

THE GENESIS PARADOX: REVISITING THE BIBLICAL BLUEPRINT
OF UNITY BETWEEN THE GENDERS — IN THE
HOME AND IN THE CHURCH

By

Lori Greenwood

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Dedication

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Preface

The research presented in this paper is in support of a book I wrote (published 2001) entitled, *The Genesis Generation: Discover the power of unity between the sexes -- in the church and in the home*, which is quoted throughout this work.

The scripture quotations contained herein, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version of the Bible, copyright 1979, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers. Apart from the initial footnote, all biblical quotes appear as in-text parenthetical citations. Otherwise, additional sources from which I have accumulated data or insight are documented by footnote on the bottom portion of applicable pages and contain no additional technical details or discussion. This information can be found in the endnotes.

List of Definitions

Egalitarian: (Derived from the French word *égal*, meaning "equal") has two distinct definitions in modern English.[1] It is defined either as an individual holding to a political doctrine that all people should be treated as equals and have the same political, economic, social, and civil rights [2] or an individual holding to a social philosophy advocating the removal of inequalities imposed among people.

Complimentarian: an individual with a theological view (held by many in Christianity and other world religions) that men and women have different, but complementary roles and responsibilities, as manifested in marriage, family life, religious leadership, and society.

List of Abbreviations:

AMP: Amplified Translation of the Bible

KJV: King James Version of the Bible

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Vessel Concept

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”¹

The author of *The Genesis Generation* describes the “vessel concept” as follows:

In my kitchen I have a large cooking pot—you might call it “industrial size.” It belonged to my husband’s grandmother, who gave it to us back when we first got married. It, obviously, had been used rigorously over the years; and it seemed like a strange wedding gift. After a few uses, we realized what a treasure it was! It was durable—indestructible—and was excellent for everything from soups and stews to tie-dying t-shirts. It quickly became the workhorse of our kitchen, where it remains in circulation until this day.

In that same kitchen, we also have a beautiful full-lead crystal vase. It was given to us by my husband’s parents. It was made by Mats Jonasson in Sweden, and is very

¹. Holy Spirit, Holy Bible: King James Version (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 1979) 1 Peter 2:7. Hereafter all quotations from this edition and translation of the Bible will be documented with the chapter and verse in parenthesis immediately following quotation.

lovely in design. It has graced our table with a lovely rose or two and brought a simple elegance to the room.

Both of these items are very unique “vessels.” One, though obviously the weaker of the two, is immeasurably more valuable. I have never asked the crystal vase to do the job of the big cooking pot, nor vice versa. Each has its own purpose and function. Each is needed and necessary. And, so it is within the body of Christ: Both male and female are necessary components to the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27, Genesis 5:1-2, Mark 10:6-8).

Being the weaker vessel is not a statement of value or ability. It is a statement of physical strength — and (with rare exception) man is obviously the stronger. Being weaker doesn’t mean that God can’t use you! Some of the other “vessels” you may have met on your way through life may have told you otherwise. Women with a vision have been oppressed by some, simply because they were women.²

As I read the scriptures, I see a different Christ. To the “weaker,” Jesus has always been the great emancipator — the true eliminator of distinctions. Anyone who can believe His Word, can be unfettered and set free!³

“There is neither Jew nor Greek [no racial distinction], there is neither bond nor free [no

². Lori Greenwood, The Genesis Generation: Discover the Power of Unity Between the Sexes. (Pennsauken, New Jersey: VisionLink International, 2001) pp. 5-6

³. T. D. Jakes, Woman Thou Art Loosed (Dallas, Texas: Albury Publishing, 1996) p. 22

social distinction], there is neither male nor female [no gender distinction]; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:28-29).

Within the covenant of salvation, God's plan includes a unique and diverse people, all moving in unity and bringing glory to His name. His love is no less to those who happen to be "weaker vessels." Even in the Old Testament, scripture clarifies that God is a gender-neutral God. He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). He will move on behalf of anyone who has faith — and faith is an equal opportunity force.⁴

The Amplified Bible says it this way:

"In the same way you married men ought to live considerately with [your wives], with an intelligent recognition [of the marriage relationship], honoring the woman as [physically] the weaker, but [realizing that you] are joint heirs of the grace (God's unmerited favor) of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered and cut off. [Otherwise, you cannot pray effectively.]"⁵

4. Greenwood, p. 7

5. The Holy Spirit, Holy Bible: Amplified Version. (LaHabra, California: The Lockman Foundation, 1965) 1 Peter 3:7. Hereafter all quotations from this edition and translation of the Bible will be documented with the chapter, verse and "AMP" in parenthesis immediately following quotation.

The man who intelligently recognizes his “weaker vessel,” will protect and honor her.

This single act will revolutionize his life.

CHAPTER II

RETURNING TO THE PLACE OF ORIGIN

Are You Ready for a Revolution?

“Revolution” defined, is the motion of a body around its orbit; the turning on an axis; a radical change in the laws or thinking of a land or people after a revolt; to change completely; to meditate; to reflect upon; to return to the place of origin; to complete one revolution.¹

An object in revolution follows the path of its orbit. By necessity, that object must return to, or pass by, the place of its origin. It needs to come back to the beginning point. In a similar fashion, the church can gain insight into the biblical blueprint for gender distinctions and roles by returning to guidelines set forth in the Word of God.

Since no book that was to be included in the canon of the bible was composed after the second century B.C, the early writings, both Jewish and Christian (such as the Apocrypha and the Mishna), all post-date the authoritative text of the Hebrew Bible. While certainly the later writings are significant, these text reveal more about specific needs or situations of latter groups than the earlier authoritative statements. Therefore, we must consider the possibility that distinct differences may exist between the meaning of the ancient texts and the post-resurrection

¹. “revolution,” The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, (Orlando, Florida: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999)

biblical situations recorded in biblical regions outside of Israel. ²

When it comes to the topic of gender, for which certain biblical texts have held great stamina in the many years after their configuration, the commission for classifying views not inherent in the ancient writings can be compelling. While we understand that the function of the early passages is meant to be identical for both ancient Israel and the later believers, we can misread the social attitudes of Judeo-Christian traditions that are entrenched in later texts and practices. Without separating these traditions of men from the Word of God, we can create barriers to a pure understanding of the original functions of the ancient texts. In short, when considering early authoritative Hebrew works, we tend to interpret those early Jewish text with post-Isrealite thinking. ³

To comprehend the power of philosophical road blocks created by religious thinking, allow me to draw on an analogy from science. Prior to the Renaissance movement that began in the mid-1300's, there was a great dearth in scientific discovery. Much of this intellectual dry-spell can be attributed to obstructions created by theologians in opposition to scientific endeavors. Eventually, the great discovers of men like Galileo and Kepler emerged from underneath these barriers. Galileo is noted as saying the following:

2. Carol Meyers, Discovering Eve (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 1988) pp. 72-73

3. Ibid, pp. 73-74

“Let us grant then that theology is conversant with the loftiest divine contemplation, and occupies the regal throne among the sciences by this dignity. But acquiring the highest authority in this way, if she does not descend to the lower and humbler speculations of the subordinate sciences and has no regard for them for they are not concerned with blessedness, then her professors should not arrogate to themselves the authority to decide on controversies in professions which they have neither studied nor practiced. Why, this would be as if an absolute despot being neither a physician or an architect, but knowing himself free to command, should undertake to administer medicine and erect buildings according to his whim.”⁴

The early Hebrew Bible commentators, both Jewish and Christian, may have unintentionally (in the words of Galileo) acted as “despots,” by allowing their own positions on gender to form canonical authority. In by-passing the methodology of the “lower and humbler speculations,” longstanding barriers to clear understanding have been erected.⁵

Anti-Feminist Views of the Early Church Fathers

Is it possible that gender bias has subtly filtered into bible translation and teaching? An

p. 334

4. A. Koestler, The Sleepwalkers, (New York, New York: Macmillian Press, 1959)

5. Meyers, p. 74

example to consider can be found in the work of St. Jerome. Known for his antifeminist views, Jerome's perspectives impacted the way he dealt with passages about women in his highly prestigious translation of the Hebrew Bible, known as the Vulgate. While known to be a competent Hebrew scholar, Jerome was also known to have strong hostility toward women. His fear of women constituted "such a powerful and all-pervasive influence upon him that the accuracy of his vulgate translation itself has been affected."⁶ As a standard used throughout the Roman Catholic Church, the Vulgate has had significant influence on the western world.

Two examples of Jerome's mistranslations are cited here:

In the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39, where she attempts to seduce him, the original Hebrew text narrates the story in a straightforward, non-judgmental way. The woman says to Joseph 'Lie with me', and the Hebrew says simply 'and he refused'. Not so Jerome. 'And he refused' becomes 'by no means agreeing to this wicked deed'. In the course of the next few verses we have more condemnatory words introduced, for example *stuprum* which is a very strong word for vile behaviour. It is as if Jerome cannot somehow tolerate that the Holy Writ does not emphasise that the woman is wicked, and feels he must do so. The quite significant changes thus made in biblical narratives are likely to have had some effect on the preaching from these texts in the medieval pulpit.

⁶. J. Barr, The Vulgate Genesis and St. Jerome's Attitude for Women. (Studia, Pastrica 18, 1982) p. 268

A very important alteration is made by Jerome in Genesis 3.16. God has been addressing severe words to the serpent in the garden and he finishes his warning to Eve with the words: ‘Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you,’ While ‘he will rule over you’ makes clear the husband’s predominance over the wife, the impact is softened somewhat by the other half of the verse, ‘Your desire will be for your husband’, the Hebrew word for ‘desire’ here having sexual content. In Jerome’s version, however, that half of the verse is changed to ‘You will be under the power of your husband’ and ‘he will rule over you’ completes the verse. Complete subjection and subordination of the woman is now laid down.

This verse was much quoted, in its new form, by later writers in their exegesis of Genesis 3 and discussion of the situation of women after Eve’s sin in the garden.⁷

A more detailed study of the far-reaching influence of Jerome’s attitudes toward women, would also need to examine medieval literature. Some such works would include *Holy Maidenhood*, Walter Map’s *De Nugis Curialium*, the *Romance of the Rose*, and *Lamentations of Matheolus*. Jerome’s influence would extend to John Milton when creating his *Paradise Lost*.⁸ Perhaps the most significant of these literary influences would be found in the works of Chaucer:

⁷. Janet Martin Soskice, ed. After Eve. (London, England: Collins Marshall Pickering 1990) Chapter 6.

⁸. J. O’Brien and W. Major, In the Beginning (Chico, California: Scholars Press, 1982) p.95

Chaucer quotes from Jerome in several of his works, most notably in the *Prologue to The Wife of Bath's Tale*. It is in this Prologue, with its references to, and its quotations from, the *Against Jovinian*, that we see most clearly how wide Jerome's influence was. I do not think that Chaucer would have used the *Against Jovinian* in just this way had it not been a well-known piece of writing in his day. He both refers to it by name as if it would be known to his readers, and then uses it subtly and artfully for an audience in the know to enjoy.⁹

The Wife of Bath's Prologue is larded with quotations from the *Against Jovinian*.

