning participants of a lampstand church! We are able to reflect the light of Christ's word to others, as we are walking in the light of that word, ourselves. Wonderfully, the life of Christ, which is the precious inheritance of our sonship, is the light of the world. Joh 8:12.

Article 3

The spiritual man

Jonathan Thompson

Maturity as a son of God

The pathway of maturity for every son of God starts and never strays from the pathway of discipleship. We need to understand that this is a different process from the natural process of aging and experience in life. This process develops (multiplies) the culture of a son of God so that they can participate in sanctification at the tree of life in every circumstance.

How do we choose the culture of discipleship?

A disciple does not react to their circumstances in order to find a place of moral superiority. A disciple responds in fellowship dialogue to the word of faith as they 'incline their ear'. Connecting this point to the daily process of discipleship, Isaiah said, 'The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples ... He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.' Isa 50:4.

Having given themselves to a process of discipleship, a mature Christian will not assess their success or failure. They do not dictate nor define

their progress. To do otherwise is merely a projection. A mature son does not engage in thoughts or conversations that measure themselves against others.

The hallmark of a disciple is that they are a friend of Christ who has chosen to live by the initiative of the Father. In this regard, Jesus said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.' Joh 8:28. Christ has also commanded us to follow Him by revealing the initiative of the Father.

Our culture is established in the fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom. We would all agree that, as we mature, we will be increasing in wisdom; otherwise, we remain stagnant and immobile. Again, wisdom, like maturity, is not acquired through experience or longevity of life; but, rather, by having sought her [wisdom] through our participation in the culture of discipleship.

The mark of maturity is sanctification.

The immature, or carnal, man

'And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people, but as to carnal [men of flesh], as to babes [infants] in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not yet able to receive it, and even now you are still not able, for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife and divisions among you, are you not carnal, and behaving like mere men?' 1Co 3:1-3.

An immature, or carnal, man will be a babe in Christ because they are not able to process the word (understand with spiritual wisdom). It is therefore impossible for them to be sustained and to grow in their Christian identity. When not sustained, they become weak and sick, and a number sleep. 1Co 11:30. It is not that the word somehow has no effect; it is that they themselves disregard the word towards them each day and, in their unbelief, choose to withdraw from the Spirit of God.

Those who refuse to hear the voice of the Spirit will be motivated only by what is in their natural appetites. This will be what controls, or enslaves, them. Joh 8:34. They will be sensual people, governed by their human nature, instead of by the Spirit of God. These ones cannot grow in their capacity to worship, which is their 'spiritual service' as they present themselves to be a living sacrifice. Rom 12:1. This diminished capacity

separates them from God and, as in Cain's situation, leads to the consuming of their identity.

These ones can eat only at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because they can only differentiate what is in front of them by what is good or evil according to their own perception.

Identity verification

A spiritual man looks for security and verification only in the eyes of Christ. Meeting 'His eyes as a flame of fire' exposes their immature attributes. It is here where they receive the gift of repentance coming from His word, illuminating their participation in piercing Him and causing His heart to break. This is where a spiritual man will mourn with godly sorrow which leads to repentance.

As we respond in faith, as one who mourns the loss of a firstborn, the Lord provides a way of faith- obedience for us. This is connected to a fellowship in which our repentance and the development of our sonship is given to us. This is why we listen to what the Spirit is saying as He awakens our ears. We do have to engage with our personal participation each day by praying in the Spirit!

The activity of meeting Christ in this way is entirely positive! In fact, in this fellowship, we become His friends. The initiative of others toward us reveals those who have been expressing the love of God toward us, and we soon realise who our friends really are. We also recognise our own repentance from previous carnal modes of relating that we called 'friendship'. The fellowship of the presbytery, which is with the Father and the Son, speaks faith to us so that we can also draw near, and can participate at the tree of life - where our joy is made complete. This is the context of true friendship.

This type of friendship is one which is established (rooted and grounded) in love. 'This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.' 'Greater love has no-one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.' Joh 15:12-13. It is also a command. It is Christ teaching us how to draw near!

A pathway of destruction

There is, however, another way of finding verification. These other forms of identity verification are oppressive. They lead to the eroding of identity, which ultimately results in destruction.

A quote by C S Lewis notes that ‘We may give our human loves the unconditional allegiance which we owe only to God. Then they become gods: then they become demons. Then they will destroy us, and also destroy themselves. For natural loves that are allowed to become gods do not remain loves. They are still called so, but can become in fact complicated forms of hatred.’

This statement is true. When we define our own expressions of love, we are re-writing God’s very name. This is to ‘take the Lord’s name in vain’. Exo 20:7. This is why any other area of verification apart from the tree of life will lead to oppression, and may cause us to spiritually die.

Pornography

A prime example of such destructive verification is pornography. The issue of pornography is one which must be addressed. It is the real pandemic of our time. The world is even aware of the grip of this delusion of verification. The best that studies can show is that the use of pornography leads to poor mental health, lower quality of life, lower life-satisfaction and self-esteem, and increased symptoms of depression among adolescents. However, it is so much more sinister and corrupt than that. It is the gratification of the flesh that leads to a pathway of never-ending and unsatisfied depths. 1Co 5:6.

‘But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.’ 1Co 5:11.

There is no capacity for us to be the substance of the bread and wine to each other if these corruptions have devoured our capacity to fill out our Christian name. We have no valid participation – only false projection.

‘Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you

were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.' 1Co 6:9-11.

There cannot be progress, in any way, for a person while they are under the bondage of such depravation.

Social media

Just as pornography is an issue of false identity verification, social media is a platform of projection that leads to the same kind of oppression. It is statistically a bigger problem for ladies, but not, of course, exclusively. There is no less a threat to your sonship being devoured from these platforms of oppression than through pornography.

Other examples which should be treated with no less seriousness are: computer games (virtual realities), escaping into movies, texting people of the opposite gender, career or study and any other kind of covetous relationships.

Milestones of maturity

By way of summary, as we grow in the maturity of our sonship, we will continue to multiply in our capacity to participate according to our spiritual identity. Some of these hallmarks of maturity are:

- As *disciples*, we are actively choosing to respond to the Lord as He awakens our ears, and we know the context of our participation.
- We are then able to *worship* the Lord as we diligently press into our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering.
- *Mourning* is a part of how we live. It is not an exercise in shame or condemnation; nor is it self-assessment. *Illumination* breaks in on our heart, and we cry out in faith.
- Bearing the *fruit* of righteousness. 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit.' Gal 5:22.
- We have *confidence* in our *sanctification*. A mature son is secured to the Lord's counsel and is aware of where they can and cannot go - especially relationally among one another. Our confidence is cemented in our obedience.

WALKING IN THE SPIRIT IN A LAMPSTAND CHURCH

- Rooted and *grounded in love*. We have 'gone into the ground' and have become established with Christ as our foundation. We respond to His command to give preference to one another.

Article 4

The routine of a spiritual man

Lachlan Perrin

Jesus was a man of routine

Jesus used the wind as a metaphor to describe the behaviour of a spiritual son of God. He said, '[It] blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going.' Joh 3:8. Jesus was not suggesting that a person who is born of the Spirit is abstract, unpredictable or 'flighty'. Rather, He was saying that the thoughts, priorities and daily routine of a person who walks by the Spirit will not make sense to a person whose mind is set on the flesh.

It is noteworthy that during the time of Jesus' earthly ministry, His disciples observed that He was a man of routine! This may be a new thought for you. Perhaps you have thought of Jesus' ministry as being largely spontaneous - visiting various places to teach and work miracles, before 'breezing' out of that place and moving on to the next.

On the contrary, when Luke compiled his Gospel account, he wrote, '[Jesus] came to Nazareth ... *and as was His custom*, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read'. Luk 4:16. Later in

Luke's Gospel he also noted, 'Now during the day [Jesus] was teaching in the temple, but at evening He would go out and spend the night on the mount that is called Olivet'. Luk 21:37. Mark also commented on Jesus' 'customs'. Mar 10:1. The Gospel writers were identifying the habitual and consistent nature of Jesus' routines and behaviour.

