

# PRAYER IN FAMILY

Peter Hay, prepared for word ministry, 25 September 2020

Transcription of recording, slightly edited

## Introduction

Hello, everyone. Today we are going to look at the second session of the fourth foundation of fellowship, which is prayer.

We had planned to include both family prayer and devotions, together with house to house, or corporate, prayer. However, during the preparations it became apparent that we would only have time to look at family prayer.

We will also touch on some other aspects of prayer that we will consider in more detail next week.

## Prayer in our homes

Let us begin with an important point. Unless prayer is a reality in our own houses, our participation in corporate or house to house prayer will be unprofitable.

That is somewhat obvious, isn't it? If we cannot pray together within our home, there will be a limit to our prayers when gathered with another household.

## Prayer as incense

Before we look more specifically at what house, or family, prayer and devotions might 'look like', it will be helpful to identify four primary expressions of prayer as revealed in the Old Testament.

These four dimensions of prayer are part of our prayer speech, or 'conversation'. In the Scriptures, prayer is symbolised as the incense that was offered every morning and every evening on the golden altar in the tabernacle of Moses.

The term 'every morning and every evening' does not refer to the time schedule that we need to devote to. Rather, it highlights the point that this prayer conversation is to be *daily* and *continual*.

We will now highlight, from the Scriptures, the relationship between incense and prayer, and then we will look at these four dimensions of incense as part of our prayer conversation.

The first Scripture we will go to is a psalm where David said, 'Lord, I cry out to You; make haste to me!' This is a *cry*, or a *speech*, to the Lord.

'Give ear to my voice when I cry out to You. Let my prayer be set before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.' Psa 141:1-2.

At the evening sacrifice, there was the burnt offering of a lamb, and it is interesting to note the relationship between incense, prayer and the *connection to offering*. That was the point that we were making last week.

The next Scripture that we will look at is from the book of Revelation. 'Now when He had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each having a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song, saying: 'You're worthy to take the scroll, and open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, and have made us kings and priests to our God; and we shall reign on the earth'. Rev 5:8-10.

The point I am focusing on is that the golden bowls in the hands of the twenty-four elders, full of incense - *full of incense* - are the prayers of the saints. Incense represents the prayers of the saints.

Let us look more closely at the subject of incense.

## The five components of incense

The incense that was offered in the tabernacle of Moses comprised four sweet spices: stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense, which were mixed in equal measure. To these four spices was added *salt*.

Therefore, there were *five* elements comprising the incense which was laid on the coals of the golden altar. That created a cloud of incense that mingled with the Shekinah glory, or the presence of Yahweh. These prayers were joining the priestly prayer to the fellowship of Yahweh.

The four sweet spices represent four aspects of prayerful worship, or fellowship, with Yahweh. The *salt* represents the ministry of the Holy Spirit who, as we learnt in our last session, enables us to join the fellowship of prayer without the corruption of our own fleshly expression.

Remember, we are not bringing our own fleshly petitions, and our own will, to bear on the fellowship of Yahweh. That would be like bringing our *filthy feet and shoes onto the holy ground* of Yahweh's own conversation.

The only way in which we can join that prayer conversation is by the Holy Spirit, which is *the salt element* added to these four dimensions of prayer.

The four expressions of prayer as incense are foundational to praying *individually, as families, and from house to house.*

In this regard, many of us need to, by faith, reform our culture in relation to prayer. We should see these four dimensions of prayer as incense, as part of our conversation within the fellowship of Yahweh by the Holy Spirit.

### **The Lord's prayer**

These four elements of incense, or aspects of prayer, were identified by Jesus when He taught His disciples to pray. Mat 6:9-13. Luk 11:2-4.

They can be *spoken*, obviously, and they can also be *sung*.

We have just read that the twenty-four elders with bowls of incense sang a *song*. So, singing is to be part of our prayerful devotion individually, as families, and also as a community of believers.

Let us consider the four aspects of incense, or four dimensions of prayer, by the Holy Spirit.

### **Praise, worship and thanksgiving to God the Father**

The first is the offering of praise, worship and thanksgiving to God the Father. Heb 13:15. Psa 34:1-3. Psa 95:1-2.

No matter what we do, whether it be prayer, rejoicing, thanksgiving or glorifying God the Father, we do it in the fear of the Lord.

Jesus drew our attention to this when He said, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.'

The word 'hallowed' means to 'be sanctified,' so to hallow the Father means to not bring anything onto the ground of prayer that is other than the expression of *grace* that we have received from the God of all grace.

What we have received from Him, we declare back to Him, through praise, worship and thanksgiving.' This point about the sanctification

of our name and its connection to thanksgiving is brought out beautifully by King David.

David said, 'I will bless the Lord *at all times.*' Psa 34:1.

Remember that incense was offered continually. 'I will bless the Lord at all times; His praise shall *continually* be in my mouth.'

'Oh, magnify the Lord with me' [the fellowship element], and let us exalt *His name* together.' Psa 34:3.

This, then, is the first element of prayer - rejoicing, thanksgiving, and glorifying and worshipping God the Father by the capacity of the Holy Spirit.

This is what Jesus meant when He encouraged the disciples to pray, 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name.' Mat 6:9.

'So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Luk 11:2.