Chaucer, that master of irony, puts the words of one of the greatest anti-feminists of all time into the mouth of a woman.”¹⁰

Antifemist views were shared by many leaders in church history:

St. Tertullian (about 155 to 225 CE): “Do you not know that you are each an Eve? The sentence of God on this sex of yours lives in this age: the guilt must of necessity live too. You are the Devil's gateway: You are the unsealer of the forbidden tree: You are the first deserter of the divine law: You are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert even the Son of God had to die.”¹¹

⁹. Soskice, chapter 6

¹⁰. Ibid, chapter 6

¹¹. Karen Armstrong, The Gospel According to Women: Christianity's Creation of the

St. Augustine of Hippo (354 to 430 CE). He wrote to a friend: “What is the difference whether it is in a wife or a mother, it is still Eve the temptress that we must beware of in any woman.....I fail to see what use woman can be to man, if one excludes the function of bearing children.”¹²

St. Thomas Aquinas (1225 to 1274 CE): “As regards the individual nature, woman is defective and misbegotten, for the active force in the male seed tends to the production of a perfect likeness in the masculine sex; while the production of woman comes from a defect in the active force or from some material indisposition, or even from some external influence.”¹³

Martin Luther (1483 to 1546): “If they [women] become tired or even die, that does not matter. Let them die in childbirth, that’s why they are there.”¹⁴

No doubt, some gender-bias has led to the newer gender-neutral bible translations. Let me share some of the content from complimentary Wayne Grudem’s paper called, “What’s Wrong with Gender-Neutral Bible Translations?,” which states:

“Now some of the misleading language has been removed from the Bible. For example,

12. Ibid, pp. 52-62

13. Nancy Van Vuuren, The Subversion of Women. (Santa Ana, California: Westminster Press, 1973) pp.28-30

14. Helen. Ellerbe, The Dark Side of Christian History. (SanRafael, California: Morningstar Books, 1995) p. 136

Jesus no longer says, ‘ And I when I am lifted up from the Earth will draw all men to myself.’ (That’s the RSV.) But instead, ‘And I will draw all people to myself.’ (That’s the New RSV.) This is an improvement. The word ‘men’ isn’t specified by the Greek text, and ‘all people’ is a faithful rendering of the Greek *anthropoi*. Changes like this, using gender neutral language without sacrificing accuracy in translation are acceptable. And so the problem is not the changes at every point, the problem is changing the masculine, gender specific language in the English translation of the Bible in ways that obscure the original meaning.”¹⁵

Taking all of this into consideration, particularly the influence of the early church fathers, one can only begin to understand God’s true intent by returning to the beginning statements of the original biblical text.

“And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over everything that moveth upon the earth” (Genesis 1:26-28).

15. Wayne Grudem, What’s Wrong with Gender Neutral Bible Translations? (Louisville, Kentucky: Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood Vol. 3, 1996) pp. 3-5

In the beginning, God never intended for either gender to dominate or manipulate the other. He intended them to work along side of each other and to help each other. The job was too big for Adam to carry out single-handedly.¹⁶ If they did this, work effectively together, they would jointly hold a position of authority in the earth. They would have dominion.

There are four things over which Adam and Eve are told to exercise dominion:

- Fish
- Fowl
- Cattle
- Creeping Things

Adam and Eve are given the command, to take dominion, twice (Gen 1:26 & 28).

Notice, that “mankind,” neither man nor woman, appears on this list. They had no dominion over each other. This platform, not dominating each other, was the blueprint of God outlined in the early Hebrew text. Are you trying to dominate each other? Then maybe its time for a revolution.¹⁷

¹⁶. Kathrine Giske, Pathways to Purpose. (Queensland, Australia: Kharis Enterprises Publishing, 1999) p. 89

¹⁷. Greenwood, p. 11

CHAPTER III

POINTING THE FINGER

Adam was created before the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:7). Along with Adam, God planted the Garden in Eden. God planted the Garden with His words.

God gave Adam every type of tree, not just the ones he wanted or needed (Genesis 2:9). God gave Adam the good gold and the precious stones (Genesis 2:11-12). God gave Adam the responsibility of tending and guarding the Garden (Genesis 2:15). And then, God gave Adam the command to, “EAT” (Genesis 2:16). Adam was informed by God to freely eat of every tree of the garden — except one. [Emphasis added.]

“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:17).

All of this took place *before* Eve was ever created. [Emphasis added.]

“And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from the man, made he the woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Genesis 2:21-23).

The serpent enters the garden.

Adam’s failure to guard and keep the garden is what allowed the serpent to enter (Genesis 2:15).

“Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden” (Genesis 3:1)?

While the serpent may have been smarter than the other beasts, he was not smarter than Adam, and he is not smarter than mankind in general. People perish for the lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6), not because the devil is so smart! They both ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil—one in ignorance, and one in disobedience. ¹

The devil came to Eve, simply because he knew that she didn't know what God said. Remember, God gave the command to Adam before Eve was created. The devil will come to all of us, and attempt to take advantage of us, based on what we do not know. Apparently, Adam must have told Eve something, but she seems to only know about the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and mentions nothing about the tree of life (Genesis 2:9; Genesis 3: 2-3).

Adam had somehow failed to inform Eve fully and accurately. He had not guarded the garden — allowing the serpent in—and was apparently standing there, having full knowledge of God's commandment to him, when the serpent engages Eve in a dialogue over eating of the trees...

“And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to

¹. Dr. Ken Stewart, Choosing a Mate. Audio Cassette. Life in Christ Ministries, Inc. 1999

the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband WITH HER; [emphasis added] and he did eat” (Genesis 3:6).

Notice that Adam was standing there with her and did nothing to stop her.

God confronted Adam (Genesis 3:9-12). But, Adam took sides with the serpent, against God, and pointed the finger at Eve.

God said, “Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat” (Genesis 3:11)?

Adam responded, “THE WOMAN whom THOU [GOD] gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” (Genesis 3:11-12) [Emphasis added.]

God didn’t even respond. Instead, he turned to Eve, and she told the truth: “... The serpent beguiled me and I did eat” (Genesis 3:13b).

Eve didn’t accuse Adam, even though, by that time, it was obvious to her that he had not told her the truth about the tree. I have learned so much from this one verse [Genesis 3:14]. If you simply refuse to point the finger of blame at your mate, and just tell God the truth, then He can turn it all around. ²

Because of Eve’s responsible and honest answer, God enters a covenant with the woman. In Genesis 3:15, God prophecies of the day when He will take sides with a woman against the serpent.

². Greenwood, p. 17

“And I will put enmity between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3: 15).

This prophesy was fulfilled when the Word became flesh (John 1:14). The “Word” was named Jesus, and He was born of a young virgin woman, named Mary. But, the dialogue between Adam, Eve, and God didn’t end there...

“Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee. And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shall not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:16-19).

As you can see, a large part of Genesis 3 is given over to God’s explanation of the consequences associated with their disobedience.

The serpent is cursed, and both the man and the woman are given “itzbon,”³ (Hebrew) which means toil and anguish.

Anguish will characterize the woman’s role as wife and mother — it will also describe the man’s place as the tiller of the accursed ground. The woman’s life will become “anguish” by difficult childbearing and by the conflict between her desire for her husband and her hostility

toward being dominated, or ruled over, by him. It is important to note here, that the word “ruled” as found in Genesis 3:16 is the Hebrew word, “Masal.”⁴ It literally means “cause to have rule.” Disobedience to God’s instruction in the Garden of Eden is what caused Adam to have rule over Eve. There is always a consequence to disobedience.⁵

The man’s life will become “anguish” by no longer experiencing the original status he had in the garden—where he was the master of all life—but, instead, he will be required to work hard to be the provider to his family.⁶

God never intended for man to toil this way; and He also never intended for the woman to be subject to the rule of the man. He intended for them to have dominion—together.

Like any loving parent, God desired for them to choose obedience—but Adam and Eve did not. There is always a consequence to every step off course; and a reward to every step toward obedience. Wrong choices have consequences.

3. James Strong, LL.D., S.T.D., The New Strong’s Complete Dictionary of Bible Words.

(Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996) Strong’s No. 6093. p. 480

4. Strong, Strong’s No.4910, p. 443

5. G. E. Mendenhall, The Shady Side of Wisdom: The Date and Purpose of Genesis 3.

(Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1974) p.327

6. Judith L. Kovacs, Women in the New Testament. In *What the Bible Really Says*, ed.

M. Smith and R.J. Hoffman (New York, New York: Harper Collins Publisher, 1993) p. 198

In America, we have an alarming divorce rate. While commonly quoted at 50%, current divorce rates are actually slightly lower.⁷ In short, many couples who wed will walk away from their commitment to each other.

Greenwood comments:

Many struggle through most of their marriage trying to dominate each other. Whenever anything goes wrong, they merely point the finger at the other — feeling quite confident that they could not possibly be to blame. Many seek the advice of marriage counselors, each partner secretly hoping that the therapist will agree with them and explain to the other how wrong they are: Each hoping that the counselor will not tell them—what they know in their hearts that God will tell them—“Repent.”

The problem is sin. Many make the same error that Adam fell into. They have become victims of poor communication. They have failed to develop a relationship with God and cannot be bothered with obedience to His Word. By not taking responsibility for our “garden,” we let the devil take advantage of our ignorance and rebellion.

“Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, old things are passed away; behold all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

⁷. “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: Population Characteristics.” Current Population Reports 2002. p. 10. June 2001. US Census Bureau. 5 March 2002.
<<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p.20-537>.

“And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given unto us the ministry of reconciliation;” (2 Corinthians 5:18).

The author of *The Genesis Generation* states: By the time I was born-again, I was an adult. It wasn't until I was 24 years old that I became a new creation. When I did, not only were the old things swept away, but I was reconciled to God by Christ Jesus. When I was reconciled to God, I returned (at least in the spirit) to the Garden. But, my habit of living and my manner of thinking did not get born again. Those things I must continually improve on by meditating in the Word of God.

As I renew my mind (Romans 12:2), I find that I grow closer to God and closer to His original plan.

As time goes by, my husband and I get closer and closer to the blueprint that God had in the Garden of Eden. We work better at being mutual companions and helpers to each other, and we grow less and less dependant on “tilling the ground.” We are seeing God bless us and prosper us. We are growing closer to mastering our life rather than being in anguish (or “itzbon”) over it. ⁸

We are both male and female, created in His image, to help each other spiritually, and to fulfill the unique purpose of the Father for our lives. ⁹

⁸. Greenwood pp. 20-22

Let me remind you again of Peter's words;

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honor unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered” (1 Peter 3:7).

God has a plan of triumph between the sexes. He places us together to jointly bear His likeness and display His power. The key is to stop pointing the finger at each other, join forces against the serpent, and run him out of your garden.