Jesus had *practical* routines when He was on earth because they were a platform for His obedience to the *spiritual* works that the Father had commanded Him to do. Joh 5:19-20. Joh 12:49. Similarly, for us, our daily *physical* timetable should facilitate our daily *spiritual* participation in the kingdom of God. The routine and behaviour of a son of God who is committed to a lampstand church are the focus of this article.

Lifting our eyes to the works of priesthood

When John recorded the book of Revelation, he introduced Jesus as the One who '*has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father*'. Rev 1:6. The apostle Peter wrote similarly, saying, '*You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation*'. 1Pe 2:9. The key point is that every member of a lampstand church should be a priest - a priest with priestly works to do - *here and now*. As we journey through life, reckoning every day to be a fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, Jesus disciplines us as members of an *eternal* priesthood. Our behaviour and the way in which we structure our routine need to reflect our understanding of this point.

Even though King David lived prior to the offering of Jesus, he understood that Jesus had authored all of his days and had finished every work that was foreordained for him. David testified, '*You formed my inward parts [his spirit and soul]; You wove me in my mother's womb [his physical body] ... My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the depths of the earth*'. Psa 139:13,15.

When David referred to his 'frame', as distinct from his identity and physical body, he was referring to his *heavenly* body. 'The depths of the earth' refers to Jesus' descent to the lowest parts of the earth during His offering journey. It was here, in the lowest parts of the earth, that Jesus authored our days, learned our obedience and fulfilled the works of our sonship for both this age, *and the age to come!*

So, as we begin to consider *how* we go about establishing a personal program and routine, we need to ask ourselves, 'Is my sight fixed upon

this age; or am I lifting my eyes to see and appreciate my participation in an eternal priesthood?' As we lift our eyes and fix them upon Jesus, who is raised and seated on the Father's throne in heavenly places, we find that our priority and focus shift from the goals and expectations that are temporal, to the works of righteousness that are eternal.

When we obey the word of our sonship, our preoccupation will shift from the things that are temporal, to the works that are eternal. Having this perspective, and ordering our lives accordingly, are described in the Bible as 'walking in the same steps of faith as Abraham'. The book of Hebrews summarised Abraham's time on earth, recording, 'By faith he lived in the land of promise *as a stranger*, dwelling in tents ... for *he looked for a city* which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God'. Heb 11:9-10. Abraham lived 'as in a foreign land' because he was looking more earnestly for his participation in the new heavens and new earth. Walking in this faith teaches us how to approach the setting of daily routines. Our practical activities should serve the goal of learning a culture of participation in Christ, which begins in this age and continues in the age to come.

Setting routines as spiritual sons of God

When it comes to establishing a routine and learning how to set life priorities, Jesus instructed us to, firstly, seek the kingdom of God and our righteous participation in it. Mat 6:33. This begins with a commitment, daily, to join the conversation of faith that Yahweh extends to us from the tree of life. Gen 3:8. Rev 2:7. This routine connects us to the discussion concerning the word of our sonship, and to the provision of grace and understanding that is necessary for us to fulfil our daily works. We will comment further on 'the routine of fellowship' in the next section.

Again, it is important to note that seeking first the kingdom of God and prioritising our participation, daily, in the conversation of faith, are not abstract concepts. For example, the word 'culture' is very different from the word 'routine'. Someone might say that they have a *culture* of prayer and devotions, but what, practically, is their *routine* of prayer and devotions? Jesus' routine was to rise early and pray. Mar 1:35. He prioritised this fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit so that He could acceptably fulfil His priestly works. Why would we think that we can do it any other way?

Ideally, from the age of twelve to eighteen, a son of God will begin to establish Christian routines that balance the activities of life according to their sanctification. Let's be clear - this requires discipline! The Lord spoke to Jeremiah, saying, 'It is good for a man that he should bear the yoke in his youth.' Lam 3:27. Often, we have emphasised this verse in relation to joining service teams and making offering throughout the young adult years. While this is true - it is important to learn how to work hard during the tertiary phase of life, and to prioritise working hard within the practical areas of church administration - there is a more basic understanding of this instruction.

'Bearing the *yoke*' does not refer only to the 'burden', or 'load', being carried; it refers to the *constraint* and discipline associated with being yoked in the first place. For example, we need to be yoked to Christ, and to His custom of rising early each day and prioritising time spent in prayer. If we do not learn the constraint required to pursue godliness and to deny worldliness, we will struggle to prioritise the works of our sonship over the cares of the world, and over our self-conceived projections of who and what we want to be in life.

This principle was demonstrated in the Scripture when Cain and Abel came to be of accountable adult age, and brought offering to the Lord. Clearly, Abel had learned how to engage in the conversation of faith concerning his works. He knew what to offer according to his name and works, and was therefore accepted by God. Cain, however, evidently did not prioritise his participation in the fellowship of the word of life. He offered the fruit of his projection, and God had no regard for his offering.

From the age of twelve, when the Bible encourages us to be 'about our Father's business', through to the early young adult years, every son of God should be obtaining the testimony of a Christian routine. They are making the daily program of discipleship their own. Like the psalmist, they are able to say, 'This [routine] has become mine, that I observe Your precepts.' Psa 119:56.

Being consistent with a personal program is not 'dull'. That is the complaint of the fool, whose eyes are set on the ends, or limits, of this finite earth. Pro 17:24. They are looking for satisfaction in the passing pleasures of the world. In contrast, establishing the routine of receiving and observing the word of our sonship teaches us that joy and contentment during our time on earth are derived from our fulfilment of

God's will. The practical disciplines and routines of life are simply the platform for our participation in the spiritual life.

The routine of agape fellowship

In addition to a daily program of prayer and devotions, every son of God needs to be established in an understanding of fellowship and in a tangible routine of fellowship. That is, we need to know what fellowship does and does not 'look like'! And we need the *idea* of joining the conversation of Yahweh to translate to the practicalities of 'with whom', 'when' and 'how often' we speak with others about our sonship. Our active participation in these discussions demonstrates that we have received faith to 'lift our voice for understanding' and to be instructed concerning our sonship. Pro 2:3. Also, as we participate in the Lord's *agape* fellowship table, we have the opportunity to bless one another because our testimony multiplies the life of God within us.

Let us be reminded: there is only *one* fellowship. 'Fellowship' describes the continual participation, by offering, of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in relationship together. For us to 'have a time of fellowship', as we often say, our activity together needs to be our participation on the ground of Yahweh's one fellowship.

Many have confused a busy social life with fellowship. Let's not kid ourselves. As the Lord has begun to restore our understanding of true communion - *agape* fellowship - we have appreciated the need to sanctify our fellowship occasions with the word of present truth and with prayer. 1Ti 4:5. This is a deliberate step and, when we neglect to take it, simply gathering Christians together does not necessarily amount to a time of fellowship. In fact, without a conscious and proactive initiative to sanctify an occasion for the sake of fellowship, activities and events can run to a number of excesses and become quite *unsanctified*, *unedifying* and *unhelpful*.

Learning to discern 'which conversation' we are engaging in is important. Is this fellowship or not? There is no provision for our sonship outside of the conversation of faith that occurs on the ground of Yahweh at the tree of life. As with Eve, every alternative conversation that we entertain will not only fail to produce the righteousness of God; it will also very likely lead us down a pathway of unrighteousness.

When Paul wrote to the Hebrews about mature sons of God, he identified them as those 'who because of practice have their senses trained to

discern good and evil'. Heb 5:14. This does not refer to a capacity to judge *between* good and evil; it refers to the capacity to identify influences and relational interactions that are at the *tree* of the knowledge of good and evil.

At this time, the Lord is admonishing every young adult to become properly grounded in *agape* fellowship. This conversation of faith, based upon the proceeding word, teaches us how to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to, instead, live discreetly and in a godly way in this present world. Tit 2:11-13.