### **The commitment to the will of God being done through offering**

The second aspect of incense, or the second dimension of our prayer, is the *commitment to the will of God being done through offering.*

Last week we learned that, when we are joined to Christ's prayer by the Holy Spirit, we are able to *make our request made known to God.*

Christ prayed the prayer that we *can't* pray according to our own understanding and desire, because that is not the prayer, 'Not my will, but Yours, be done' '

We cannot pray that but, by the Spirit, we are joined to Christ's prayer and our hearts are sprinkled with His blood, so that we can serve the living God, which means to *do His will.*

This is a beautiful point, because Jesus said, in the next stanza of His instructions regarding how we are to pray, 'Pray this way, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."' Mat 6:10.'

Remember that we are praying *by the Holy Spirit.*

We are *connected* to Christ's prayer, which is this very prayer; so we *can* then pray it too.

This is our priestly desire to present ourselves, to make offering.

I love the Scripture that the apostle John wrote in his first epistle. 'This is the confidence that we have in Him [in Christ, by the Holy Spirit], that if we ask anything according to His will' [if it's according to His will, we will not be asking amiss], He hears us. 1Jn 5:14.

'Now this is the *confidence*.' And *confidence* is the expression of faith, isn't it?

'If we ask anything according to His will, He *hears* us, and if we *know* that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.' 1Jn 5: 15.

The second dimension of incense, or prayer, then, is *commitment to the will of God* - or asking according to the will of God.

This is what it means to pray, 'Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

And we pray this by the Holy Spirit, in Christ.

### **Receiving and sharing the word of prophecy**

The third aspect of incense, or the element of prayer, which Christ also identified in His teaching on prayer is the *prophetic* word, or *prophecy*, which is for edification, exhortation and comfort.

It is being made 'more sure' in our lives. 1Co 14:3. 2Pe 1:19-21.

This aspect of our prayer - *prophecy* - involves both *receiving* the word of prophecy (remember that prophecy is for edification, for exhortation and for comfort) and also *sharing it with others*.

Do you see that our devotional life around the word that we are receiving is both the word that we have heard as a communion ministry to us, which we are setting as the 'food' for our week, and also the daily devotions that, together, form the prophetic word that is made more sure in our life as we give attention to it?

We bless the Lord for the daily devotions, and thank David Baker who compiles this out of our present truth word.

As we receive the word, the *faith* of that word enters our heart, and can be in our mouth to minister to one another.

This is sharing in 'all good things'. Gal 6:6.

Therefore, this third aspect of prayer involves both *receiving* the word of prophecy, and *sharing* it with others.

This will obviously occur in the communion setting, but it is also an expression in our family devotions.

This is our daily bread, which we 'eat', devotionally.

And it is also our commitment to, and expression of, *repentance* and *reconciliation*.

Do you see that we can only repent in relation to the *word* that we are *hearing*? This is because we are turning to the word; otherwise, we are turning to merely our own sense of what is right or wrong.

This daily bread becomes critical to our ability to walk in repentance, and to be those who are reconciled to our brethren.

This is what Jesus said in relation to His third instruction on how to pray. 'Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we *forgive* our debtors.' Mat 6:12.

Both repentance and reconciliation in relation to our daily bread are fundamental to this third aspect of prayer.

### **The confession of faith expressed through testimony**

The fourth aspect of prayer is the confession of faith expressed through testimony.

It is lovely to realise that the Lord delights in our testimony to Him of His life in us as much as He delights to hear us testify to one another.

That is a great thought, isn't it? As we pray, we can testify to the Lord, 'Lord, I am secure in You. I am obtaining life in the fellowship of Your offering and sufferings.'

This element of prayer, then, is the *testimony* of a believer who is joined to the offering and sufferings of Christ; and, in this fellowship, they are being delivered from their own way.

This is the key, isn't it?

The fellowship of the offering and sufferings of Christ is the means by which our own way is being removed from us, and we are being *enabled* to offer ourselves as a living sacrifice to God as part of a *kingdom of priests*.

Both elements are happening. We are being *delivered* from our own way so that we are not under the captivity of the ruler of this world.

And we are being *taken captive by Christ* to a will of which we are not the source.

It is that which enables us to 'priest' ourselves as a living sacrifice, as a kingdom of priests.

### **Prayer by the Spirit**

This is exactly what Jesus said in the final statement of His prayer instructions to us.

'And do not lead us into temptation, but *deliver us from the evil one*.'

How is He doing that? It is through His offering and sufferings!

'Deliver us from the evil one for Yours is the kingdom and the *power* and the glory forever. Amen.' Mat 6:13.

Do you see how amazing it is that Jesus has given us this instruction on how we are to pray?

And prayer is not a 'protocol', is it? We don't merely, religiously, go through those statements day after day.

What we are being joined to by the Spirit is the *incense*, the four dimensions of prayer, that are connecting us to the very fellowship and conversation of Yahweh Himself.

I don't know about you but, as I understood this, I rejoiced that the Lord has granted us such a participation in the Spirit. The Spirit is the salt, and enables these four dimensions to be grace on our lips by which we proclaim our salvation in the Lord.

### **PRAYER IN OUR HOUSEHOLDS**

So let us consider what this is will be like in our families.