⁹. J. Oswald Sanders, Every Life is a Plan of God. New York, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992) p. 10

CHAPTER IV

THE BIBLICAL RECORD

Just the Facts

In a concise study of both the Bible and ancient world history, one will discover that before the Babylonian exile in 587 BC, women in Israel enjoyed the status and freedom comparable to that of men. Feminist scholarship, devoted to understanding women's roles in ancient Israel, has become an important development in the field of religious studies. Over the last twenty years, the use of anthropological and sociological theory to better understand and categorize the origins of ancient Israel as a distinct social formation in the Near East of the late second and first millennia has been established as a key development in biblical studies. Israel lived in a patriarchal world, but her society was always informed by faith: Faith that gave equality to women in the eyes of God.¹ Through God's eyes, the woman is seen and understood as the necessary complement of the man. The woman is understood as the needed helper in a relationship of mutual companionship and assistance (Genesis 2:18). Both male and female are necessary components to the image of God (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 5:1-2 and Mark 10:6-8).²

Women are found serving as Prophets (Exodus 15:20; 2 Kings 22:14-20), as Judges

1. Meyers, p. 9

2. Elizabeth Achtemeier, Women: An Overview. In *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed.

(Judges 4-5), and as Queens (1 Kings 19; 2 Kings 11) in pre-exile Israel. They are never excluded from the worship of God (Deuteronomy 16: 13-14; 2 Samuel 1-2). They are sometimes honored as models of wisdom (2 Samuel 14; 2 Samuel 20:16-22; Exodus 20:12). The honor of mothers receives equal rank as that of fathers (Deuteronomy 5:16; Genesis 15:5-6).³ The family rights of wives and mothers are protected by law, indicating a respect equal to men (Genesis 38; Proverbs 31: 10-31).⁴ Women who engage in profitable commercial enterprises, who teach in wisdom, and who serve the community through deeds of charity are honored as ideal (Proverbs 31:10-31).

And, while women, historically, faced a lengthy period of time when they did not receive the respect and mutual benefits that were afforded to men, Jesus of Nazareth did not adhere to those customs.

Jesus followed the words of the Biblical text, confirming God's equal value of women.⁵ Jesus made no hesitation in engaging even unclean foreign women in public conversation (John 4:27). He ignored all strictures of ritual impurity (Mark 5:25- 43). He Himself taught women

³. Fred H. Wight, Manners and Customs of Bible Lands. (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1953) p. 106

⁴. Judith L. Kovacs, pp. 213-215

⁵. Ron Rhodes, The Complete Book of Bible Answers. (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1997) p. 136

(Luke 10:38-42), gave them equal rank with men as Daughters of Abraham (Luke 13:10-17), openly ministered to them as “children of wisdom,” (Luke 7:35-50) and afforded them the highest respect as persons (Matthew 5:28).

Women belonged to the inner circle of disciples (Luke 8:1-3), and they are attested as the first witnesses of the resurrection (Luke 24:1-11; John 20: 18). The fourth gospel begins and ends with the testimony of a woman to the Christ (John 4:29; John 20:18).

Women played significant leading roles in earliest Christianity, being baptized and receiving the Spirit (Acts 2:17; Acts 5:14; Acts 8:12; Acts 16:15), doing acts of charity (Acts 9:36), suffering imprisonment for their faith (Acts 8:3; Acts 9:1-2), and serving as ministers in the church (Romans 16:1-7). They were allowed to preach and pray in worship services (1 Corinthians 11:5), as well as to prophesy (Acts 21:8-9), and to teach (Acts 18:25-26).⁶

These, according to the Bible, are the facts.

⁶. Achtemeier, ed. B.M. Metzger and M.D. Coogan, p. 807

CHAPTER V.

SILENCE

“Let your women keep silence in the churches; for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law” (1 Corinthians 14:34).

“As the Spirit of God began to talk to me about teaching and preaching the gospel, I often used this scripture to explain to God that He was obviously mistaken. ‘I can’t do that Lord! Paul commanded me to be silent in the church.’ It seemed like a good way out of it at the time.” (Greenwood, 27)

In several places throughout the 1st Corinthian letter, the Apostle Paul communicates information regarding the status of women and the sacrament of marriage.¹ So, what about this statement of Paul’s that forbids women to speak in church assemblies and commands them to be subordinate? Could it be a reference to Genesis 3:16?

How is it, that he said, “silence,” in this passage — especially when compared to his statements in the very same letter to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11), when he talks about women praying and prophesying in the public worship?

About this topic, egalitarian Craig S. Keener is quoted as saying:

¹. Robert L. Constable, Called Saints. (Chicago, Illinois: Moody Bible Institute, 1962) p. 3

“Paul cannot mean complete silence. The problem was not that the women were teaching, but more likely learning too loudly.”²

When examining the latter half of 1 Corinthians 14, the 34 verse says this, “... it is not permitted unto them to speak.” The word, permitted, in the Greek text is the word “epitrepo.”³ The meaning implies, to turn to, to entrust, to permit. Keep in mind, that in the text, it is prefaced by the word, NOT. So, here, it seems that the text is saying (just as transcribed), “not permitted.” Yet, depending on which study source you use, some interpret the passage to imply that the teaching prohibited “chatter,” and was in fact an injunction against the women engaging in idle conversation at the public worship service.

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of the New Testament, known as *The Message*, has an interesting translation of this passage as found in 1 Corinthians 14.

“Wives must not disrupt worship, talking when they should be listening, asking questions that could more appropriately be asked of their husbands at home. God’s book of the law guides our manners and customs here.

Wives have no license to use the time of worship for unwarranted speaking. Do you — both men and women — imagine that you are a sacred oracle determining what is right and

2. Craig S. Keener, Two Views on Women in Ministry, ed. J.R. Beck and C. L.

Bloomberg (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001) p. 51

3. Strong, G2010, p.623

wrong? Do you think that everything revolves around you?

If anyone of you thinks God has something for you to say or has inspired you to do something, pay close attention to what I have written. This is the way the Master wants it. If you can't play by the rules, God can't use you. Sorry.”⁴

But what about 1 Timothy, chapter 2?

“Let the women learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Timothy 2:11-12).

Like the text in 1 Corinthians 14:33-34, this scripture shares the idea that women should be subordinate to men and should, in fact, remain silent. However, there is more here than first meets the eye. The word, woman, as it appears in the original text, is the word, “gune.” “Gune,” is more appropriately translated as the word, “wife”—not woman. So, the context of the verse is addressing husbands and wives—not men and women in general.

If you have ever observed a woman who is critical of her husband in public, you will understand why Paul is instructing wives not to correct their husbands in a public setting. As any good wife knows, critically correcting her husband in the presence of others is a very sensitive matter. This is because it undermines the man's authority; and (as the saying goes), “adds insult to injury,” when it happens in the presence of others. It is always best, if you dis-

⁴. Eugene Peterson, The Message. (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress Publishing Group, 1996) 1 Corinthians 14.

agree with your husband's public commentary, to wait and discuss it with him in private. In this manner, you indicate to him that you respect him. This is why I believe Paul encouraged the women—or more accurately, the wives—to observe their husbands in silence when they are in a public forum.⁵

Paul goes on to discuss the roles of the sexes in even clearer instruction given to church officers. He states that Bishops and deacons are to be the husband of one wife (1 Tim. 3:2,12). Then, Paul interjects one statement with regards to women: “The women likewise [ie; the male deacons] must be serious, no slanderers, but temperate, faithful in all things” (1 Tim. 3:11). With this brief ruling, he returns to the men, with the emphasis remaining that the women were also officials.

To make this as clear as possible, I again would like to show you the passage from Peterson's paraphrase, *The Message*.

“The same goes for those who want to be servants in the church: serious, not deceitful, not too free with the bottle, not in it for what they can get out of it. They must be reverent before the mystery of faith, not using their position to try to run things. Let them prove themselves first. If they show they can do it, take them on. No exceptions are to be made for women — same qualifications: serious, dependable, not sharp-tongued, not overfond of wine.

⁵. Dr. Ken Stewart, Choosing a Mate. Audio Cassette. Life in Christ Ministries, Inc. 1999

Servants in the church are to be committed to their spouses, attentive to their own children, and diligent in looking after their own affairs. Those who do this servant work will come to be highly respected, a real credit to this Jesus-faith” (1 Timothy 3, 2nd paragraph).⁶

When the exegesis is either inconclusive or not cohesive with other samplings of scripture, we must study (2 Timothy 2:15) to obtain the clearest understanding and also rely on the whole of scripture to determine what stand to take.

Compared to the overwhelming evidence (see chapter 4) supporting God’s complete ability to use women in a wide variety of roles, without limitation, as witnessed in much of the Biblical text, I am inclined to side with the Word.

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon ALL flesh; and your sons and your DAUGHTERS shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams and your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the HANDMAIDS in those days will I pour out of my spirit” [Emphasis added] (Joel 2:28-29).

“There is neither Jew nor Greek [no racial distinction], neither bond nor free [no social distinction], there is neither male nor female [no gender distinction]; for ye are ALL one in Christ Jesus” [Comments inserted] (Galatians 3:28).

It is time to break the silence, join forces, and tell the world Jesus loves them.

⁶. Eugene Peterson, The Message. (Colorado Springs, Colorado: NavPress Publishing Group, 1996) 2 Timothy 3

CHAPTER VI.

GOD HONORS WHAT'S RIGHT

“Then came the daughters of Zelophehad, the son of Hopher, the son of Gilead, the son of Machir, the son of Manasseh, of the family of Manasseh, the son of Joseph; and these are the names of his daughters; Mahlah, Noah, and Hoglah, and Milcah, and Tirzah. And they stood before Moses, and before Eleazar the priest, and before the princes of the congregation, saying, Our father died in the wilderness, and he was not in the company of them that gathered themselves together against the Lord in the company of Korah; but died in his own sin, and had no sons. Why should the name of our father be done away from among his family, because he hath no son? Give unto us therefore a possession among the brethren of our father” (Numbers 27:4).

When Moses heard the case of these five sisters, he did not know what to do — so he went before God. As the scriptures tell us, the women were granted their request. These sisters were not willing to be passed by simply because they were born female. Prior to this event, women were not allowed to own property. This was the law of man—but not the law of God. When they appealed their situation to God through Moses, they were vindicated. ^{1,2}

1. Meyers, p. 40

2. Mary Chilton Callaway, Women in the Old Testament. In *What the Bible Really Says*, ed. M. Smith and R.J. Hoffman (New York: New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1993) p. 202

Communication was key here. The land and wealth rightfully belonging to them, would have gone to their father's brothers—leaving them with nothing—if they had not spoken their hearts. These women did not wait for some man to plead their case; they stepped out in faith and took action. Did you know that faith is not for men only? These five sisters used their faith—and faith always moves the hand of God.

“And Moses brought their case before the Lord, And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, The daughters of Zelophehad speak right; thou shalt surely give them a possession of an inheritance among their father's brethren; and thou shalt cause the inheritance of their father to pass unto them” (Numbers 27:5-7).

Like these five women, women today are also daughters of Abraham. Do you think it is fair for a woman to receive her Father's inheritance? We live in a time when women understand their rights. They no longer expect their inheritance to come to them by feebly sitting around and waiting for someone else to negotiate it for them. They are willing to press in and possess the promises of their Father God.³

Ladies, communicate what you need. Communicate what is in your heart. Do what you can in the natural—and, then, step into the supernatural, where the power of God makes all

³. Jakes, p. 144

things possible! It is time to move out and possess your land in faith. God honors your heart.

He does what is right. This quality of His remains unchanged, even by your gender. ⁴

⁴. Jakes, pp.144-146

CHAPTER VII.