Article 5

Case Study: A day in the life of a spiritual man

Lachlan Perrin

The handbook of life

In our previous article, we discussed how a spiritual son of God sets priorities and establishes routines. Just as our Lord and Master Jesus Christ did, we establish practical routines because they are a *physical* platform for our *spiritual* participation in the kingdom of God. In this article we are discussing the key elements that comprise a 'day in the life of a spiritual man'.

We will consider the following categories of personal discipline and activity: prayer; devotions; hygiene and dress; health; career; recreation; and offering. The first point to note, which may be a new thought for you, is that the Bible has a great deal to say about *all* of these matters. The Bible is a complete handbook for all matters of life, behaviour and relationship. Our access to the wisdom that we need to navigate life with discretion and understanding is ministered to us as we participate in

agape fellowship. *Fellowship* underpins every aspect of a spiritual man's daily routine.

Christ has appointed a messenger administration to steward His household. He has given them to the work of feeding His disciples with the fruit of life in every season. Luk 12:42. Receiving these messengers and their message brings a disciple onto the ground of Yahweh's one fellowship, and grants them access to the conversation of faith that is at the tree of life. 1Jn 1:3. Let us be clear, the conversation of faith that equips a son of God with grace and understanding to fulfil the works of their sonship, and to live as one who is wise in this present age, is only ever based upon the proceeding word of God. 1Jn 1:3.

The Bible outlines a *godly understanding and approach* to all aspects of life and living. This means that the illustrative lessons included in this article teach *timeless* principles; they are not intended to set generation-specific 'rules' or standards. For example, with regard to dress, the Bible will not tell you which clothes 'match' or whether shorts or three-quarter length pants are 'better'! Rather, the Scriptures teach us to approach our choice of clothing from the basis of sanctification.

The *timeless* nature of the Bible's instruction is a significant point in itself. Unless this point is understood, an unwise young adult may think things such as, 'It's different in my day - Mum and Dad don't get it' or 'What would the Young Adult program leaders know - they're old?' Returning to our example of 'dress', Yahweh Himself had to dress the very first humans whom He created! He had to replace Adam and Eve's choice of clothing of fig leaves (which were an expression of a projection *and* a covering for their shame) with 'priestly garments'.

How Adam and Eve were dressed in the physical was actually the expression of a spiritual reality! This lesson alone begins to teach us how we are to approach our clothing. Are we seeking to be known and to make statements through 'the putting on of clothing' or by the testimony of 'the hidden person of the heart'? 1Pe 3:3-4.

Difficult times have come

To help establish a context for this article, let us begin by reading some passages from Paul's second pastoral epistle to Timothy. 'But realise this, that in the last days difficult times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without

self-control, brutal, haters of good, treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; avoid such men as these.' 2Ti 3:1-5. Paul continued his description of those of the world by stating that they are '*always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth ... but they will not make further progress*'. 2Ti 3:7,9.

We could ask, 'Why was Paul writing to Timothy, in *their* era, warning him about the perilous times of *the last days*?' It is because *Paul was outlining Satan's agenda for the entire church age*. Paul was highlighting that these characteristics of the world will become *more and more* prevalent and *more and more* pervasive throughout each generation. As the gospel of sonship continues to proclaim mercy and the grace of God for the ingathering of a multitude of sons, the world's push for these ungodly characteristics will also escalate.

As sons of God, we *can*, by the Spirit, recognise the pressure that is upon us to normalise and accept these worldly qualities. Having a steadfast daily routine – founded upon the obedience of our sonship, not on our conformity to what is 'trending' in the world – guards us. The structure of the *practical* routine of a son of God should be the fruit of their participation in spiritual fellowship. Fellowship enables a son of God to remain connected to the word of their sanctification and to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their life.

It will be helpful to comment on Paul's identification of those who are 'always learning and never able to come to a knowledge of the truth'. In Western society today, there is a heightened cultural priority toward education. This is both formal, through academic institutions or recognised training and courses, and informal, through social media. There is an irrational fear that without both dimensions of 'learning' a person will be disadvantaged. Either they will be overlooked in the workplace and therefore become financially or reputationally vulnerable, or they will miss the latest 'posts' and therefore be 'uninformed' or 'off-trend'.

Paul highlighted the reality that 'always learning' in this way does not reward a person with the true knowledge of their sonship. In fact, they make 'no further progress' concerning their name, works and eternal reward.

This worldly response of narrowing down and focusing upon 'always learning' has led to an imbalanced formation and maturity within many

of today's young adults. That is, the growth of a son of God requires instruction concerning their maturity spiritually, physically, mentally, academically, emotionally, relationally, financially etc.

For example, many broader, cross-sectional life skills are left underdeveloped when an excessive focus upon education is pursued. These skills might be *household disciplines* such as hospitality training, carrying a load of chores (cooking, cleaning, washing up, grocery shopping, maintenance); *personal disciplines* such as individual hygiene and cleanliness, keeping a tidy room, picking up after themselves, even getting out of bed; or *social disciplines* such as table manners and etiquette, an awareness of unacceptable behaviours and conversation subjects, an awareness and accountability for their impact upon others – even how to make small talk.

Thankfully, the instruction of the gospel of sonship is a complete life package! King Solomon wrote, 'Bright eyes gladden the heart; good news puts fat on the bones'. Pro 15:30. When a person lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, they are illuminated and have 'bright eyes'. Gladness and contentment are their portion each day. When they submit to the cross-sectional instruction that the word of their sonship declares, they will grow in a well-rounded way; not *too* tall *too* soon – gangly and uncoordinated!

The Lord gives His people sufficient time, every day, to set and maintain a sustainable, balanced routine. Whenever a young adult feels anxious, believing that they 'don't have enough time', it is time to revisit the foundations of how they have set their daily routine.

Initiative; not existentialism

For the sake of our case study, we will consider the spiritual son of God named 'Gavin'. Gavin is 20 years old, is studying at university, has a part-time job and lives at home with his believing parents. Despite growing up in a covenant household, Gavin has come to appreciate that the Father places each member of the body just as *He* desires. 1Co 12:18. Gavin understands that he is not continuing at church simply because it is the obvious or easiest lifestyle choice. Nor can his ongoing attendance be based upon the convenience of his friendships or for the sake of keeping his parents happy. Instead, Gavin has obtained the testimony of choosing what God has already chosen for him. He has received, believed and chosen to obey the call of Christ upon his life. He has chosen to abide where the Father has planted him.

Importantly, Gavin recognises that this principle of choosing what the Father has already chosen for him applies when it comes to the setting of his daily routine. In this way, Gavin's plans are the proactive initiative that he takes toward his sonship, not the reaction he makes to 'what life throws at him'.

A person who lives in an existential way plans their daily program in response to what they experience in the physical world. That is, they plan their routine based on satisfying all of the requirements that are dictated to them by the deadlines of life under the sun. While every son of God must live, behave and relate within these boundaries of creation, their existence should be '*in* the world', not '*of* the world'. Accordingly, the daily routine of a son of God should be an initiative of faith to responsibly steward their sanctification.

Returning to Gavin, our case study, his university timetable has an 8:00 start one morning, followed by a 10:00 start the next morning. Should this change what time he wakes up each day? Rather than sleeping for two hours longer on the second day, Gavin gets up at the *same* time both mornings. He does not let a university timetable dictate his daily routine as a son of God! His initiative toward his participation in the kingdom of God determines how he stewards (and starts) his days.

So, Gavin wakes up at the same time *every* morning with a consistent schedule of prayer, devotions, showering and getting dressed, having fellowship over breakfast with his family, and then attending to household chores (which he does reliably and in clear communication with his parents). All of these activities occur daily, regardless of what is going to happen once he sets out from home.

The apostle Paul testified of his resolve to approach all practical matters in life as an expression of his participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. He wrote, 'I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; *in any and every circumstance* I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. *I can do all things* [that are foreordained in the Father's will for me] through Him who strengthens me.'

Php 4:12-13.