#### **Prayer – a conversation**

We concluded last session by discussing the prayer conversation between Abraham and Yahweh. We noted that the Lord revealed His plans to Abraham and made the point that prayer is literally a two-way *conversation*.

As He did for Abraham, so He does for us. The Lord does reveal His will to us, and we have the opportunity to make our requests made known to the Lord.

He revealed His plans to Abraham and listened to Abraham's requests, because the Lord *knew* Abraham and was confident that Abraham would train his children after him.

'And the Lord [Yahweh] said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing, since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"

'For I have *known* him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.' Gen 18:17-19.

### **Receiving, believing and walking according to God's word – knowing Him and being known**

There are some amazing points that are foundational to how we approach the Lord.

First, Abraham was not known by God because he was inherently good or religiously active.

Rather, he was known by God because he had *received, believed, and walked* according to God's word. It wasn't because he was inherently good or because of his religious activity. It was because he was a hearer and a believer, which means he was *a man of faith*.

The Lord said, 'I *know* Abraham'.

It may be somewhat confronting to recognise that the Lord does not know every person who claims to be a Christian based on their good works.

The Lord declares, 'Many will say to Me in that day [the day of judgement], 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name [I suspect most of this is using the name as 'the magic word']?'

'And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you".' Mat 7:22-23.

Contrast this with Yahweh's relationship with Abraham as He (Yahweh) discussed Their own work, 'I am going to join Abraham to this because *I know him*.'

But to those who have done all sorts of religious activities, He said, 'Depart from Me, I never knew you, you who practise lawlessness.'

To 'practise lawlessness' is to live by the other law.

The point that I want to highlight is, what does it mean *to be known by God*? It is obviously not dependant on being religiously active.

The Lord said that He knew Abraham, *so that* Abraham could command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord.

Now, I had assumed, by reading the Scriptures in a natural, fleshly way, that Yahweh was saying, 'I have known Abraham because Abraham has a good family order, and he is training up his children in the way that they should go. So I am confident that I can reveal My will to Abraham.'

Can you see that that is the reverse of what Yahweh said?

He said, 'I have *known Abraham so that* he can command his children and his household, and they can walk in the way of faith.'

So, God didn't know Abraham because he had a great family culture; Abraham was *known by God and knowing God* so that he *could* establish a fruitful and productive family culture.

That should relieve us all. None of us can, by our own effort, establish a fruitful, godly culture.

We must let go of that presumption and understand what it means to be known by God, and to know Him, so that we can establish a devotional, prayerful foundation and culture in our house.

### **Being known by the Lord - headship and prayer**

From the writings of Paul we learn that we are *known by the Lord* through the order of headship.

Participation according to this order is fundamental to the prayers of men and women, individually, and to devotional prayer in a family and in the church.

Another way of saying this is that, if we are not connected to the lordship of headship, the Lord is not hearing our prayer, and it is very easy to demonstrate that in the Scriptures.

'But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, the head of Christ is God [God the Father]. Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonours his Head [Christ].

'But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head [her husband] for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.' ICo 11:3-5.

In *The Steps of Salvation* Part 5 and in *Lampstand Churches* Part 1, we have written about this particular passage and explained the principle of the 'shaved head', but that is not the subject for today.

### **The order of headship**

I am focusing here on what it means to have your head 'covered', if you are a man; and 'uncovered', if you are a woman, in relation to prayer.

So, our subject today is not primarily the order of headship, but it is helpful to be reminded that headship is *not* an order through which authority is exercised over others or by which it is delegated from one person to another.

That is not the order of headship. If you are jarred by the term, 'order of headship', then it is likely that you don't understand it.

What is the order of headship?

Headship is the order through which *the grace of life* is multiplied and ministered to others *by offering*.

It is the *way* that a person lays down their life to reveal the name and expression of another.

It is a remarkable truth that headship is true for God the Father in relation to the Son, and for the Son to the Father.

But, also, it is true for the Son in relation to every man, and every man to the Son.

It is true for every man to a woman, and a woman to a man and to Christ.

And it is even true for children.

### **Headship is offering**

Headship is totally to do with *offering*, rather than with who has the authority to do or say what!

Let us be clear about this understanding of headship.

Now, there is *a ministry of grace* which comes by the word. So, how we interface with this word is going to be very important because, remember, this order is the way that our prayers *ascend*, because we have received the grace that has *descended*.

Remember that it is *grace on our lips by which we pray!*

The order of headship is very important, but it is most important to understand *how that order* works, so that it is not expressed as some chauvinistic imposition of authority over another; and, rather, that it is actually the expression of *offering in love*.

### **A man's head covered**

We will consider a man's head being covered.

In truth, a man's head should be *uncovered*, but let us see what it looks like when it is covered.

One way of beginning to think about this or to visual it is that if a man has his head covered, it means that he cannot *see* properly. Something is veiling his heart or preventing him from seeing what is coming down; coming to him.

A man's head is covered when he preferences and services (that means he serves or is active in relation to) any relational obligation over and above his submission to, and fellowship with, Christ.

I will say that again. A man covers his head when he preferences and services any relational obligation over his submission to, and fellowship with, Christ.