BEHIND EVERY GOOD MAN

It has become fashionable among educated women in the western world to “have it all.” And that “all” is built from the three main components of marriage, motherhood and career. In present-day societies, women struggle to succeed in all three areas, when plainly, during at least certain seasons of life, just one of those elements would constitute a full-time role. For many contemporary women, attempting to balance the elements of life and responsibility can put staggering stress on motherhood and marriages. ¹

In the pre-industrial setting of ancient Israel, women experienced a much different reality. For example, the female reproductive role has implications beyond the marriage and family setting. It was critical to tribal and national success as well. To truly “be fruitful and multiply,” hinged on a community’s ability to procreate, possess, produce from, and protect their land. ² Factoring notably higher infant mortality rates than exist today, and overall shorter life spans, the female reproductive role took on national significance. The concern for increase in population numbers had bearing on security within a community, tribe or nation. Perhaps, much of

¹. Elisabeth Elliot, Trusting God in a Twisted World. (old Tappan, New Jersey: Fleming H. Revel Co., 1989) p. 134

². P. Bird, Male & Female He Created Them: Genesis 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation. Harvard Theological Review 77: 129-159, 1981, p. 153

the census list we observe in the book of Numbers, reflected a need toward military draft and national strength. The book of Numbers specifically states that of the people numbered, “all in Israel who are able to go forth to war” (Numbers 1:3, 26:2).

While not to obscure the fact that motherhood would encompass a large amount of a woman’s time and efforts, even among ancient people groups, there is an interesting challenge placed on married couples in such a setting. Married couples needed to respond to childbearing on a tribal-national level. This would have elevated the role of motherhood to a prominent level.³

How does this situation contrast with contemporary marriage and family. Our own experiences lean toward small family units and long life spans with women living an average of 75-years. This means that only 1/7th of a women’s life is dedicated to childbearing and rearing children in their early years.⁴ Today, the reasons for childbearing are much more personal and therefore, much less revered and rewarded by society as a whole. In fact, one could go as far as to say that contemporary society is confused about the value of mothering all-together.⁵

³. R.R. Wilk and R. Netting, Households: Changing Forms and Functions. In *Netting, Wilk and Arnould (1984a)*, pp.1-28, 1984, pp. 14-15

⁴. R. Rapp, E. Ross and R. Bridenthal, Examining Family History: Household and Family. In *Feminists Studies* 5:174-200, 1979, p. 182

⁵. Elisha Morgan and Carol Kuykendall, What Every Mom Needs. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995) p. 24

When we look back at ancient Israel, the notion that the domestic duties were female responsibilities is much of a misconception. The household and domestic roles were shouldered by males and females working together.⁶ Much of the social history indicates a homogenous, hard-working people group. Since the Jewish communities did not subscribe to a “class system,” they did not create differing rewards for age, occupation or gender. Therefore, ancient Israel might easily have been termed an egalitarian society.⁷ From this view-point, it becomes less complicated to allow androcentric biblical texts to cloud our view of gender interactions within an egalitarian farming-based household.

In early Jewish communities, all members of the household were part of the labor force. While males and females made nearly equal contributions, this does not necessarily suggest that they were doing the same tasks.^{8,9} Some roles could be carried-out by either male or female workers, and some were probably carried out by both genders — especially at labor-intensive

⁶. D. R. Bender, A Refinement of the Concept of Household: Families, Co-residence and Domestic Functions. In *American Anthropologists* 69: 493-504, 1967, p. 498

⁷. N.K. Gottwald, *The Tribes of Yahweh*. (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1979)

⁸. J. Brown, A Note on the Division of Labor. In *American Anthropologists* 72: 1073 - 1078, 1970, p. 1073

⁹. G. Lenski and J. Lenski, Human Societies. (New York, New York: McGraw Hill, 1987) pp. 44-45

times like harvest. However, there also existed traditional responsibilities that may have been divided along gender and age lines. As with other pre-industrial societies, household organization is balanced with respect to both the male and the female task load. ¹⁰

This complimentary flow is not always found in our modern culture — and particularly not within the Christian community, where strong gender boundaries can be present. When analyzing modern, western, industrialized societies, the dichotomy between low status, domestic-based, female functions and high status, public sphere, male functions will undoubtedly emerge. ¹¹ This “domestic versus public” concept distorts the healthy function of marriage and male-female relationships in general by fostering a mindset that leads to competition and control within marriages, based solely on misplaced gender value.

Gender conflicts are not the only stumbling block in domestic relations. Many relationships that fail blame their demise on poor communication.

What makes a good marriage?

Many feel that a good marriage has plenty of physical attraction, sexual appeal—or what we often refer to as “chemistry.” Yet, this is really only a small component in making mar-

¹⁰. Meyers, p. 71

¹¹. M.Z. Rosaldo, The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding SIGNS 5:389-417, cf. Conkey and Spector, 1984

riage “work,”

In America, nearly half of couples who make a decision to wed each other, will end up divorced.¹² Tragically, this statistic is not much lower for Christian couples, even in view of the fact that Jesus’ teachings discouraged divorce. This is undoubtedly because the same problems that plague couples outside of the church walls are attacking those within as well.

Donald Hughes, author of the e-book entitled, *The Divorce Reality*, made the following comment:

“In the churches, people have a superstitious view that Christianity will keep them from divorce, but they are subject to the same problems as everyone else, and they include a lack of relationship skills... Just being born again is not a rabbit’s foot.”¹³

Additionally, Researcher George Barna, commented: “While it may be alarming to discover that born again Christians are more likely than others to experience a divorce, that pattern has been in place for quite some time. Even more disturbing, perhaps, is that when those individuals [Christians] experience a divorce many of them feel their community of faith provides

12. “America’s Families and Living Arrangements: Population Characteristics.”

Current Population Reports 2002, p. 10. June 2001. US Census Bureau. 5 March 2002.

<<http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/p.20-537>.

13. Hughs, Donald, The Divorce Reality. 1999.

<<http://www.bookstore.theatronmedia.com>>. 5 March 2002

rejection rather than support and healing. But the research also raises questions regarding the effectiveness of how churches minister to families. The ultimate responsibility for a marriage belongs to the husband and wife, but the high incidence of divorce within Christian communities challenges the idea that churches provide truly practical and life-changing support for marriages. ¹⁴

CNN reported: Barna's research "raised eyebrows, sowed confusion, and even brought on a little holy anger." This prompted Barna to write to his supporters, confirming that he stands by his data, even though it is upsetting. To quote Barna: "We rarely find substantial differences between the moral behavior of Christians and non-Christians." His organization, *Barna Research Group*, released this statement: "We would love to be able to report that Christians are living very distinct lives and impacting the community, but... in the area of divorce rates, they continue to be the same" as the rest of the population. ¹⁵

When reviewing the data, it seems that the vices that are killing marriages are NOT alcoholism, drug addiction, or extramarital affairs, but poor communication skills. ¹⁶

14. "Christians are More Likely to Experience Divorce Than Non-Christians." Barna Research Group. 21 Dec 1999. <<http://www.barna.org>>. 5 March 2002.

15. "Bible Belt Has Nation's Worst Divorce Rate." CNN.com. 12 Nov 1999 <<http://www.cnn.com>>. 5 March 2002

16. Dr. Ken Stewart, Choosing a Mate. Audio Cassette. Life in Christ Ministries, Inc. 1999

You may remember, that back in Chapter 3, we talked about the fact that Adam never really communicated God's expectations to Eve with regard to the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. That poor communication is what led to the fall of man — and, one could argue, that poor communication is still causing couples to fall.

Often, the complications with communication stem from the fact that males and females are indeed very different creatures! It seems that we approach almost everything differently and can, at times, become rather perplexed about the manner in which the opposite gender addresses many of life's issues. When it comes to love and relationships, one could argue that men and women are speaking different languages.¹⁷ Men and women are very different.

Speaking two Different Languages

A recent study conducted on four-year-olds came to some startling conclusions. The study recorded every sound that came out of the mouth of a test group of young boys and girls.¹⁸ The outcomes of the experiment concluded that one hundred percent of the sounds made by the four-year-old girls were either literal words or were connected to literal words. The girls spent large amounts of time talking. Equal amounts of time were spent either talking to the other

17. Gary Chapman, The Five Love Languages. (Chicago, Illinois: Northfield Publishing, 1995) p. 16

18. B. Robert Kohn, "Patterns of Hemispheric Specialization in Preschoolers," Neuropsychologia, 12:505 -12.

girls or simply talking to themselves. However, the figure for boys included only approximately sixty- percent literal words. The remaining forty percent of sounds made, were just that -- sounds. It seems that the boys spent nearly as much time just making noise as using words for communication. In summary, the study concluded, that even as children, males and female have entirely different language and communication skills.¹⁹

As adults, men tend to be logical, factual and somewhat detail-oriented in their communications. Women, on the other hand, may have much more of a need to share conversation, and to share deeply on an emotional level. As such, a woman's need for deep relationship often exceeds what the average man desires.²⁰

In his book, *The Language of the Heart*, James Lynch reveals medical evidence that suggests that as men strive to develop broader communication skills, they change and improve their cardiovascular health. The evidence suggests that when an individual holds their words inside, it produces a form of stress that increases blood pressure, which can lead to hypertension, and the potential of heart problems. As a man learns to communicate, by speaking a combination of the logical language of the head, coupled with the language of the heart, positive

¹⁹. Gary Smalley and John Trent, *Love is a Decision*. (Dallas, Texas: Word Publishing, 1989) pp.44

²⁰ *Ibid*, p.44

change occurs in his life.²¹

With all of this in mind, you may find yourself saying, "What's the point?" If men and women are really so different, how will we be able to reach intimate relationships that have any longevity. Yet, research suggests that often times what appears to be complete incompatibility between the two genders is the very thing that enables a great marriage to be formed.²² To achieve this "greatness," Gary Smalley suggests the use of "word pictures:"

"The first of these [communication] skills is to employ the most powerful communication tool we know of in the Scriptures. We call these emotional word pictures, and without exaggeration, we've seen it turn a forty-watt communication into a laser beam of words that hits both head and heart at the same time."²³

An emotional word picture is a method of communication that activates both the emotions and the intellect. This technique allows another individual not only to hear our words, but to experience them.²⁴

²¹ James J. Lynch, The Language of the Heart (New York, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1985).

²². Smalley (1989), p. 120.

²³. Gary Smalley and John Trent, The Language of Love (Pomona, California: Focus on the Family Publishers, 1988).

²⁴. Smalley (1988)

Alongside the development of these communication skills, there is compelling evidence to suggest that humor is another key to success in relationships. Perhaps you've heard it said, that the key to happiness and longevity in marriage is two-fold: have a big sense of humor and a short memory. If you can learn to laugh (even at yourself) and determine not to keep a list of the "wrongs" done to you—you and your spouse are on your way to a successful marriage.²⁵

"Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited (arrogant and inflated with pride); it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]" (1 Corinthians 13: 4-5).

The author of *The Genesis Generation* says:

It is important to remember that God designed the genders to complete and compliment each other. In other words, the strong qualities of your mate (yes, even the qualities that perplex you) are divinely arranged by God to undergird you in the areas where you need it!

If you do not keep this in perspective and learn to appreciate the differences between you and your spouse, the devil will use these same "strong qualities" as a source for you to annoy and destroy one another.