With Paul's testimony and our above example in mind, we recognise that a spiritual son of God establishes a daily routine in Christ. That is, if they are waking up, they are waking up for Christ; if they are studying, they are studying for Christ; if they are working, they are working for Christ; if

they are recreating, they are recreating for Christ; and so on. It is with this understanding that we will consider some of the core elements that comprise a life in the day of a spiritual man.

Waking early and prayer

We read in the Gospel of Mark, 'In the *early* morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place, and was praying there'. Mar 1:35. There is no personal discipline more important for a spiritual man than a consistent prayer life. When we pray in the Holy Spirit, we join the prayer fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rom 8:26-28. When we pray in tongues, in cooperation with the leading and burden of the Holy Spirit, we 'build ourselves up in our most holy faith'. Jud 1:20. This is the faith that Christ ministers to us in the word that is proclaimed by His messengers, which brings definition concerning the works of our sonship.

Prayer, then, not only focuses a spiritual man toward the works that the Father has prepared for them; it also emboldens their faith. This faith manifests as the strong belief that their day, with all of its highs, lows and everything in between, is a unique participation in Christ's offering. In the Psalms, David wrote, 'Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my groaning ... *in the morning*, O Lord, You will hear my voice; *in the morning* I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch'. Psa 5:1,3. The Hebrew word for 'morning' in this psalm can otherwise be translated as 'dawn' or 'at the break of day'.

Returning to our case study, Gavin sets his alarm clock for the same time every morning. At 'the break of his day', he prays in other tongues, watching in the Spirit and waiting on the Lord. His prayer is not sacramental; it is not a token activity. He purposes himself to meditate on the word of present truth. Psa 119:15. And he allows the Holy Spirit to prompt him and to steer his prayer; otherwise, his temptation is to pray in the flesh, simply articulating all of the things that are weighing on his mind.

Suppose Gavin has had a late night - up doing an assignment, travelling home from a church meeting or just out for an *agape* meal with another household. Should that late night impact the time that he sets his alarm to sound the next morning? No, it should not. Gavin knows that if he had an early shift at work, he would drag himself out of bed despite the late night. Why should he get up early to serve his earthly master, but not get up early to fellowship with his heavenly Master? So, rather than sleeping

in, Gavin gets out of bed at the *same* time and prays according to his routine. Then, if he needs to, he can catch up on sleep in a deliberate way, such as an earlier night or a nap after work.

Devotions

We read in the book of Isaiah, 'The Lord GOD has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to sustain the weary one with a word. *He awakens me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple.*' Isa 50:4. A time of devotional reading and word study accompanies the morning prayer of a spiritual man. It is truly dignifying to know that the Lord's word facilitates His initiative to establish relationship with us. He wants us to *know* Him, and to know ourselves in fellowship with Him.

We can draw many of the practical lessons concerning daily devotions from the account of the Lord feeding manna to the nation of Israel during their wilderness journey. Exo 16. The book of Exodus accounts, 'They gathered it morning by morning, every man as much as he should eat; but when the sun grew hot, it would melt'. Exo 16:21. If we allow ourselves to become busy with the activities and demands of the day, without first giving priority to our devotions, then we are effectively saying to the Lord, 'I don't need You; I have an alternate provision for today.'

Moses described the lesson of the manna in the wilderness, saying, 'He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.' Deu 8:3. During the time of His earthly ministry, Jesus confirmed that His body and blood are the fulfilment of the bread from heaven. Jesus said, 'For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.' Joh 6:32-33. Earlier in John Chapter 6, Jesus said, 'Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life ... this is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.' Joh 6:27,29.

We undertake the work of believing in Jesus when we apply ourselves, through a consistent devotional life, to understand the word of faith. This also becomes the platform for our being ready to 'speak' the word of faith, by testimony, 'in and out of season'. 2Ti 4:2. That is, being

devotional keeps the word of faith that is being preached to us through Christ's messengers, in our mouth and in our heart. Rom 10:8.

Throughout his teenage years, Gavin laid hold of his daily devotions as a personal initiative to know the Lord. He would revisit his notes from church meetings and look up key verses in the Bible, reading either side of the quoted verse to help him to appreciate the scriptural context. While he enjoyed and participated in the family devotional program initiated by his Dad, he came to treasure his personal devotional time. He learned the importance of keeping his 'storehouse' full. Gavin recognised that being able to share at *agape* fellowship times or on the odd occasion at school when someone asked him about church, was completely connected to his devotional life. As he applied himself to his daily devotions, he was equipped to share about personally knowing and believing in God.

Hygiene and dress

Gavin distinctly remembers a rather unusual encounter. One day, having finished a shift at work, he came across a person in the street who was preaching about Jesus. Curious to hear what the person was saying, Gavin drew near – too near. His focus quickly shifted from the message being shared to the person's unkempt and dirty clothing, dishevelled hair and unpleasant body odour. To this day, Gavin remembers thinking, 'As Christians, it's no good talking about the washing of the water of the word if the gospel hasn't even taught us how to wash our clothes ... or ourselves!'

The Scriptures reveal the Lord's desire for spiritual sons of God to understand the importance of their personal hygiene and their mindset toward dress. We have already commented on a godly mindset toward *choosing* our clothing. In this section, we are addressing our personal cleanliness and the cleanliness of our clothes.

Throughout the book of Leviticus, Moses recorded the Lord's detailed instructions concerning the cleanliness and bathing procedures of the nation of Israel. This was not just ceremonial or symbolic! The Lord was addressing their hygiene and the washing of their clothing, because their diligence on these matters demonstrated their respect for Him and, importantly, their care and regard for one another. For example, in the third month after the nation of Israel had gone out from Egypt, 'The Lord said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and *let them wash their garments*".' Exo 19:10. The Lord gave

this instruction because He planned to come down to Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people.

Similarly, we read in the book of Deuteronomy, ‘Since the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp to deliver you and to defeat your enemies before you, therefore your camp must be holy; and He must not see anything indecent among you or He will turn away from you’.

Deu 23:14. The context of this verse was actually to do with the nation of Israel’s sewerage, most likely because of the close proximity with which they were encamped together. Cleanliness of this nature was necessary in order to combat disease and sickness.

Nevertheless, the principle of the matter remains. As spiritual sons of God, we recognise that God has created us as *body*, soul and spirit. Any laziness or lack of discipline in relation to our personal hygiene or to the cleanliness of our clothing *does* impact upon others.

Remembering his encounter with the street preacher, Gavin includes taking a shower, shaving, doing his hair, wearing clean clothing, cleaning his teeth and applying deodorant as part of his morning routine. In so doing, he shows regard for the rest of his family, for those whom he meets at university, and for those whom he works alongside when he offers at church and has shifts at work.

Health

We read in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, ‘Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.’ 1Co 6:19-20. The truth is that we have been given *one* earthly body and we need to steward it accordingly! While the days for every Christian are determined by God, and they will not die one moment earlier than the Father has ordained if they remain obedient to His will, it is still possible for a spiritual man to cut his days short by failing to look after his health.

It is equally true that poor discipline in the area of health, such as bad diet and inadequate exercise, can reduce a person’s capacity to ‘glorify God in their body’. That is, they render themselves unable to fulfil the works of God because of the state of their physical body. Obviously, there are specific health matters and ailments that befall every person throughout their lifetime. Our focus in this section, however, is on how we steward our health as a matter of personal discipline.

While some young adults do not give too much attention to maintaining their physical health, others give a great deal. When it comes to exercising, it is helpful to remember the words of Paul to Timothy. He wrote, 'Bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come'. 1Ti 4:8. We do not take our physique with us when we depart from this present earth. The Lord prepares a spiritual, heavenly body for us! It is helpful to keep this in perspective when it comes to the inclusion of exercise within a balanced daily routine.

A spiritual man gives attention to his physical health for one reason. His earthly body is the vessel through which he fulfils the works that the Father has prepared for him to do in this age. An excessive preoccupation with, or an addiction to, exercise will jeopardise a balanced routine. For example, some young adults can get out of bed for an early morning session at the gym, but then struggle to rise early for a church prayer meeting.