In the first instance, a Christian man does this when he allows the agendas of his wife to define the culture and direction of his house. He listens to his wife, who gives direction regarding the way he should go and what their culture should be, rather than receiving it from Christ.

She becomes the 'mirror' into which he looks in order to know and express himself. This is the thorny ground issue - how he may please his wife.

Instead of looking into *Christ's face, which is a mirror* (and is also the mirror of the presbytery), he looks into his wife's face for his sense of how he should act in the house. He 'services' what she is giving to him as to what considers to be fruitful and advantageous for their household.

His sense of how to be a husband and head in the house comes from her; not from Christ.

Do you see that his head is *covered* in relation to Christ, as he is 'wearing', or submitting to, the veil which should be on his wife's head? This is how it occurs in a marriage.

However, these alternative obligations are not restricted to servicing a wife's agenda.

They also include 'the wisdom from beneath', which comes by entertaining and living by the opinions of others.

It is not just that we give our ear to *other conversations*, remembering that there is the conversation of prayer that is by the Spirit in the fellowship of Yahweh, as well as alternative conversations that we can be engaged in.

Many of us do not live to the same excesses as people who have these opinions but, if you 'give your ear to it', you are trying to serve two masters. There are some conversations that you should immediately register as being not of the conversation of Yahweh.

Do not give your ear to those because, when you do, your face is turned away from the face of Christ. You are veiled.

It does not matter whether or not you 'agree' with the issue; rather, it is because you are *joined* to it so that your head is covered. That is 'entertaining and living by the opinions of others' and is the *pursuit of 'the pleasures of this world'*.

This is an obligation that is over and against serving the Lord according to His word.

As an example, we may prioritise work over participation in the fellowship of the church or we might hold to a particular doctrinal interpretation or understanding of the word of God.

These are relational obligations over and against submission to Christ and His fellowship.

Rather than receiving His direction for life by looking into the face of Christ and receiving the light of the word of God as it is ministered by the presbytery, a man's head is covered by these other relational obligations.

They 'feed' - remember that it is a food - his deluded perspective of himself and his life, and it

is completely without grace. It may be successful in the world, but it is not standing in grace by which you are obtaining an eternal inheritance through the blessing of sonship.

So, do not be confused or deceived into thinking that success in the world is the mark of *blessing*. That is an absolute anathema; it is a complete falsehood.

*Blessing* is obtained as the *life* of God becomes yours.

Now, the man whose head is covered, because he is not receiving the word of grace from Christ, has no grace on his lips for prayer.

Think about it this way. There is an order that functions by offering and through which grace from God the Father comes through Christ.

If you are not looking from where it is coming, you are not receiving it.

Because he is not receiving the word of grace from Christ, a man has no grace on his lips. That means that he cannot pray; nor does he have grace to lead his children and his house.

So, what is this going to 'look like'? He may be relationally disengaged with little initiative toward the devotional culture of the household. He will probably be somewhat devotionally lazy - perhaps not a little lazy, perhaps very devotionally lazy.

Or, when he attempts to speak in the family it is a dead work because *it is not by faith*.

So, faith comes by hearing and, if you are not hearing, your initiative toward devotional activity is not an action of faith; it is an action of your own good. And it is a dead work.

How do you know it is a dead work? It is because it will often be accompanied by wrath or strong emotion or frustration, as the man endeavours to impose himself and his good initiative on the household. It is always full of 'blow-ups', difficulty and frustration, because no-one is submitting to what he is saying.

That is a person whose head is covered. There is no grace; there is no peace.

Those prayers - and it does not matter how diligent you are on your knees - are not being

heard, because they are not the expression of incense.

Do you see that incense is the grace on your lips ascending to God?

So, if you are not looking into the face of the Lord, you are not known by Him. Remember what God said about Abraham: 'I have known Abraham, that he may command his family'.

If we are not looking into the face of our Head, because our head is covered, it means that we are not known by Him and have no capacity to command our household; no capacity to exercise headship.

Headship is not genetic; headship is the capacity of grace that is received by offering.

So that means that if your head is covered, you have no headship to exercise.

The prayer of this man is hindered.

### **Women and headship**

Let us now consider a woman whose head is 'uncovered', and what it means that it should be covered.

A woman's head is uncovered through her *rejection of headship*. For her head to be covered, it means that she has accepted that headship is the order of life for her.

So, a woman's head is uncovered through her rejection of headship.

I hope this is a helpful point for everyone.

This is the case if she is the wife of a believing husband; if she is the wife of an unbelieving husband; or if she is a single woman.

It is not only in relation to a husband; it is the rejection of headship itself as the means by which grace is ministered to her so that she can facilitate that as a cultural expression.

A woman rejects headship when she endeavours to cultivate a life for herself and for her household *in her own image*.

That has nothing to do with whether she has a husband or not. It has to do with whose image you are being established in.

Where a woman does have a husband, the direction for that household should come through him.

But where a woman does not have a husband, the culture of that household is to be in the image of Yahweh Himself, not in her own image. That would be the pursuit of being 'like God' Gen 3:5.

That is how Satan deceived Eve. He said to her, 'You can be like God if you eat this other fruit that you have been told not to eat.' Gen 3:4-5.

This is the pursuit of receiving a 'food,' or a perspective, by which a woman *wants to be like God and crafts* the life and her household in her own image.