25. Stewart, 1999.

If you are feeling annoyed by your spouse, don't get mad at him/her—get mad at the devil and turn the situation around. Thank God that He gave you a spouse who sees things differently than you do. This is for your own benefit! But, all of this being said, how do you learn to live with, and truly love, someone who is very different from you? ²⁶

The key is found within the four types of love.

The Bible talks about four different types of love. These “loves” are four different Greek words that appear in the scriptures, and each of these words means, “love.”

- Agape ²⁷:

Agape is the love of God. It is what gives us the ability to see our mate as a valuable and precious gift from God. You do not have agape unless you have the love of God shed abroad in your heart (Romans 5:5). ²⁸

- Philos

Philos is often translated as “brotherly love.” It refers to a loving friendship among other brothers and sisters in the Lord. ²⁹

²⁶. Greenwood, p. 40

²⁷. Strong, G26, p. 567

²⁸. Kenneth E. Hagin, Love: The Way to Victory. (Tulsa, Oklahoma: RHEMA Bible Church, 1996) p. 2

²⁹. W.E. Vine, Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary. (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1984) p. 382

- Storge : Storge is an affectionate or romantic love.³⁰
- Eros: Eros is sexual love between husband and wife.³¹

A man and a woman will both approach agape love in the same manner. Both will react to agape spirit first—and then soul. This is because God is a Spirit, and He seeks to have a relationship with the recreated spirits of men and women. There is no difference between the spirit of a man and the spirit of a woman (Galatians 3:28).³²

Philos is another type of love that is very similar to both men and women. Both genders will approach a friendship soul (or mind) first — and then body. This is to say, that even though you may be “friendly” with many people, you do not become good friends with everybody. Generally, you need to relate to someone who has a common interest, intellect, or background as yourself. These are soulful points in common. If you have these common soulful traits with someone else, then you can proceed to building a strong friendship.

Storge, however, marks a departure in similarity between the genders. The approach to storge love is directly opposite for a woman and a man. A man will always relate to affection body first—then mind/soul. While a woman will always relate to affection as a thing of the mind (or soul) first—then it affects her body. This is key. In a romantic relationship, storge will

30. Vine, p. 16

31. C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves. (Ireland: Harvest Books, 1960)

32. Dr. Ken Stewart, Choosing a Mate. Audio Cassette. Life in Christ Ministries, Inc. 1999

always proceed eros. If storge love is not engaged, eros (or sexual love) will be a very difficult transition.³³

Eros, as you may have now guessed, is also directly opposite for a man as it is for a woman. A man will always react to sexual love body first—then mind/soul. While, a woman will approach sex from her mind first; and, then, she will react to it in her body.²⁷ The simple understanding of these four types of love can shed an enormous amount of light on all areas of a marriage relationship.³⁴

Realize, that God's first intention was for man and woman to relate to each other spirit to spirit. This is why Genesis 2:25 states that although they were naked, they were unashamed. In other words, their nakedness wasn't an issue. They didn't even know that they were naked. After the encounter with the serpent, their perspective changed. Genesis 3:10 documents that they were ashamed of their nakedness—and they hid themselves.³⁵

God never intended for males and females to relate to each other as body to body first. They were to be spirit dominated.

33. Ibid

34. Weekend to Remember: Conference Manual. (Little Rock, Arkansas: Campus Crusade for Christ, 1985) p.116

35. Dr. Ken Stewart, Choosing a Mate. Audio Cassette. Life in Christ Ministries, Inc. 1999

Most marriages start off on the wrong foot. Couples begin their relationship by relating to each other body to body first. God's intention is to unite them as one spirit—then they are in a position to overcome the body and soul struggles.

Ideally, agape love is to be intermingled with the other “loves.” As one develops an understanding of how these types of love affect them; spirit, soul, and body, then relationships can be enhanced.³⁶

Having knowledge of God's Word is the only way you can divide the soul from the spirit, and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart (Hebrews 4:12). This is why Christians must renew their minds (Romans 12:2).

To quote Dr. Ken Stewart:

“Men, when it is clear that you have not taken time to think about your wife or act toward her in a kind and respectful fashion, and you attempt to become bodily affectionate with her, she will become offended. When you have no kind words (or no words at all) for her and decide to make a sexual advance toward her, you are communicating to her in a non-verbal fashion. And, your non-verbal communication is telling her that she is merely a possession of yours to be used to bring you pleasure. If a man allows his mind to be fully consumed with thoughts of responsibility and then attempts to relate to his wife physically only (without ever engaging her mind in conversation), he will find that his wife will be unresponsive.

36. Ibid

When a woman behaves affectionately from a physical stand point, it is because her mind has been engaged first. For the woman, storge love is a “mind thing.” If no attention has been spent in respectfully relating to her as a thinking and feeling human being, then her body will not (and in some cases, physically cannot) proceed smoothly to eros love.”³⁷

In essence, women who understand why the male reacts so differently to storge and eros love, can attempt to facilitate better communication with their spouse—knowing that the end result will be mutually beneficial.

Ultimately, when marital gender conflicts arise, you cannot resolve them mind vs. mind, soul vs. soul, or even body vs. body. They must be addressed spiritually through repentance.

If the man succeeds in strong communication, loving support of his wife, and a willingness to repent when needed, then something supernatural happens. She is moved to the place, emotionally, physically and spiritually, where she becomes the helpmeet and heartmate that she was created to be. This elevates her husband’s quality of life.

By being protected and loved as a wife, a woman brings her husband to the place where he is the lord of his “garden” with authority over the devil and dominion over circumstances. They begin to rule and reign together as priests and kings (Rev.1:6).³⁸

³⁷. Dr. Ken Stewart, Choosing a Mate. Audio Cassette. Life in Christ Ministries, Inc. 1999

³⁸. Ibid.

There is a saying that goes, “Behind every good man is a good woman.” The Bible says it this way, “He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing” (Proverbs 18:22). When a man finds this “good thing,” the scriptures say that they become one flesh—one body (Mark 10:8-9).

Let me illustrate this concept. Communication in the human body is constantly flowing from the head (brain) to all other parts. To sever that communication could dramatically impair the operation of the body. It may even bring death to the body. If the marriage is to function as “one flesh,” then, a break in communication could be just as deadly.

Much like the human body, the godly marriage receives its instructions from the Head—Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18). In addition, the partners must be connected to each other, all while remaining connected to the Head. And, while different “parts” may perform different functions, the command from the Head keeps every part working toward the common goal.

If you are not headed for the same goal, you are not listening to the Head. This is critical. Are you and your spouse headed for the same goal?

Do you share a common vision for raising your children, handling your finances, and spending your time? If not, you need to review the commands coming from the Head—Jesus Christ. As you seek the commands found in God’s Word, you will unite in a common vision toward a common goal.

Communication is the key!

As husbands start to understand the immense value of good communication, they will undoubtedly and dramatically improve their standard of living. What was once perceived as a

nagging wife will clearly be revealed as a communication problem.

Women who are connected by informative and consistent communication from their husbands will rapidly move to the position of being the “good thing” that Proverbs speaks about (not that they weren’t “good” to begin with—only that their spouse may have been unable to perceive them as such). From the very beginning of life on earth, Satan had a plan to divide the man from the woman — and to divide mankind from God. The reason he worked so hard to divide the man from the woman is that he understood that when they were flowing in unity, they jointly displayed the image of God (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 5:2) and displayed God’s glory.³⁹

The devil has insight into a lesson that Jesus taught. A house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25). Had the woman and the man in the Garden of Eden any understanding of the power contained within their unity, they could have turned on the serpent and ran him out of the garden. But, Adam and Eve were ignorant of the power available to them through the godly force of the united male and female.

I believe one of the last great occurrences that we will see prior to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, is the unification of this power among the sexes. Behind every good man will be a good woman—and vice versa! I believe that marriages will unite in a way that leaves the devil no room for entry.

³⁹. Greenwood, p. 46

I believe that the men and the women of the church will work together and respect each other's gifts and callings in a way that locks out the devil. I believe that women will come alongside men and be the helpmeets the men have needed from the start. When this happens, all will see the devil's deception for what it is—and will eat freely of the Tree of Life.⁴¹

41. Ibid, pp. 48-50

CHAPTER VIII

THE WEAKEST VESSELS

When exploring the different schools of thought regarding whether God is able to use women to minister the gospel, one may also contemplate His ability to work through children.

On this topic, the author of *The Genesis Generation* is quoted as saying the following:

I think back to the days before I became a mother—aaahhh, the days of climbing the corporate ladder, business meetings, or even simply having time to myself to take a luxurious bath or polish my toe nails. Now, it seems like a surreal dream. Surrounded by sleepless nights, dirty diapers, breast feeding, helping with homework, and making costumes for the school play I wonder how, exactly, did it get so packed full of responsibility? I have never worked so hard in my life. There are days when I am challenged to get a shower or use the bathroom out of necessity—time has become ever so precious.

Yet, I find that my life was pale and bland before our children's existences. I have been stretched and transformed into something I never knew I could be. I find myself juggling multiple tasks with ease and learning to rely on God in new and marvelous ways. I see things—spiritually speaking—with a clarity that I could not have comprehended before parenthood and I rejoice! I am blessed with two little girls. I take time to encourage them. I remind them often that God has a unique plan for their lives and that He will use them for His glory. Just the simple act of encouraging them has often encouraged me. After all, if God can work through these—the weakest of

vessels—then, He can use me, too!

I have never told my girls that God will be limited in the capacity in which He uses them on account of their femaleness. I have never discouraged my children—nor insulted the Spirit of God—by placing Him in that confining box. What has that accomplished? The supernatural manifestation of the power of God through the faith of two tiny little girls.

During a troubled time in the pregnancy with my second child, I often would have to take my oldest (then 3-1/2 years old) to the hospital with me as I went through numerous ultrasounds and fetal profile tests. The reports were often bad. On one of those occasions, my little girl rebuked the medical technician. She exploded, “This baby is blessed, and we are not about to settle for that bad news.” We were believing God for a healthy baby.

We were not willing to accept Down Syndrome, Hepatitis B, and Strep. We could not agree with the reports that she had stopped growing, was under-developed, and might never be “normal.” Little Crista laid down the law that day. “We are going to believe the Word of God... and that is that!” In that moment, I was glad that I never tried to explain to her that God couldn’t use her on account of her “femaleness.” I rejoiced that I never waited to explain the things of God to her until she was “old enough” to comprehend it. If it were not for the fact that God used her so mightily during that time, I doubt her sister would be alive today.

As I create an environment for my girls to move in the Spirit, I am challenged to move as well. By instilling in them the obvious fact that God CAN use them, I am reprogramming myself to be used of God. When I see God working in the relationship He has with my children, I am persuaded to let go of the “religious notion” that He cannot work through a woman like me. It is a liberating place to be. It is not about me. It is not about the color of my skin, the length of my hair, or the gender He created me to be — it is all about Him. He will move through anyone who is open to conducting His power.

We need to come to Him with the simple loving faith of children (Matthew 18:3) — not in our own might (Zechariah 4:6), but like one of the weakest vessels.

If we can keep this humble attitude; I believe God can, and will, use us all.