When Gavin finished high school, he took out a gym membership. Gavin enjoyed improving his fitness – lasting longer on various cardio machines and lifting heavier weights. After several months, Gavin had also made a number of new friends within the gym community. One day, a deacon in the music administration at church asked Gavin how his music practice was going. He had noticed that Gavin had been progressively losing dexterity on his instrument and struggling to maintain good intonation for the full duration of an *agape* communion service. This was the wake-up call that Gavin needed. He loved the song of the Lord and loved offering within the orchestra. But he had stopped preparing his offering adequately.

As Gavin fellowshiped around his music practice and the other elements of his life, he realised how convicted he felt over the gym. He also realised how much he was seeking the verification of his identity through the friendships and affirmation of the gym community. They were nice people and spoke impartially about Gavin being a Christian. Even so, Gavin knew that he had drifted. He still goes to the gym, but not at the expense of offering his first and his best; nor at the expense of maintaining a balanced daily routine. Having sought fellowship around the matter, Gavin also received wisdom to understand the pull of the gym community and how to, instead, verify his identity in Christ.

Career

We read in Paul's letter to the Colossians, 'Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with sincerity of heart, fearing the Lord. Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men.' Col 3:22-23. How a spiritual man views their career is important - once they are working fulltime, they will spend a large portion of their time both at work and thinking about work.

On one hand, a son of God willingly and cheerfully obeys their employer because they believe that the Lord has sown them to that context. In this way, their obedience to their employer is their obedience to serve the Lord. On the other hand, and despite the hours involved, the career of a son of God should not hinder their participation in the program of fellowship that is extended to them from the Lord's table. We recall the parable of the great banquet and the excuses given by those who rejected the invitation for fellowship. Luk 14:12-24. Whether it be the opportunity for career advancement (buying a new or additional 'piece of land') or business expansion (buying 'five yoke of oxen'), any career pursuit that draws a spiritual man away from fellowship is a bondage that is not from the Lord.

Gavin took his first part-time job when he started at university. He loved being able to contribute, financially, towards the kingdom of God and towards the expenses associated with living at home. After a few months with that employer, Gavin proved to be an excellent and adept worker. The busiest shifts at his workplace were over the weekend. Soon, Gavin's employer started rostering the limited number of hours that Gavin was prepared to work each week, on weekends. Despite Gavin explaining his commitment to church events over the weekend, his employer still insisted that he be available, if needed, for weekend shifts. Gavin sought fellowship regarding his phase of life and his priorities. His focus was on studying, and learning to balance the other areas of his daily program. Gavin made the decision to quit this job because it was binding him, and hindering his participation in fellowship. Since then, he has found another part-time job, with a boss who happily rosters him on weekdays and around his university hours.

Recreation

There is little doubt that as news about Jesus' earthly ministry spread, He was often sought out and pursued by large crowds of people. Mar 3:7.

Mar 3:20. Mat 14:13. Despite the busyness of His ministry work, Jesus encouraged His disciples, saying, 'Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while.' Mar 6:31. Jesus told His disciples to rest because they did not even have time to eat! Perhaps it is encouraging for you to know that Jesus recognises our need to rest and refresh. The question is, what genuinely refreshes us, and what kinds of recreation avail this rest?

Recreation is not escapism. The rest of God, which is available daily for a spiritual man, is not a break or an escape from a person's reality. For example, there is nothing inherently wrong with watching a movie. But watching a movie to escape the pressure of an assignment due the next day will not change the reality of needing to do that assignment. Rest is not procrastination; nor distraction. So, what is the rest of God?

Paul wrote to the Hebrews, saying, 'Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it'. Heb 4:1. Continuing, Paul said, 'For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, "AS I SWORE IN MY WRATH, THEY SHALL NOT ENTER MY REST," although *His works were finished from the foundation of the world.*' Heb 4:3.

We enter the rest of God by abiding in Christ, who has *already* finished our works and *already* fulfilled our righteousness in His once, for all, offering. In this way, the rest of God is not a reprieve from the responsibilities that we have in life; it is the testimony of His strength and refreshing, by grace, in the midst of our labours.

On the subject of movies and entertainment, we need to guard the influences that we allow into our mind. If we allow ourselves to be bombarded with the things of the world, then they *will* create a strong desire *for* the world within us. We must not be deceived. We cannot, in the name of being committed Christians, believe that we have some kind of power over worldly, sensual influences. There is a difference between arrogantly saying, 'I can handle it', and wisely saying, 'I can see trouble from afar and I am choosing to hide myself from it.'

The apostle Peter wrote about the outcome of sensual and worldly cultures upon Lot, pointing out that righteous Lot was not only unable to 'handle it' – he needed rescuing! 'He [the Lord] *rescued* righteous Lot, *oppressed* by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men (for *by what he saw and heard* that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds).' 2Pe 2:7-8.

It is a sobering thought that if we allow our minds, which are a faculty of our soul, to be influenced by worldly definitions of pleasure and recreation, physical probity and sexual behaviour, the desires that those influences promote will torment us. The apostle Paul also understood this point and wrote to Titus with a similar reminder. 'The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us to *deny ungodliness and worldly desires* and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age.' Tit 2:11-12. We can open the door to these damaging worldly influences through our use of social media, what we watch on television, and the trending worldly cultures that we esteem and pursue.

Offering

Ideally, within the context of covenant households, children are progressively encouraged and taught how to engage in the dialogue of present truth. Nevertheless, as we considered in the previous article with Cain and Abel, the young adult years present an opportunity for participation beyond and apart from the family. We recall that Cain and Abel approached their unique participation in the fellowship of Yahweh *by offering*.

When we make offering, we are *presenting ourselves to the Lord*. We are presenting the fruit that we have brought forth as sons of God, having laboured, by grace, according to name and abilities. In the first case, this will be our testimony – speaking by faith – concerning the life of Christ that has been multiplied to us through our fellowship in His offering and sufferings. In the second case, our fruit includes the physical, tangible contributions that we make to the administration of offering within a lampstand church. Importantly, Jesus made a key statement concerning offering when He said, 'Each tree is known by its own fruit.' Luk 6:44.

Since finishing high school, Gavin has prioritised his participation in tangible areas of offering at church. He plays in the orchestra, is involved in cleaning teams and attends the monthly working bee. But in addition to these areas of offering, he received a measure of faith akin to Paul's admonition to the Corinthians to 'on the first day of every week, *put aside* and save'. 1Co 16:2. Gavin has been able to offer one day a week at church, which he shares between the mowing team and the music office. His faith was to present himself, by offering, for the sake of being better known. And, quite apart from the specific work that he has done, the fellowship that he has found with those who are receiving his offering,

has provided him with a context to receive input concerning his identity and maturity as a spiritual man.

Article 6

The culture of meeting – Having root in ourselves

Tim Maurice

'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.

Having root in ourselves

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 13:21. '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 if we are to be able to truly meet another person in the body of Christ.

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 hearts. 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:

'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 says that he has 'unclean lips' he doesn't mean that he is given to swearing or to the occasional inappropriate outburst. He means that the motivation, tone and content of his speech is corrupt because it is sourced from his iniquity. We know this is the case, because the seraph who ministers to him declares afterward that he has 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.

We can say, then, that a person with root in themselves has a testimony of their iniquity being taken away by the Lord. Furthermore, Isaiah's cry reveals some vital points of spiritual self-understanding. His cry reveals that Isaiah has 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 cried out and said, '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, equally, 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.

Our point here is that a person who has met the Lord in this way has learned to mourn their iniquity. This makes them a person who has understanding. 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. They testify that they have looked upon Christ and mourned for having been a transgressor who laid Christ's seven wounds upon Him.