That is 'Godlikeness', and is to have your head uncovered, making yourself equal to God.

A woman who has rejected headship is easily deceived by alternative words that are sourced from Satan.

That's exactly what happened to Eve when Satan came and tempted her.

Interestingly, Satan didn't come and tempt Adam. That means there is a vulnerability there that Satan exploits, and the vulnerability for the man is his laziness and his willingness to capitulate to the word and direction of his wife.

### **A woman who has rejected headship - deceived by alternative words sourced from Satan**

A woman who has rejected headship is easily deceived by alternative words that are sourced from Satan, which she believes are good for cultivating a happy and fruitful life in her own image. She is sensitive to, and vulnerable to, other sources of food that she looks at and thinks, 'Oh, that's what a fruitful life should be like; that's what our household should be like.'

Her desire for control in her life, and that of her household, is driven by fear and anxiety.

What is this fear? It's the fear of the absence of fruitfulness. This is amazing, because she is supposed to be fruitful. In fact, she has been created to be fruitful. Disconnected from headship, this absence of fruitfulness *drives her* to go and seek it in other ways.

To avoid the lack of fruitfulness that she fears, she compares herself with others. By looking around she thinks, 'Oh, that's a good life, and that's what they're doing to obtain that fruitfulness.' She preferences supposedly good advice from other

sources over the word of truth or makes them equivalent to the word of truth.

Good ideas in magazines; good advice from social media – there are all kinds of sources that she picks and chooses from, none of which comes from above, but she makes it equivalent to the word of truth. She endeavours to 'find' herself through the *appearance* of fruitfulness.

This is all her good works that convey the appearance that she is a fruitful son of God when, actually, she is not giving herself to the household in which the Lord has placed her and which she is to facilitate.

She is 'all over the place', doing things other than giving herself to piety. Rather than the word being the provision for her life, it is a resource from which she discriminately draws.

She sees the present truth word as another source of information - and it is a good source; but she considers that there are other things that can be accommodated as well.

As soon as she does that, she is actually changing that word for herself. It is no longer the word of life; it is merely a source of information from which she draws in order to craft or cultivate a culture in her own image. I

It is a resource from which she discriminately draws to service the culture and life that she is endeavouring to craft for herself and her children.

### **The drive of a wife may be fuelled by her perception of her husband's ineptness**

The drive of a married woman may be fuelled by her perception of her husband's ineptness. She is in a marriage relationship where she considers her husband to be a 'goose', who has no drive for life or capacity, so she fills the void.

She may be fuelled by her perception of her husband's ineptness, which she believes she must compensate for by giving him direction and reflection on his life and the family - and he is probably gladly relieved because he's bone lazy!

She has deceived him into thinking that she has the capacity to give the direction for the house. And he is lazy, not willing to turn his face to Christ, and actually give some direction.



She is unable to hear from her husband or hear the word that proceeds from Christ through the ministry of the presbytery.

When she presumes to pray or to minister to others in the church, *she does so with her head uncovered* and brings dishonour to her husband *and to the church!*

That is a focal point. If she dishonours her husband by praying or prophesying with her head uncovered, she dishonours not only him, she actually dishonours the church itself, *which is Christ.*

Like the man whose head is covered, her lips are without grace, and her actions are dead works. This woman's prayers are hindered.

### **Fallen relational modes are in all our marriages**

Let's all 'take a deep breath' and make the obvious point that these fallen relational modes are the effect of the Fall, and are in all our marriages!

As I have been preparing this word, and we have been chatting in our own house, it has been personally confronting to realise that, of course, I do this. We have this dysfunction in our own marriage, *but* we are not without hope. Let's see where the hope is.

Before that, we need to make another point. If we do not find recovery, because we are all born with this lawless potential, we remain *disconnected* from Christ. To presume to devote as a family and to minister in the church *without giving attention* to the order of headship is *lawlessness!*

Abraham was known by God so that he could command his children. That means that Abraham had a face to face relationship with Yahweh so that Abraham had grace to train up his children and to lead his household.

That was to secure Sarah who, we read, was 'without any fear'.

This order is important. If we won't give attention to it, and we either presume that that's not us or that we can try and 'fix' ourselves up through our own good work, *that is lawlessness!*

It doesn't matter how many people you've raised from the dead, how much prophecy you speak, how much you do in the name of God, if you are

not known by Him according to this order, *it is lawlessness.*

### **Delivered from lawlessness so that our prayers are not hindered**

Let's consider how we are delivered from lawlessness so that our prayers are not hindered. Hopefully this next point will relieve the pressure a little.

This does not mean that, until we are perfect, we are not able to pray.

We have these fallen cultures in our household, and we think, 'Yes, that's true. I know that that happens in my household. Does that mean I can never pray until I'm fully perfect?'

Of course, it doesn't! Rather, each day, we *humble* ourselves.

This is the case for the mature, the ones who understand the weakness of Christ, and who realise that we don't even know how to pray as we ought.

*By the Spirit*, we humble ourselves. And, by the Spirit, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we are being delivered from the fallen propensities within us which would otherwise cause our disconnection from Christ.

These fallen propensities cause us to trust in our own understanding, which we have garnered from the environment. We are *turning* from that.