To God be the glory. ¹

The interaction between a child and their environment forms the basis of their development: spirit, soul and body. Children experience a process of development as the expansion of their conception of the world around them, and their ability to influence or act on that world, grows. ² [Faith and a child’s exposure to acts of faith can play a significant role here.]

1. Greenwood, pp. 51-54

2. James Garbarino, Children and Families in the Social Environment (Hawthorne, New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1992) p. 16.

A child's own unique individualism engaged in interaction with the events of life itself, cause a child's identity and competence to emerge as an outcome.³ In short, if a child is exposed to acts of faith and the functioning of the gifts of the spirit, then it is likely that that experience would enable them to operate in faith and spiritual gifts as well.

³. U. Bronfenbrenner, The Ecology of Human Development: Experiments by Nature and Design. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1979) p. 330

CHAPTER IX.

RESTORING THE GENESIS GENERATION

Lately, when I read through the book of Job, I have begun to see a similarity between the life of Job and the history of the church.

Job, much like the early church, started out blessed! Then, over time, the devil came and robbed both Job and the church of many of those blessings.

And, just like Job, the church opened the door to the devil by operating in fear and the use of negative words (Job 42:3). But, let's not focus on the negative. Let's see what happened to Job in the end—because, the church will share a similar end as did the servant, Job.¹

“And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. Then there came unto him all his bretheren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house; and they bemoaned him, and comforted him all the evil that the Lord had brought [allowed] upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and everyone an earring of gold. So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she

¹. David J. A. Clines, Job Among the Wisdom Literature. In *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed. B.M. Metzger and M.D. Coogan (New York, New York: Oxford University Press, 1993) p. 370

asses. He has also seven sons and three daughters. And he called the name of the first, Jemima; and the name of the second, Kezia; and the name of the third, Keren-happuch. And in all the land were no women found so fair as the daughters of Job; and their father gave them inheritance among their brethren. After this lived Job an hundred and forty years, and saw his sons, and his son's sons, even four generations. So Job died being old and full of days" (Job 42:10-17).

In verse 10, we read that Job "doubled." This will happen to the church in the last days—we will double in blessings.

In verse 11, we see as Job doubled all the people came and fellowshiped with him and made an offering to him—blessing him even more! This will happen to the church as well. Those who had walked away from the church will be restored; and, as an act of worship, they will bring an offering to the house of God.

In verse 12, Job is prospering—this will happen to the church, too!

In verse 13, we see that Job had children. The church will have spiritual offspring—in other words, people will become born again.

In verse 14, the names of Job's daughters are listed—only the daughters—this is because (vs. 15) there were no women in all the land as blessed and beautiful as the daughters of Job. This is a type of the women of the church. As the return of the Lord draws nearer, the women of the church will be so fair that everyone will know that they are the daughters of God, Himself. But, then, verse 15 goes on to say that Job left an inheritance to both his sons and

daughters—a practice that was unheard of at the time Job lived! Generally, only the sons would receive an inheritance and the daughters would be “married off.” But, Job was so wealthy and blessed, he gave an inheritance to his daughters. At the end of the church age, God the Father will move wealth through the hands of both His sons and His daughters (Deuteronomy 8:18). He will pour out His abundant blessings on both His sons and His daughters (Joel 2:28-29). This is, because there will be a vast harvest of souls; and He, simply, will not restrict Himself to the use of the men only! There will be too much work to be done. God is going to bless and use the women, as well!

In the end, just like the children of Job, the children of God will receive equal treatment, regardless of their gender—and the blessings will abound. 2.

Did you know that the prophet Joel recorded this same thing? God will use all His children equally; according to their gifts; and regardless of their gender, in the last days.

“Be glad then, ye children of Zion [this is the church], and rejoice in the Lord your God; for he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain and the latter rain in the first month [a farmer needs both the early and late rain to get a harvest]. And the floors shall be full of wheat [the wheat is the harvest of the souls of the lost], and the vats shall overflow with wine [wine represents the fullness of the indwelling Holy Spirit] and oil [oil represents the anointing]. And I will restore to you the years

2. Greenwood, p. 56-58

that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. [God will restore the years in which the devil caused us to be divided. Remember that Jesus taught that a house divided against itself cannot stand (Mark 3:25).] And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, [This is the same abundant blessing that the book of Job recorded.] and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wonderously with you; and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else; and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward [after He restores us to unity], that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh [not just male flesh, but all flesh]; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit... And it shall come to pass that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered..." [Comments added.] (Joel 2: 23-29;32a).

God has a plan to restore the years that were eaten away by the devil. When the devil came to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, he came to rob them of their unified power and left them with years of conflict toward each other.³ But, God can do more than unify the man and the woman, He can restore all the years they were ineffective and powerless.

³. Mike Murdock, 20 Keys to a Happier Marriage. (Denton, Texas: Wisdom International, 1994) p. 5

The author of *The Genesis Generation* comments:

Do you know that He can do that? Do you know that He is going to perform that very act of unification and restoration right here among the ranks of His church?

The prophet, Ezekiel, recorded that a day was coming when the Word of God would breathe life into God's people (Ezekiel 10:1-10). He said that those people would rise up to be a great and mighty army. Both men and women will stand among those ranks.

Did you know that God will not force us to work together? After all, He created us with free will. We have a choice. We can believe His Word—or we can stick to our own religious traditions. We can still make the same choice that Adam and Eve made—and not allow women to be the helpers that men so desperately need.

When I first married my husband, I had opportunities to use my faith. I believed fully that God was calling me (and my future family) to the ministry—AND, I also believed fully that God wanted me to be married to this man. And while God and I had an understanding of this fact, my husband did not.

Many times, the very fact that I was pursuing God and the work of the ministry would convict my husband. I remember one particular occasion when this made him so angry that he said to me, “You should have married a preacher!!!” It took a lot of composure to hold my tongue, but I did. And, in my heart I heard the Holy Ghost respond, “You did marry a preacher.” For several years, that was all I had to hold on to.

In February of 1999, I was invited to preach in Calcutta, India. I took my entire family with me. One Sunday morning, my youngest daughter (then only one year old) decided she wasn't interested in sitting quietly in a tiny Calcutta church; but, instead, needed to spend some time with Mommy. She wasn't too concerned with the fact that I was scheduled to preach that morning. My husband simply said, "I'll preach." In fact, he had his Bible and notes all ready to go!

After the service, a dear friend of ours (we call him Uncle Harry) who was listening to my husband deliver the Sunday morning message, came running out of the church. "Sister Lori, Sister Lori, you married a preacher!"

In that moment, I stood in the middle of a dream. I viewed something with my eyes that I had only, up until that point, seen in my heart.

For years, I could see something in the man that even he could not. For a long time (even though I believe I am also called to preach), I felt like I was standing in my husband's place — holding the spot for him. There were times when this became frustrating and irritating to me. There were times when this made him angry and resentful; because, ultimately, deep down inside he knew God had commanded him to "hold forth the Word of life." (Philippians 2:16)

Had I not come alongside my husband to help him do what God had commanded him to do, he may never have eaten of the Tree of Life. Men, you cannot do it without the women. Women, you cannot do it without the men (even though, spiritually speaking, some of you Single Moms have been doing the man's job for years). God never planned for you to do it all alone.

He knew you would need help. He designed us to work together.⁴

All throughout the record of creation as found in the book of Genesis, God pauses to reflect on His progress. Often, the Bible records that He remarks, “It is good.” Sometimes He even states that “it is very good.” There is only one time in those accounts that God says, “It is not good...” Why would God say that something He made was not good?

“And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a help meet for him” (Genesis 2:18).

When God commanded Adam to eat freely (especially of the Tree of Life) and Adam did not do what God said, God remarked, “This is not good.” In verse 18, God came to the conclusion, “Adam needs help.” Adam cannot seem to do what God told him to do—so, God solved the problem.

“And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (Genesis 2:22-25).

In this generation, God is restoring Genesis. He is raising up men and women who will walk in the Spirit and in unity as helpers to each other.

⁴. Greenwood, pp. 60-63

CHAPTER X.

LOVE IS THE KEY

“Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:7-8).

“... if we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is perfected in us” (1 John 4:12).

“... the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost...” (Romans 5:5).

For most of us, the true success in our lives will be determined by our ability to establish positive relationships. ¹ From the very beginning of this earth, God created Adam and Eve to have a relationship with each other; and He created mankind to have a relationship with Him.

Everything that God ever created is designed for connection. Nothing is engineered for self-sufficiency. God desires a relationship with human beings. ²

“And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, “Where art thou” (Genesis 3:9)?

¹. Lester Sumrall, Making Life Count. (New York, New York: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985) p. 72

². Mike Murdock, Wisdom for Winning. (Denton, Texas: Wisdom, International, 1988)

God is continually reaching for us. That is why Luke 19:10 records that Jesus came into the earth to “seek and save that which was lost.” He is still reaching; longing for a loving relationship with us.

Many have no relationship with their heavenly Father—they are lost—and Jesus calls them home to a relationship with the Father.

There is a power that is intrinsic in a relationship. The future of every relationship depends on which direction we focus the power.

The devil fears godly relationship because of the power therein. This is why the devil will use relationships to destroy people and break their focus in life. If he can get you to direct the power of a relationship toward an ungodly end, then he can use the power intrinsic to that relationship to ruin you.

Loving relationships hold the power of agreement.³

“Verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if any two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:18-20).

There is exponential power available to people who honor the gift of godly relationships. When people come together, honoring each other, filled with compassion for each other,

³. Greenwood, p. 68

God's power is released from heaven.

Love is the key.

“Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up, and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him.

Confess your faults one to another, and pray for one another, that ye may be healed. The effective fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:14-16).

Love reaches for another. Love is filled with God's compassion. Love honors the gift of relationship.

“Speak not evil against each other, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge” (James 4:11).

Love is a “two-way street.” We need to feel loved; to receive approval, recognition, attention and affection. Also, we need to release those same things to others.

Therein is the power of relationship. Love is the key—and love is spelled, T-I-M-E. 4.

In a marriage, time is the only way your love is exposed to your spouse. Often, I have heard people say, “Oh, she/he knows I love her/him. I don't have to make time to show them I

4. Ibid, pp. 69-70

love her/him.” Wrong. Your time spent together is the only way you can have a relationship.⁵

What would your walk with God be like if you never made time to read the Bible, to pray, or even to go to church? It would not be long before you felt His presence leave. Why? You made no time to show Him that you loved Him. And while many can understand a simple illustration like that, we somehow think that it doesn’t apply to our relationship with our spouse. You must make time to honor and recognize the relationship God has blessed you with through your spouse.

I once knew a man who spent all of his time either at work or going out with his friends from the office after work. He spent the weekends doing the things that he loved to do without the company of his wife. One day, he came home to find her packing. She left him. And while it was no surprise to me why she left, he seemed to be shocked—as if he had no idea why she would leave! So, I simply asked one question, “Tell me why she should stay?” He could not answer.