A person with this testimony is able to meet another son of God in the fellowship of the offering of Christ. This is what we mean by 'meeting'. We can say, then, that *mourning gives a person the capacity to befriend another person*. That is because someone who has learned to mourn is one who has responded the word of Christ in faith-obedience. They keep His commandments, which are to love the Lord with all their heart and to love their neighbour as themselves. Having seen their iniquity removed and their sin forgiven, this person is not nourishing a projection within themselves. As such, they can meet freely with other people.

Meeting in the body of Christ

As you interact with one another, you have the opportunity to meet and experience the bond of fellowship. On the other hand, you also have the opportunity to go your own way in the hope that people will accept your projection of yourself. Let's consider what both of these scenarios might look like.

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. 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. He fell for the temptation of Satan, who constantly asks, 'Did God really say that?'

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:

Then Saul said to Samuel, '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 agrees with Samuel superficially, but only after being caught out. The second thing is that he blames the people for his disobedience in an attempt to avoid accountability for his iniquity. Third, he attempts to tie Samuel to his iniquity by helping him to save face in front of the people.

We can draw three conclusions from this:

1. 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. Any deviation from simple faith-obedience only indicates that we still harbour an iniquitous agenda.
2. When our iniquity is exposed, we must be accountable. We are without excuse.
3. We must not bring another agenda into our conversation. 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 hearts.

A testimony of turning

King David sinned greatly when he took Uriah the Hittite's wife and then had Uriah killed in battle. 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.

Then David 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. 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.

Article 7

The culture of meeting – Being rooted and grounded in love

Tim Maurice

'For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.' Eph 3:14-19.

When we have root within ourselves, we begin to be rooted and grounded in love. The church is 'the pillar and ground of truth'. 1Ti 3:15. We are to be planted in the body of Christ. When the love of God is poured into our

hearts, we can be motivated by that love to lay down our lives for another person. In other words, as we mature in love we increasingly obtain the capacity to be poured out in the service of someone else.

Let's take examine Paul's prayer above and note some key points.

1. Every family in heaven and on earth derives its name from the Father. This is a reference to the remnant of the Spirit which is bestowed upon a couple that is joined in one Spirit by the Lord.
2. The Father grants us the riches of His glory, strengthening us in the inner man, when He delivers us from our iniquity and sin and places His name upon us.
3. As a result, we receive the faith of Christ to be a son of God. Along with the Father and the Holy Spirit, Christ takes up residence within us.
4. We are planted in the body of Christ because the love of God has been poured into our hearts. Rom. 5:5. Our understanding of His love comes to us in the fellowship of 'all the saints' in the agape meal.
5. The love poured into us by the Holy Spirit, as we join Christ's offering journey, grants us the daily grace to know the love of Christ personally. This knowing is a spiritual knowing that is completely unlike intellectual knowledge. As we receive this unique knowledge from Him, we see that we are being filled up and being conformed to the likeness of the image of God.

In this passage, Paul has documented a whole culture. 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. Otherwise, courtship will only become an exercise in ticking boxes, performance and projection.

When we are rooted and grounded in love, offering is our way of life. We are the aroma of life to another. 2Co 2:16. 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. In receiving the word together wholeheartedly, their *agape* meal became a context of sincere – that is, genuine – connection and fellowship:

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.

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 3:18.

Honour and fear – the hallmarks of offering

‘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. 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 lives back to Him.

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 us, acknowledging that it belongs to Him. The Father is honoured as we bring the firstfruits of the Spirit that He has given us. 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’.

A person walking in the fear of the Lord is obtaining wisdom. 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. 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.

A young man and a young woman who are walking in this culture will find that they can meet.

The man will demonstrate that he understands what it means to 'give himself up' for another, and to sanctify himself and honour himself. It is already part of his culture to make offering towards another person. It is his custom in the body of Christ. Therefore, he will find it natural to regard a particular woman, whom he might be getting to know, in sanctification and honour of her name. In understanding the honour bestowed on him by the Father, the man will be able to honour the woman he is getting to know.

Being familiar with the depths of his fallen wretchedness in Adam, he will not feel inadequate because of this knowledge. On the contrary, he will rejoice in the mercy of God's full provision for him and will gladly and sincerely share his testimony of this knowledge with the woman.

Equally, a woman can meet a godly man because she has been illuminated to the depths of her deception in the Fall and has mourned alone for piercing Christ. She understands the honour of the riches of the Father's glory towards her and is not striving to compete with or possess a man. She has personally met the Father in order to understand who she is. She is confident because she has accepted the Father's name for her.

Friendship for both parties is, therefore, not a context for self-discovery. Nor is it likely to grow into a form of compensation in an attempt to fill the void within them. They are emptying in order to offer, rather than craving to be filled. They have been filled up to the fullness of God. They place no pressure on another person to supply what only God can.

In this way, romance has no room to drive the relationship. Friendship and godly romance will spring naturally out of the *agape* (love of God) which is the shared life and motivation of the couple. When this is so, the Lord will lead their conversation to the tree of life and feed them from it. However, if they depart from this conversation they will find themselves being driven by motivations to fill the void within them, either by conquering or by being conquered. Even where this does not become overtly immoral, it will still result in a carnal bond which creates enmity and an inability to meet.

As you approach friendships together, including friendships which may lead on to courtship, keep the culture of fellowship firmly in your minds and hearts. This culture is demonstrated in the daily meeting and breaking of bread together with gladness and simplicity of heart. This culture describes our uncomplicated participation in the anointing of one Spirit together. Here, we experience the immanence of the Lord's life, as we receive His word ministered from the fellowship of the presbytery. This is where we meet and find true friendship.

The word 'simplicity' used in this instance of the Scriptures denotes the simple obedience of a disciple. Paul was concerned for the Corinthians, that their hearts would not be 'corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ'. 2Co 11:3. This is the simplicity that resists the temptation of Satan to deviate from the obedience found in a fellowship of the word. This culture of obedience will produce the gladness in us described by the psalmist:

'I will bless the LORD who has counselled me;
Indeed, my mind instructs me in the night.
I have set the LORD continually before me;
Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.
Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices;
My flesh also will dwell securely.' Psa 16:7-9.

Article 8

Preparing to receive a portion of His Spirit

Richie Kaa

In recent years, we have been growing in our understanding of how the Lord makes special provision for those who marry according to His covenant purpose. That is, the Lord desires that each couple begins to receive a portion of His Spirit on the day that they marry, in order that they might be joined in one Spirit and equipped for the fulfilment of His will in their marriage. Mal 2:15.

By implication, no such requirement concerning an additional portion exists outside of marriage. This is because the choice to marry according to the covenant purpose of God carries with it the specific mandate of bringing forth godly seed. Mal 2. This is unachievable for any couple unless they receive Yahweh's generous allocation of grace each day.

In this article, we will consider the necessary preparation toward Christian marriage, which has, as its defining cultural centrepiece, a daily conversation with Yahweh at the tree of life, where each couple is fed

with the substance of their name. This is a daily prayer conversation where they receive grace for the unique works of each person's sanctification within the covenant of their marriage.

With this as our focus, we have approached this article by summarising the key points of preparation that are currently being illuminated among us. We will begin with a summary of *marriage* at the tree of life, where a portion of the Spirit as a daily anointing is received in fellowship with Yahweh.

We will then consider the *courtship* phase, highlighting the key waypoints that are preparatory toward a one-Spirit marriage.

Finally, we will briefly consider several key *discipleship* waypoints that are consistent with a young person who is 'coming of age', and that are helpfully established as the basis for an initiative toward courtship.

Christian marriage

It is important to understand that a woman is called with her husband, but she is called *by her own name*. This makes her personally accountable to the Father.

Our former understanding was that a married woman's primary work is to serve her husband's ministry agenda, believing this to be her submission to his headship. However, such an approach causes her to be unaccountable in relation to her own sonship initiative.

Furthermore, no couple should meet at the tree of life for the purpose of arranging their household program or arranging how she will service his agenda, as though this might verify her identity. The verifying of a woman's identity by this kind of 'teamwork' approach is not acceptable to the Father, and demonstrates a pragmatic compensation for not walking in His grace.