This turning is the *repentance* which is *part of the daily bread.*

We are turning to the Lord each day in prayer. Repentance is fundamental to our prayer in the Spirit.

To live this way - to *humble* ourselves, and to join the weakness of Christ, praying in the Holy Spirit, joined to, or being kept, in the love of God, looking to the mercies of our Lord Jesus Christ - is what it means to *obtain His mercies which are new every morning.*

We are failures every day in relation to this, but we 'draw a line under it' at the end of each day, and the mercy of the Lord is near to us each morning as our hearts are sprinkled in the fellowship of prayer. *We can remain joined* to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, even

though some of the suffering is the relational sufferings in our household.

We can obtain, or remain connected to, this order of headship by which we are obtaining grace. This is faith.

We are adding 'an introduction to grace in which we stand'.

That grace is 'on our lips' to minister to one another and to minister to the Lord in praise and worship.

It does not mean that until we are perfect we are unable to pray. Remember, we are praying in the Spirit by the mercies of God, joined to His fellowship, which is a whole-day reality for us.

Take up your cross *daily* and follow Him.

### **No family devotions without prayer and devotions as a couple**

Practically, if we are talking about family prayer, this fellowship will involve our commitment – as a husband and a wife or as a single person – to meet the Lord in right order.

For Christian husbands and wives, this will mean praying and talking together.

We have to realise that there are no family devotions without prayer and devotions as a *couple*, because the order of life by which we have a ground to pray on *depends on that relationship*.

### **Grace is right there in the mess; His blood sprinkling clean**

For Christian husbands and wives, this will mean praying and talking together devotionally, and *putting off* the fleshly propensities and expressions that arise.

Usually, those fleshly propensities and expressions will rise in the midst of relational stress and difficulty *between* a husband and wife. But *grace* is right there in the mess. That's the trauma. That's where the grace is! That's where the blood is being shed on our hearts, sprinkling us clean, so that we can *forgive* one-another. That's where the grace will be.

### **Praying at all times; heirs together of the grace of life**

This is part of 'praying at all times'. Have you ever wondered, 'How do I do that? How do I get off my

knees and get to work if I'm supposed to be praying at all times?'

We read, 'Husbands, likewise, dwell with them [their wives] with understanding, giving honour to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life.' 1Pe3:7.

'Heirs together of the grace of life.' There is an order by which this grace is coming down so that we can speak by grace in prayer. It is these four dimensions of incense.

'Being heirs together of the grace of life so that your prayers may not be hindered.' 1Pe 3:7.

This means that if you *don't* dwell with understanding, and you *don't* give honour to the wife as the weaker vessel, and you are *not* an heir *together* of the grace of life, your prayers, husbands and wives, *are not being heard*.

That is quite confronting. It seems as though the *heavens* are like steel; prayers are not ascending to the Lord at all.

### **Understanding is the culture of offering**

It's important that we understand this passage.

Husbands, your dwelling with understanding and giving honour to the wife as the weaker vessel doesn't mean being patient with, or tolerant of, your wife, because she is less intelligent or less physically capable than you.

If you have thought that, *stop*; because that is absolute nonsense. Those of you who have any sort of truth in you will know that that is not even true.

I know that my wife is always about five steps ahead of me, in terms of processing capacity. So, dwelling with understanding is not a sort of patronising attitude that thinks, 'You're just a bit weaker and a bit less intelligent, so I'll go slower for you; you're the weaker vessel.'

That is complete heresy.

How do we engage with this passage so that our prayers are not hindered?

Let's begin with 'understanding', because to dwell with understanding is not patronising and being tolerant. It is not an attitude that says, 'I'm such an understanding person and I'll compensate for your weakness.'

Understanding is *the culture of offering*.

We are to 'give our ear', to 'incline our ear', to wisdom - that is, to *the word from heaven* which has come down from above.

And we are to 'cry out for understanding'. That is for that word of wisdom to be *in our conversation and feet as a cultural way*.

This understanding changes the impact of this passage immensely. Understanding is the culture of offering revealed through our conversation and conduct. A man who dwells with his wife with understanding makes offering toward her by giving himself to speak with her and to pray with her.

### **Laziness or dwelling with understanding?**

Husbands, many of us are lazy!

We are actually happy for our wife to take the direction so that we don't have to do it. That is 'not dwelling with understanding'. That is being lazy.

To dwell with understanding is to *hear* the word yourself; to incline your ear. *You* are the one who is to have your ear pierced to the door of the house.

'Crying out for understanding' is giving attention to what that is really like in your life and in the life of your family, and giving yourself to speak and pray with your wife - to make time to do it.

It means, for most of us switching off the television. A bit less television and a bit more prayer is going to see dwelling with understanding become a cultural reality for many of us.

Understanding is *revealed through our conversation and conduct*.

A man who dwells with his wife with understanding *makes offering* toward her by giving himself to speak with her and to pray with her.

He is not lazy regarding the wisdom from above, which he is hearing from the messengers of Christ.

He discusses the implications of the word for his house with his wife. He gives attention to it. She gives attention to it. She sits in the same meeting, hearing the same word.

He calls her, saying, 'Let's discuss this together and understand together what this is going to

look like as a cultural reality in our house every time that the proceeding word is being spoken.'