Your spouse is a gift from God. You must make time to honor and recognize the relationship God has blessed you with through your spouse. Your spouse is a gift from God. When you are no longer able to recognize your spouse as a gift; then, in your eyes, she/he has no value.⁶

⁵. Stormie Omartian, The Power of a Praying Wife. (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House Publishers, 1997) p. 127

⁶. Greenwood, pp. 69-71

When you treat people as if they are of no value, they will eventually exit your life.⁷

This is true in every relationship in life. Pastors who fail to recognize and thank those that God has sent to them, as special gifts will find that those people will leave their church. Employers who fail to honor and reward those employees who work with excellence and diligence will find that those employees will find another job. Parents, who fail to see the treasure inside their sons or daughters, and only have words of criticism, will see their children grow up, move out, and emotionally detach themselves. Why do you think marriages break up? One or both persons choose to no longer distinguish the gift of God in the other.

Love is the key. Time is the investment.⁸

God gives you a spouse who can see things that you are unable to see. When your marriage is God-centered, your mate will cause your best qualities to surface. Your mate will give you longevity and energize you. She/he will strengthen your strengths. This takes love and time—you have to be committed to seeking the best God has for you!⁹

Like any person, I find that there are moments in life when I am content to walk

⁷. Mike Murdock, The Law of Recognition. (Denton, Texas: Wisdom, International, 1999) p. 7

⁸. Greenwood, p. 72

⁹. Murdock (1999) p. 8-9

the fence between what I am willing to tolerate and the best that God has for me. Many times, I find myself expecting my husband to be the one who recognizes what a treasure I am—citing all the reasons why I don't need to look for the treasure in him! In those moments, I am walking the fence. The Word of God will kick you off the fence.

The dominant qualities of your spouse are divinely arranged to protect you, undergird your weaknesses, and fuel your goals in life. If you are unable to recognize these traits as a gift from God, then the same dominant qualities can be used by the devil to destroy you.

Let me give you a personal illustration of this thought. I communicate most effectively in a written format. Often, early in our marriage, when my husband and I did not always see eye-to-eye on issues, I would present my thoughts to him in a written format. At that time, we did not fully realize that this ability to communicate in written form was a gift. Since my husband did not view it as a gift, it only annoyed him all the more! Over time we saw God moving through my writing. We saw that it was the most effective way for me to communicate. Now, because we understand it as a gift from God, when we are faced with the issues of life; my husband will often ask me to write my suggestions and solutions down for him to review. We used to see the devil ride roughshod over the top of us—because we could not recognize God, when we are faced with the issues of life; my husband will often ask me to write my suggestions and solutions down for him to review. We used to see the devil ride roughshod over the top of

us—because we could not recognize my gift—now, we use the gift to the advantage of our relationship. In fact, we utilize each other’s gifts to bring growth and development into our relationship.

You and your mate will determine what grows in your marriage—briars or mighty oaks. Remember that there is power intrinsic in your relationship and you and your spouse must willfully decide which way you will direct that power.

The law of the devil is the same as it was in the Garden of Eden—divide and conquer. Jesus said it this way; “A house divided against itself cannot stand.”

If you do nothing to protect your marriage, then you will put other things and interests above time for your spouse. When you do this, you create isolation, aloneness, and vulnerability. 10

It is not good that man should be alone (Genesis 2:18).

10. Greenwood, pp. 73-74

CHAPTER XI.

LEARNING TO LOVE

“But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise [like the aged men], that they be in behavior as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise [like the young women] exhort to be sober minded. In all things showing thyself a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity and sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:1-8).

This passage of scripture from the book of Titus starts out by giving us some guidelines with regard to conduct as Christians and as wedded couples. Titus 2:4 instructs the older women in the churches to teach the younger women in two primary areas. The first area is in how to love their husbands. The second is in how to love their children.¹ Verse 6 indicates that the young men were also to be taught to love their spouses and children when it states,

¹. Russell Fuller, Marriage in Ancient Israel. In *Oxford Companion to the Bible*, ed.

“Young men likewise...” What does this tell us? Love is not innate. Love must be learned.

By nature, I am a goal setter. One of the things that has made life so fulfilling for me, is that I often ask myself one simple question, “What can I do to improve?” What can I do to improve—my marriage, the manner in which I’m raising my children, my walk with God, my performance at the office, my finances, my physical appearance—and the list goes on. One of the ways I find that helps me to improve the most, is to observe someone who is already at the place that I want to be—and learn whatever I can from her/him.

If I want to enhance my child’s performance in school, I talk to successful teachers and ask for ideas to promote my child’s enthusiasm for learning. And, if I want to improve my marriage, I talk to people who have been happily married for many years.

My husband’s parents have been together for 45 years. They were very young when they first started their lives together. They know what it is like to struggle. They’ve raised kids, dogs, turtles, and even a few snakes that my husband dragged home as a boy. They both had successful careers. All their children turned out to be successful, happy, productive members of society. They have never tried to meddle or manipulate one single time in our marriage—yet they are always there when we need their help. They are retired, living a wonderful and more than comfortable lifestyle. This is, because they made wise decisions throughout their lives together. When my husband and I hit a challenging season in our marriage, I often ask him, “How did your parents handle

stuff like this?” Sometimes I just get the answers I need from passing conversations with my mother-in-law. I don’t even know if she realizes how much she has helped me. What was she teaching me? She was teaching me how to love.

When I became a mother for the first time, one of the first “revelations” I got was to call my own mother and apologize for every rotten thing that I ever did, said, or thought. I had no idea what challenge motherhood was (and still is). Even though I have been down this road of motherhood for a few years now, I still ask my mother a lot of questions. And now (much more than ever) I’m listening to what she says—because she is full of wisdom. She, too, is continually teaching me how to love.

“That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children” (Titus 2:4).

If there is anyone you know who is walking out a life of victory right before your eyes—ask them questions. Do you go to church with a couple whom have been together for years, raised godly children, and still hold hands? Ask them how they made it through the challenges of life. Find out their secrets for success! Let them teach you how to love each other—and how to love your children.

Ephesians 5:25-33 has the best-detailed instructions to teach husbands how to love their wives and be the spiritual heads of the home.

I Peter 3: 1-7 has the best-detailed instructions to teach wives how to love their husbands.

The key, however, to these scriptures (Ephesians 5:25-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-7) working, hinges on 1 Corinthians 7:12-13; 15.²

“But to the rest speak I, not the Lord: If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman which hath a husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him...But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God has called us to peace” (1 Corinthians 7:15).

If you are in a marriage where your spouse is physically hurting you or mentally abusing you; then, clearly, they are not pleased to dwell with you! God’s desire is for you to dwell in peace.³

- Men have a perfect example in Christ (Ephesians 5:25-33).
- Women have an imperfect example in the church (1 Peter 3:1-7).

In 1 Corinthians, chapter 7, Paul talks about a man getting married to his girlfriend in order to avoid fornication. This is because marriage, as we presently know it, is an “earthly” thing. As humans, we have earthly or sensual urges and emotions. But, our earthly marriages will ultimately seem irrelevant in the light of the church being Christ’s bride.

². Greenwood, pp. 76-80

³. Henry W. Wright, A More Excellent Way. (Thomaston, Georgia: Pleasant Valley Church, Inc, 2001) pp. 78-79

The best thing that you and your spouse can do for each other here on earth is to prepare each other to become the bride of Christ! As we endeavor to prepare ourselves, we will undoubtedly learn more about love.

There are many things that I have learned about love and about why successful marriages work—some from asking questions, some from observation, and some from pain.

- Compromising your relationship with God to please your mate will not make your marriage better.
- The key to success in parenting is that you are training your children to leave you and become confident and independent (Genesis 2:24). This is what enables them to cleave to their spouse. Many marriages are destroyed by not “leaving and cleaving.”⁴
- As an adult, you must emotionally leave your parents. You must stop depending on them and stop talking to them in detail during “crisis times.” Do not trust them above your spouse. The word, “cleave,” literally means to weld together.

When I was an undergraduate student at the University of Illinois, I was an art major. I did a little welding from time to time when studying 3-dimensional design. There are three things that happen to achieve a successful weld:

- 1.) You must clean up the two pieces before you attempt to bring them together.

⁴. Blessed Okwuchi Nworuh, The Woman (Owerri, Nigeria: Ambix publishers, 2002)

2.) The pieces can only come together successfully with the heat of the welding rod.

3.) When complete, the weld becomes stronger than the metal itself, making the two pieces stronger than before they were joined.

How do you weld a couple together?

1.) You “clean them up” by compelling them to leave all the junk and debris (past grievances and failures) behind them.

2.) You unite them with the purifying heat of the Spirit and the Rod of Jesse, Jesus Christ.

3.) When complete they become one flesh—much stronger than when they were mere individuals.

God’s plan is for us to strengthen each other; and, so, we must earnestly set about the task of learning to love. 5.

5. Greenwood, pp. 82-83

CHAPTER XII.

THE BRIDEGROOM, BRIDE AND THE HOUSE FITLY FRAMED

The Apostle Paul uses two illustrations when talking to us as the church of believers in Jesus Christ. One is that we are like a human body. Each believer becomes a “part” of the body of Christ, and we become dependent on each other to function properly.

The other illustration is that we are like a building. Brick by brick, we are joined together to become the habitation of God. Every brick or “part” of the building must take its place in order for the building to stand. You cannot put the roof on until the walls are in place. You cannot expect the walls to stand unless the foundation is sure. Every element has its place.

A large portion of the book of Ephesians addresses these two concepts. It also compares the idea of human marriage between a man and woman and spiritual marriage between Jesus and the body of believers.

“You are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Jesus Christ Himself the chief Cornerstone. In Him the whole structure is joined (bound, welded) together harmoniously, and it continues to rise (grow, increase) into a holy temple in the Lord (a sanctuary dedicated, consecrated, and sacred to the presence of the Lord). In Him [and in the fellowship with one another] you yourselves also are being built up [into this structure] with the rest, to a fixed abode (dwelling place) of God in (by, through) the Spirit. For this reason [because I preach that you are built up together], I, Paul, [am] the prisoner of the Lord Jesus Christ for this sake and on behalf of you Gentiles...[The purpose is] that through the church, the complicated,

many-sided wisdom of God in all its infinite variety and innumerable aspects might now be made known to the angelic rulers and authorities (principalities and powers) in the heavenly sphere...For this reason [seeing the greatness of this plan by which you are built together in Christ], I bow my knee before the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ... That you may have the power and be strong to apprehend and grasp with all the saints [God's devoted people, the experience of that love] what is the breadth and length and height and depth [of it] (Ephesians 2:20-22; 3:1; 10; 14; 18 AMP).

Here, we see clearly, Paul's illustration of the body as a building fitly framed together (Ephesians 2:21 KJV). As we read his letter to the church at Ephesus, we see that Paul states that the very reason he bows his knee to the Father is because of his awe of the revelation that the believers, once framed together as a "building," become the habitation of God, Himself (Ephesians 3:14). In Paul's closing remarks, he even used terms of measurement that would apply to a building when he says that this is how we will know the breadth, length, height, and depth of God's willingness to dwell within us (Ephesians 3:18).

As Paul continues, in the book of Ephesians, to write; he begins to show us that the "building" can also be described as a "body." ¹ In Ephesians chapter 4, Paul tells us why God placed the five-fold ministry gifts in the church.