When this is the basis of a marriage, it will inevitably fail. It will be characterised by dystrophy, alienation and bickering, as well as by a focus toward everyone else's marriage except one's own. This is because the identity of every son can be verified *only* at the tree of life, where the substance of their name is fed to them from the mouth of Christ. Accordingly, a portion of the Spirit is given amidst the genuine conversation of two born-again sons who are both finding what is spiritual, at the tree of life, where Yahweh is feeding them.

In line with this upgrade, the Lord is urging this current generation of Christian young adults to take heed to their daily culture and routine prior to marriage, including making every effort to be joined to the *agape* meal at the tree of life and to be established in its culture. This will serve as proper preparation for Christian marriage, where they will eventually be joined by their spouse in conversation with Yahweh each day.

This is where they will receive a portion of the Spirit, first enabling them to be joined in one Spirit with each other, and then activating them toward their specific works of offering according to the only order of life that connects God with man, and by which the grace of God flows to them. The Scriptures refer to this as *'the order of headship'*. 1Co 11:2-16.

Agape defines the nature of our participation at the tree of life; that is, the motivation of love to lay down our life for the other according to each person's sanctification. This will mean that a husband's expression will be completely different from his wife's expression, and neither will feel demeaned or dishonoured. This, then, describes the conversation (and conduct) of couples who are eating at the tree of life. This is equipping each couple for their work of establishing the culture and routines of a covenant household with a view to bringing forth children who are trained and nurtured according to the divine nature which they have received from the womb.

The capacity of this portion is also key to the evangelistic ministry of the church, where many other sons (not born in covenant homes) will be bought to glory within households that have been equipped to invite, proclaim, birth and establish those who come into their homes as the doorway into the church.

Self-love

An important preparation toward Christian marriage is the love of oneself. This is particularly so for the Christian man, as it will be the basis for how he will love his wife.

Our emphasis here is not to bring a warning about those who are prone to self-loathing or self-harming. Rather, it is to convey a proper understanding of love, which, when applied to the self, has nothing to do with strong and intense emotions or with any kind of romantic feeling.

Love is firstly about *offering*. The evidence of self-love, which is first established in the man prior to marriage, and which also qualifies him to

marry, is that he has learned to nourish and cherish his own flesh. Eph 5:29. To 'nourish' refers to 'nurturing and nourishing one upwards to maturity', with an implied reference to food and being fed toward maturity.

The word 'cherish' is different. It refers to being 'warmed', and links here to defending one from the cold by clothing or covering. The two expressions denote that a man provides food and covering for his body.

Herein lies the basis for how a man will love his wife. He is first established as one who has been fed at the tree of life under the care of godly parents. And, having 'come of age', he now presents himself to receive what Yahweh would *feed* him as he continues in the *agape* meal to mature in his sonship. He has also given attention to his sanctification, being sufficiently *clothed* in his 'priestly garments' as one who is proving the will of God by offering in each season.

Courtship

We will now consider the phase leading into marriage, and give brief attention to the courtship phase, noting that *courtship is a most significant activity*. This is because the culture of your bond (i.e. what you plan and commit to as the priority of your life together), which you will define prior to your wedding day, is the very *culture* that will be multiplied in your marriage. This, then, will shape how you walk together and also how you will raise your family.

Let us consider the basis of a courtship. If you intend to build a house, you will need several key requirements. You will need some 'land' to build on; that is, you will need to be established *on the ground of fellowship*. Mat 13:44. You will need 'plans for your house', which are given to you as you build in *obedience to the word of Christ*. Mat 7:24-25. You will need the right 'materials' – the elementary *teachings about Christ*. Heb 6:1; 1Cor 3:12-13. And you will need to be established in relationship with 'skilled tradesmen' to help you to build, referring to *a presbytery and the eldering brethren* with whom you will seek fellowship to assist you in *the building of your house*. 1Jn 1:3.

Courtship is, then, the appropriate timeframe in which a couple personally assesses and tests whether they have the personal and relational requirements to proceed toward the building of a new 'house'. Please note: you should not proceed to the 'construction phase' if the basic requirements of a new house are not in your possession.

However, when a couple has received faith to proceed to marry, they will begin the construction phase, which we have referred to in other publications as *'the bonding phase'*. This commences 6-8 months prior to marriage.

Marriage is, then, the point at which the couple 'occupies' their new house.

What kind of marriage will you build?

However, the focus of our meditation is to consider the question, 'What kind of house will you build?' In other words, what will be the culture of your *covenant*? A couple are not just choosing each other, they are choosing how they will be joined in marriage.

Every Christian couple desires that their marriage is *blessed* and *approved* by God. This is made possible as a couple presents themselves for fellowship during their courtship, where they receive illumination and faith for their new house to be established.

Jesus described how a house is built. He said, 'He who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them, is likened to a wise man who built His house upon a rock.' Mat 7:24. The point is that *the word of Christ is essential*; and the one who builds on any other foundation is likened by Jesus to a fool. This would include a sacramental approach which equates 'approval' from a church leader with 'blessing', sought through a combination of compliance and religious projection. The simple rationale here is that, if a courting couple 'does the right thing' and 'says the right thing', they will achieve their shared goal.

Sadly, marriage on this basis can result only in a carnal and legal union. This is because marriage according to the will of God requires that both persons receive *faith*. And there can be no faith without illumination; no illumination without fellowship; and no fellowship without the word of Christ being proclaimed.

It is likely that any couple who proceed by a sacramental mode will be energised by the sense of personal verification that they receive in the relationship, compelling them to endure the obstacle course called 'courtship', in pursuit of their shared goal. However, there is no true meeting in this approach to marriage.

Christian marriage is not about the other serving you; nor about your need for verification from the other. Such a need would surely reveal an

idol in the heart. Thankfully, this kind of unreality can be addressed (i.e. 'thrust through') by believing parents and pastoral carers so that every young person is free to choose another from the basis of *offering love*, rather than through *self-need*. Zec 13:3.

Christian marriage belongs to, and has its part in, the Everlasting Covenant that God has sought with mankind. Marriage is His idea, and we would do well to take this point seriously. This is because, unless we are joined properly and then proceed according to the culture of His covenant, we will not receive grace for marriage and for the work that is committed to a Christian couple.

Discipleship

Let us now consider the preparatory phase of courtship and give brief attention to several discipleship waypoints that align with the coming-of-age season. The apostle Peter was a young adult (approximately 21 years of age) when he, with his brother Andrew responded to Christ's invitation to follow Him. Mat 4:19-20. We read that they 'immediately left their nets and followed [Jesus]'.

But, of particular interest to our current focus, is that it took a further three years for Peter, as one of Jesus' closest disciples, to be converted from the iniquity of his religious projection that repeatedly provoked him toward the sin of presumption.

Conversion

Although children who are born to believing homes are born with the seed of divine nature, conversion is completely essential if they are to proceed to maturity. This is because a person cannot be joined to the conversation with Yahweh at the tree of life, where they receive the grace of life for daily living and the substance of their name, until the iniquitous idolatry residing in their heart is exposed and removed, and the sin that it provokes is purged.

For Peter, this occurred in the courtyard of Caiaphas. Luk 22:61.

Like the fiery serpents who bit those who spoke with *unclean lips* against Yahweh and Moses, or the fiery coals that were applied to Isaiah's *unclean lips*, Christ's fiery eyes searched Peter's heart to fully expose his iniquity and to bring him to a place of complete poverty. This is when Peter came to an endpoint concerning his religious projection. Jesus said

that when we arrive at this place, we have come onto the ground of blessing, because we have been relieved of and delivered from our religious projections, having seen with our own eyes what our iniquity has produced. Mat 5:3. These are depths we must look upon if we are to know the heights of our name and works.

New birth

Those who are born in covenant homes are born with the seed of divine nature. Parents faithfully nurture and admonish their children in faith toward the season in which their children will need to choose what the Father has chosen for them. We refer to this season as '*coming of age*'.