I suspect that what's been spoken *right now* would be a good place to start.

### **A man guarding his house**

He *guards* what comes into his house. He is responsible - he *should* be responsible - for what is coming in to his home and for what is not coming in.

If something feels or seems spurious or inconsistent with what the Lord is saying, it probably is.

*It probably is*, because the woman was the one who is susceptible to deception. Paul made it very clear that the man was not deceived. What was he? He was disobedient!

### **Laziness bears thorns in the house**

If something 'jars' with you either when your wife is taking some sort of initiative or your children are bringing something home from school and you think, 'Oh, that is inconsistent with what I have been hearing' - it probably is!

But, if you are lazy, you simply let it come in - and it will bear thorns in your house!

'The wall of your house' will be broken down, and instead of your children being like olive trees around your table, they will be 'thorny' and 'prickles in your eyes'.

Don't be lazy. Guard your house and you won't be deceived. The issue for you is not whether you feel the jarring effect or not; it's whether you'll *do something about it*.

This is your head being *uncovered*.

And when your head is uncovered, what can you do? You can *see*.

### **He gives honour to his wife - the weakness of Christ**

'He gives honour to his wife as the weaker vessel.'

Again, this is not because she is intellectually or physically inferior. It is probably the other way around!

What does it mean? It means that he recognises that *her weakness is the weakness of Christ*.

This is the way that life is *multiplied*. 2Co 12:9.

This is 'the weakness of Christ which is stronger than man'.

I'm not saying that it is stronger than her husband.

I *am* saying that the weakness of Christ is the means by which He laid down His life and multiplied the life of God the Father to all of us.

That's what He honours. 'Honour' is not simply 'patting her on the back' saying, 'Good on you for being part of the weakness of Christ.'

**The woman has the capacity, through the Spirit, to multiply life in the home**

Rather, it is not interfering, or intervening, on her *capacity* to be the one who multiplies that life as a culture in her house.

He *honours* her because she is the one who has been made by God for this - to be the vessel of multiplication.

And it is not only that she is the vessel to have children.

It is the capacity for *the multiplication of the life of God*.

She is the one through whom the life in the house will be multiplied and facilitated.

She knows how to co-ordinate the house in relation to the direction that has been set.

And she *trusts* the word that is coming; and he trusts her to do it.

He *honours* her by allowing her to do this without imposing his own fallen need to dominate the household and its practical expression as though he knows what the best way is to do the dishes or to be hospitable.

When we are having people to our house, there is an initiative that I have toward this expression of life.

But I become servant to my wife when she says, 'We need to set the table like "this" and we're going to do it in this order.'

That's how it is *multiplied*.

But if I think that I am the head and she is the weaker vessel, according to a fleshly way, and I come in and say that it must be done 'this' way, that is *not* the grace of life.

The evening will be constrained down to my own *natural* capacity.

**A godly woman - life and fruitfulness only found in Christ through His word**

Let us consider a godly woman in terms of her *repentance* and having her *head covered*.

A godly woman, whether or not she is the wife of a Christian husband, accepts that this is the honour of headship.

What does it 'look like'?

She accepts that her capacity for life and fruitfulness is found only in Christ, through His word, not through every other word or by comparing and looking at other lifestyles and thinking, 'What do I need to do to attain that?'

It is recognising that the only source of grace for life is from *the word of God*.

She is delivered from fear by receiving this word and applying herself to piety. 'Piety' is an old fashioned word which is sometimes translated as 'godliness'.

It doesn't mean that she applies herself to being a 'more godly' person or to looking more 'righteous.'

Piety, because Christ was 'heard because of His piety', is *commitment to offering*.

Where we read, 'delivered from fear by receiving the word and applying herself to piety', means remaining committed, by faith and the capacity of the Holy Spirit, to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

**A godly, fruitful woman lives by *exanastasis***

A godly woman tries to avoid having 'a great life', saying, 'No, I'm forgoing the cultivation of a great life in my own image.'

She realises that the grace of life is the *exanastasis* life of Christ found in His offering; found in the difficult way. It means living by *exanastasis* through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

The resurrection life obtained in this fellowship is *her capacity for fruitfulness*. This is the weakness of Christ. The weakness of Christ is His *sufferings*.

When she is conformed to that and is obtaining *exanastasis* life, her capacity to multiply that life as a cultural reality in her house is unparalleled.

### **The capacity for multiplication**

It is the capacity for fruitfulness and for the care of her children.

What does this care 'look like'? It is not just the basic cares for her children so that they are fed, sheltered and clothed. Everyone does that, whether they're Christian or not; well, they *should* do.

The care of the children is to 'feed' them with the word proclaimed from the communion.

She 'sets her table with the meat', which is the offering, the bread and the wine of communion; and she teaches that culture in her house, facilitating that as a cultural reality with the children.

She is able to feed the children; and her husband is doing this as well. She is the one who can *multiply* it, because she is trusting the word and direction of her husband, and it is becoming the cultural reality of the house.

She is able to feed the word to her children as a cultural practice because she has given devotional attention to it; not devotional attention to the Women's Day magazine or to internet sites or to social media sites.

She has given devotional attention to the word itself and, having attained faith by hearing that word and applying her heart to it, she *does not fear!*

Fear drives a woman to cultivate a culture in her own image.

When she gives herself to the word, devotionally, she is full of faith. 'She *does not fear* the snow [she doesn't fear the elements] but is able to clothe all her household.' Pro 31:21.

She is able to 'clothe' them. What does that mean for her children?

It means that she is *teaching* them how to *priest themselves*.

Her head is covered, and her capacity is to teach her children. She clothes them in the garments of priesthood in every circumstance of life. She is not drawn by, or fearful of, the difficulties that her children are facing at school, with the neighbours, or with one another. She is teaching them how to interface with others as one who is about their Father's business.

### **Heirs together of His grace, seasoned with the salt of the Spirit**

Ongoing commitment to this process, by the mercies of God, enables us to have grace on our lips. This is the implication of being heirs together of the grace of life.

'Heirs together of the grace of life' means that the grace from God is on our lips, and then is rebounding to Him as incense through prayer.

'You are fairer than the sons of men.' Psa 45:2. This refers to Jesus. It is a prophetic psalm about the Son of Man. 'You are fairer than the sons of men; *grace* is poured upon Your lips; therefore God has blessed You forever. Gird Your sword [that is the word] upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, and Your glory and Your majesty.' Psa 45:2-3.

'Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt.' Col 4:6.

'Seasoned with salt' means 'by the *Spirit*'. This passage is referring to prayer, and not only to prayer in the secret place, but also to prayer as an ongoing, or continual, reality.

'Let your speech *always* be with grace, seasoned with salt that you may *know* how you ought to answer each one.' Col 4:6. That is actually answering each one in your *household*.

Husbands, answer your wife as a head, not seeking dominion over her or withdrawing because you are lazy, but *with grace*, knowing how you ought to answer.

Wives, let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, so that *you* may know how to answer, not giving direction out of fear and compulsion, but able to *receive* direction and then multiply it by offering as a cultural reality in your house.

'Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.' Eph 4:29-30.

### **Headship is an order of offering**

This relationship of one another, husband to wife and wife to husband, is not *demand*ed of each other. It is *offered*.

Remember that I said the order of headship is not an order of authority that is exercised *over* another. The order of headship is an order of offering.

Heads of houses, when you lay down something to your wife as a direction and initiative, there is vulnerability.

You can't cajole or demand compliance to that. That is not offering. It's not the expression of faith. Faith has a vulnerability to it.

Then the love of God that is poured into the heart of our spouse causes them to lay down her life down to *reveal* that. That is how grace is multiplied.

I've just said that there is a vulnerability there that is the nature of faith. And grace will be there irrespective of whether or not we are met by offering.

### **Grace because of obedience in headship order**

As a husband, you may be sitting there thinking, 'My wife is not going to do this, so I'm not going to.'

I tell you now that, if you will turn your head to Christ and you will walk in that faith and speak by faith, whether or not it's picked up, grace will be in your house.

Grace is there because of *obedience*.

Grace is not there just because it 'all works out'.

### **Aspects of prayer in our families**

By this grace, a husband or wife, or both, are able to establish a devotional context of prayer with their children, and this will involve the four aspects of prayer that are as incense to the Lord.

We need to take time to *pray and sing in the Holy Spirit* together.

Many of us find it very easy to pray individually in the Holy Spirit or to pray corporately in the Holy Spirit but, when we come to our families, we don't do it.

I encourage you that *the Holy Spirit* is the salt, or is fundamental to the incense of your prayer.

Take time as a family, even if your children don't pray in tongues yet. If you do pray in tongues, encourage them to join that prayer. Make that

foundational to your devotional life, which will have a praise element to the Lord.

*Sing* a commitment to the will of God being done. It will have a devotional element, which is the word of prophecy made sure.

There should be *testimony* in our houses, one to another, of our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. These should be foundational to our devotional life as a family; our prayer as a family. This is part of the nurture and admonition of the Lord which we are able to do because we are connected to the Lord.

It will be a bit messy at times. Those of you who have little children, in family devotional times, sometimes just keeping their attention and teaching them to focus on 'this' and not on 'that' is part of the mess. The 'success' of your devotions is not how well ordered it is or how righteous or holy its expression looks.

The success of it is that you are a family who is obtaining grace; and it is a commitment to it.

'Although my house is not so with God, yet He has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure.' 2Sa 23:5.

So, a time of devotions can be messy with children running here and there, and us having to gather them up. Some are singing and some are not singing. And some are not praying.

We may need to say, 'Pray a bit louder. Let's do it again. No, don't pray about that. We're not praying about the cricket anymore; we're praying about this.'

This is 'the nurture and admonition of the Lord' which is grace on your lips for your children, joining them to that fellowship of grace - and I is a bit messy.

That practical order is joined to the order of life. Your security as a family and your safety as a family is found in that order - in no other place.

We are *all* in families that have, to one degree or another, been affected by our fallen, fleshly cultures. We need to accept that that's true and - that is obvious for all of us.

While we can believe for *recovery* in our families, the *beginning* is our personal recovery to the order of headship, which is the culture of offering in our

houses and in the church. That's where grace will be on your lips.

It is important to make some of these foundations clear, because our prayer in houses is fundamental to effective prayer as a community of house to house believers.