Every young person is given freedom of choice. They will either continue to build upon the foundation of the divine nature that their parents have chosen for them; or they will reject this and choose to build upon the foundation of their own darkened understanding.

Paul explained that there are two aspects to the building of a house. The first is to build on an established foundation; the second concerns the way you build upon the foundation. Describing himself as 'a wise master builder', the apostle Paul confirmed Christ as being the sure, or only, foundation, which he himself had laid in order that others would build upon it. 1Co 3:10-11.

Children who are born with the divine nature are born with the foundation of Christ already laid in their hearts. However, in the very next verse, Paul shifted his attention from the foundation on which to build, to the *materials* with which to build, referring to the doctrines, or teachings, with which those following Paul would build. Paul then divided the building materials (teachings) into two groups: those which are permanent and those which are temporary.

We then observe that both aspects of the house - the foundation and the structure - will be tested. The storm (i.e. the wind, the rain and the floods) will come to every Christian household to test whether Christ is their foundation. Likewise, the fire will also come to test every home, and will determine by *which gospel* the couple has built their house. 'If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.' 1Co 3:14-15 NLT.

Accordingly, we are exhorted to ‘take heed how we build’. The point is that it is not enough to build upon the foundation of Christ; we must also *remain diligent* and *continue to build* according to the present truth word of Christ that is proclaimed by His presbytery.

Baptism

Finally, *baptism* is the daily commitment of a son of God to continue to choose what *God* has chosen. We walk in the faith of our baptism as we remain joined to His offering journey. We choose this when we choose to die with Christ and to receive our daily circumstances as a ‘crafted package’ with our name on it.

We can refer to this crafted package as ‘the day that the Lord has made, in which we can rejoice and be glad’, because it contains the *finished* works of our sonship that He is priesting to us. By this means, it contains the circumcision of Christ, where the propensity to go *our own way* and to define *our own image* is being cut from our heart, and the resurrection life of Christ which is being poured into our heart becomes the expression of our sonship.

Conclusion

The young adult years should be a dynamic and vibrant season of preparation, and should not be viewed as ‘the waiting room’ of life, where you wait and wonder when your time or opportunity will come. In other words, the young adult phase of life is not a context or season that you simply ‘endure’ in hope for courtship.

The young adult season is a legitimate training context in which you are *receiving faith for your sonship*. It is where you are filled with initiative to test and prove the will of God concerning your name and works, thus preparing you to step confidently into the next season of life.

Courtship should not be the context in which you finally decide to ‘get serious’ and give attention to your name and works. Courtship is a season of *preparation*, entered into by two disciples who are making a daily commitment to choose what God has chosen concerning their name and works, and who have faith to test the reality and viability of building a new house. There must be a proven and established foundation in the life of each Christian disciple so that an initiative toward courtship is their reality.

Article 9

Walking blamelessly – A meditation on friendship

David Hall

The first point we need to appreciate 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’. 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. 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 for us 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.

'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 at 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. 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, our brothers and sisters, in Christ.

This might be a new thought for us. Friendship begins with mourning alone in response to the word of the Father! Hang on! Everything within my fallen being demands that friendship means that I'm not supposed to

be alone and am to be supported by those who love me! No; this is the lie of Satan saying that 'we will not die' if we exercise our fallen love or other law.

So, we see that the need to humble ourselves and to mourn becomes a very important skill for us to learn because, at every agape meal, the word proclaimed to us is calling us to turn and mourn in repentance and faith. This means that we will be able to receive our brethren, or friends, as we eat and drink together and receive the obedient, friendship life of the Father through the ministry of Christ that we receive from our brethren.

When we receive this word, 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. That is friendship found in the word of faith-obedience on the one ground of fellowship.

Notice these Scriptures regarding the friendship of God. 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. This does not refer to someone having an earthly inheritance in the land of Israel, but 'leans on' the friendship of Abraham being an *eternal* relationship with Yahweh. This is the 'one ground of fellowship' that is our eternal inheritance.

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 exclusive to fellowship in the light. 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; and every other 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.

Does this challenge your idea of friendship? Why not speak the faith of your illumination to those who care for your soul? Meditate on the changes that your 'world view' might need to undergo in order for you to be a true friend.

Article 10

Disciples walking blamelessly

David Hall

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 or off-cuts from a piece of fabric for a wedding dress. The term can, however, be more simply understood as a 'portion'. So 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".' So, we see that there is a portion of the Spirit available specifically for a married couple that is tailored to their marriage covenant and name, through which they are able to walk blamelessly in the fellowship of Yahweh, and can 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! The remnant of the Spirit is an anointing of grace specifically tailored to the new name that a couple receives as husband and wife as they finalise their covenant on their wedding day. You could

say that they receive daily from the tree of life another portion of the divine nature, giving grace that is unique to their identity and name.

If we remember that the man and woman who were intending to be joined needed first to be disciples before moving into a marriage, we see that while the remnant of the Spirit is a further portion of the divine nature, their capacity to walk blamelessly, as a single person was given to them when they received the divine nature and were thus born of the Spirit. This is a portion of the Spirit. Then, as individuals, they called the name of Yahweh upon themselves in baptism in order to become a member in particular of Christ's body, and then they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit (another portion of the Spirit called a 'firstfruits'). Blamelessness as a culture is further described in these Scriptures: Rom 8:23. 1Ti 6:11-16. 1Th 3:12-13. 1Th 5:23. Php 2:14-15. 1Co 1:8.

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. They also understand how to turn to the Lord in order to have their other law cut from them through their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ as a member in particular of His body.

What single people are not doing (yet), is receiving a remnant of the Spirit unique to a couple, so that they can bring forth children according to the Spirit. Instead, they are cultivating the divine nature in themselves, and are multiplying life to the body of Christ in an *agape* fellowship. In the will of the Lord however, they will keep in view that they are to learn the *diligence* required to cut off the culture of the flesh, and to invest in the *obedience of faith* by which they will obtain the portion of the remnant of the Spirit in due time, and so bring forth godly children. 2Pe 1:2-11.

Walking blameless – as a member in particular

Disciples who desire to walk blamelessly need to learn how to set their mind on things above and walk in the Spirit. 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. 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 the things that the Father has given to us as His sons and daughters. 1Co 2:12. These are 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. In our current season, this emphasis is being taught to us as we participate in the agape meal. It is here that we respond to His word by turning to Him in repentance, and in the faith that speaks 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 element of what it means to be blameless.

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. 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. 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'. These 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. When expressed, the instruction to a husband to love his wife, dwelling with understanding and giving honour to her and together multiplying the life of God to their family and in the body of Christ, is the evidence that the conversation, or prayer, of their agape fellowship with

the Lord is not hindered. They are abounding as 'heirs together of the grace of life'. 1Pe 3:7. This is evidence that the remnant of the Spirit has been received in their marriage. We are learning that same culture of faith when we participate in the same conversation of faith and receive the blessing of Abraham, which is the promise of the Spirit. 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 and confirmed, or established, by God, so that we may be blameless in the day of our Lord. 1Co 1:8.

Cultivating the divine nature

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; and that we believe its testimony and life to us in the mouths of the messengers and our brethren (drinking the cup). 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 being fed to us by our brethren.

When we present ourselves for participation in the agape meal, we believe that the word and its fellowship is going to help us to nurture the divine nature so that, 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.

When, during times of stress, our testimony reflects our joy in receiving the resurrection life of God, even as our suffering exposes us to humiliation caused by others, we are expressing the *virtue* of Christ. 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. And we can demonstrate the qualities of Christ's sonship in the midst of suffering, through '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, and we are being strengthened though 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 our obedience that we are learning as we follow Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings and learn and testify of our illuminated conviction (positive) 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.

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. '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. The way in which they live will reveal the life and culture of God Himself. 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, because they know God who is love and, therefore, they can know themselves in relation to Him. They are becoming established in the love and righteousness of God and can love their neighbour as themselves. 2Co 5:21.

'For if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' 2Pe 1:10-11.