¹. Bruce H. Wilinson, Family Walk. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1991) p. 185

“His intention was the perfecting and the full equipping of the saints (His consecrated people), [that they should do] the work of ministering toward building up Christ’s body (the church).[That it [the body] might develop] until we all attain oneness in the image of the Son of God, that [we might arrive] at really mature manhood (the completeness of personality which is nothing less than the standard height of Christ’s own perfection), the measure of the stature of the fullness of the Christ and the completeness found in Him...”

For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], grows to full maturity, building itself up in love” (Ephesians 4:12-13; 16 AMP).

When the church, united in love, with an ability to recognize the distinctions in each other, works together as one “body;” then, the church becomes the habitation or the “building” where God dwells.

Paul continues to teach...

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of the water of the word. That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:25-27 KJV).

Paul starts out by saying that husbands ought to love their wives in the same manner that Jesus loves the church. Jesus did many things out of His love for the church. He gave us

access to all the blessings of God and, by His death, He gave us eternal life with the Father.

Because He did these things, the church worships and reveres Him—and has a fervent love for Him. If what Paul has said (husbands ought to love their wives in the same manner that Jesus loved the church) is true; then, wives ought to revere their husbands as the church reveres Jesus.

If husbands do as the Bible commands—by loving their wives as Christ loved the church—then wives will respond to their husbands by honoring them as the church honors Christ. This is why Sarah could call Abraham, “Lord” (1 Peter 3:6).

Paul continues in Ephesians 5:28-29...

“So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loved his wife, loveth himself. For no man yet hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:”

To quote the author of *The Genesis Generation*: “When I think back to growing up with my Dad, there is one thing I know for certain; he loved himself. In our house, Dad got the first (and the last) piece of meatloaf, fried chicken, apple pie, or whatever else we were eating. Dad had the most comfortable chair. The television was often tuned to the program that Dad wanted to watch. Any extra money went to feed Dad’s hobbies and habits. When we had vacation time, we went where Dad wanted to go. When we went out to dinner, we went to Dad’s favorite restaurant. I believe that this is the way it is in many homes. Why? Men love themselves.”²

². Greenwood, pp. 90-91

“So men ought to love their wives as their own bodies... For no man ever hateth his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it...”

As Paul continues teaching in Ephesians, he also cites Genesis 2:24.

“For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband” (Ephesians 5:31-33).

Paul parallels what Jesus conveyed in Mark, chapter 10 — that the man and woman will come together to complete each other and become mutually dependent, becoming one. But, then, Paul begins to disclose that this unity between the man and woman really takes its example from the unity between Jesus and the church.

The book of Mark records a dialogue between Jesus and the religious order, known as the Pharisees, in the tenth chapter of the book. In this conversation, the Pharisees asked Jesus a question that many people still ask today, “Is it lawful for a man to put away (or divorce) his wife?” After a brief mention of the Mosaic Law that allowed divorce—due to the hard-heartedness of the people—Jesus answers with clarity.

“But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this cause shall a man leave his mother and father, and cleave to his wife. And the twain shall be one flesh; so then they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore, God has joined together, let not man put asunder” (Mark 10:6-9).

In Mark 10:6, Jesus makes a reference to Genesis 1:27. Both male and female are necessary components to the image of God. This, Jesus explains, was established from the start of creation. In verse seven, Jesus further explains that “for this cause (man’s inability to completely bear the image of God without being complimented by a female),” he will eventually leave his parents’ house and permanently join himself to a wife.

In verse 8, Jesus, again making a reference to the book of Genesis (2:24), states that the man and the woman become one flesh. They become complete. When a man and a woman enter the covenant of marriage, they each purpose to strengthen and complete each other—becoming mutually dependent. This is exactly what Paul was talking about in Ephesians, Chapter 5.

So, then, what did Paul mean when he said, “For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”

This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephes. 5:31-32).

Much like Eve was designed and intended to be the bride and helpmeet to Adam, so the church was designed and intended to be the bride and helpmeet to the Lord Jesus Christ. Eve was created by God to carry out what God had begun in Adam by helping Adam fulfill the will of God and eat of the tree of life. Something that (as we all know) did not happen. The Church was designed to carry out the work done by the Lord Jesus Christ, thereby fulfilling the will of God that all would eat of the Tree of Life. If Jesus had come to this earth and died for the sins of the world, it would not have been enough to finish the job. He needed the church to go into

all the world and tell others that their ransom had been paid by the shedding of His blood on Calvary.

If Jesus would have simply come to earth and died on Calvary, He would have died in vain and faded away into the annals of human history. And, sadly, everyone would have died and gone to hell—but, that didn't happen. Why? Because Jesus asked the Father to send the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. That event started the very first church of believers—comprised of the Apostles and other close followers—and they became His helpmeet.

Much as Jesus is referred to as “The Second Adam;” the church becomes His bride, His helpmeet, “The Second Eve.” The church takes the role of the woman and carries out the work done in the man—Jesus Christ.

The church goes to tell the multitudes that Jesus died to pay the penalty for their sins, to free them from sickness and oppression, and that they can walk in the blessings that God has for them. The will of the Father includes both the Bridegroom (Jesus) and the Bride (His Church).

And, much like a man and a woman become one, so the church becomes one with the Bridegroom, Jesus Christ. Romans 8 says that we become joint-heirs with Christ.³

“Even when we were dead (slain) by [our own] shortcomings and trespasses, He made us alive together in fellowship and in union with Christ; [He gave us the very life of Christ

³. Ibid, pp. 94-96

Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him, for] it is by grace (His favor and mercy which you did not deserve) that you are saved (delivered from judgement and made partakers of Christ's salvation). And He raised us up together with Him and made us sit down together [giving us joint seating with Him] in the heavenly sphere [by virtue of our being] in Christ Jesus (the Messiah, the Anointed One) (Ephesians 2: 5-6 AMP).

Just as a husband and wife unite in love to form a baby; when the church unites in love with Jesus, we will see spiritual "babies" born again into God's house. He is the Bridegroom. We are the Bride. His love alive in us causes His house to be filled with children who love and serve Him.⁴

⁴. Ibid, p. 96

CHAPTER XIII.

THE POWER OF UNITY

“There is great power in unity, and with it, the dictum of this world; that all of us are ultimately alone, will vanish.” — Hugh Prather

There is great power in unity. This is a theme that most certainly permeates the scriptures. When people unite in mindset, in purpose, and in spirit (either for good or for evil), there is little that can stop them. Take this example from the book of Genesis:

“And the Lord said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do [build the tower of Babel]; and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do” (Genesis 11:6).

Greenwood notes:

God, out of His great mercy, confused the languages of the people at the tower of Babel. He did this, because He understood that the power of their united effort would lead (in this case) to their own demise. By confusing their ability to communicate, He broke their focus and, thereby, the power of their unity as well.

- Unity will cause blessings to flow and will unleash the power of God.

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell in unity! ... for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psalm 133:1 & 3b).

- The three Persons of the Trinity are united as the Godhead.

- The unity within the Church proves to the world that the Father sent Jesus (John 17:11-21).

- Unity of purpose is what ushered in the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4).
- Unity brought gladness, favor with all people, and dramatic Church growth to the early Christians (Acts 2:43-47).
- Being of one heart and one mind—flowing in unity—caused early Christians to minister with great power, and great grace was upon them (Acts 4:32-33).
- As we abide in unity with our Lord, we bear fruit and live productive lives (John 15:4-8).
- Believers who pray in unity obtain results (Matthew 18:19-20).
- Two people who determine to wed each other have entered into a unified covenant before God Almighty (Matthew 19:6).
- Strife (or being un-unified) is a “Kingdom-divider” (Matthew 12:25).
- In disunity there is failure (Amos 3:3).

There are many feelings and emotions found within the human experience that are often identified as love. But, true love is divine. It is completely different from friendship, lust, or even companionship. This divine love is unconditional and all encompassing—it sees through God’s eyes. Love overlooks personalities and conflicts and honors the gesture of the heart. Love believes the best in everyone and strives for unity. ¹

“Love endures long and is patient and kind; love never is envious nor boils over with jealousy, it is not boastful or vainglorious, does not display itself haughtily. It is not conceited

¹. Greenwood, pp. 97-99

(arrogant and inflated with pride); it is not rude (unmannerly) and does not act unbecomingly. Love (God's love in us) does not insist on its own rights or its own way, for it is not self-seeking; it is not touchy or fretful or resentful; it takes no account of the evil done to it [it pays no attention to a suffered wrong]. It does not rejoice at injustice and unrighteousness, but rejoices when right and truth prevail. Love bears up under anything and everything that comes, is ever ready to believe the best of every person. Its hopes are fadeless under all circumstances, and it endures everything [without weakening]. Love never fails [never fades out or becomes obsolete or comes to an end] (1 Corinthians 13:4-8 AMP).

How will the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ walk in unity? By loving each other. The scriptures proclaim:

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16).

The Father sent Jesus to wash away the sins of the entire world by His death on the cross of Calvary. By descending into hell to defeat the devil, resurrecting in glory, and bringing His perfect blood to the heavenly Mercy Seat, Jesus fulfilled the ultimate act of love—establishing a new covenant in the earth. To this very day He holds out His hand in love to any and all that will come into newness of life. But, as we read and meditate on His Words, we understand that the love story continues on.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you”
(John 13:34).

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another”

(John 13:35).

“If you love me, keep my commandments” (John 14:14).

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

God is love. To walk in unity, we must walk in love. We cannot separate the two. There is power in unity—and it is called, “love.”²

2. Ibid. pp. 100-102

EPILOGUE

APPLICATIONS THROUGH SCULPTED PRAYER

A Marriage Prayer

Father, in Jesus' Name, I pray for my spouse. I thank You that my spouse is filled with the love of God and that he/she walks worthy of You in all things.

Thank You that my spouse will be blessed in every situation that happens today. I pray that my mate is reinforced in every area—spiritually, physically, and emotionally.

Thank You, Father, that our marriage is off limits to the devil. In the name of Jesus we have authority over him and his devices. He has been rendered ineffective against us, and he has been placed under our feet.

Our marriage is a sacred bond, joined in the Spirit with Your eternal love. That bond grows stronger in love and unity with each passing day.

May our marriage shine as a light of Your love and exemplify the way You intend marriage to be. What God has joined together, let not man put assunder. Amen.

A Family Prayer

Father, in Jesus' Name, I come before You on behalf of my children. My children are a heritage from You—the fruit of the womb is a reward from You, Father. I accept them, treasure them, and thank You for giving them to me.

According to the Scriptures, as I train my children in the way they should go, when they are old, they will not depart from it. I receive that promise now and thank You for it. As I teach my children and bring them up in the admonition of the Lord, I know that they will become Godly adults. Because my children are taught of the Lord, their peace and undisturbed composure is great.

I thank You Father for Your wisdom and Word that guides me in disciplining my children. Because I admonish them and correct them through Your Word, I believe they will grow not only in stature, but in wisdom and in favor with You and man. Because they honor and obey us as parents, Your Word promises that it will be well with them, and they shall live long. I ask that You enable me to be a supernatural parent by showing me things to come concerning my children. Show me how to prepare them for the future that You have planned especially for them.

Thank You that Your angels are watching over them in all their ways and keeping them safe from any maneuver of the devil. Because I serve You, Father, I have confidence in the promise that my seed shall be great and mighty upon the earth. Amen.

A Prayer for the Body of Christ

Father, I come before You in the Name of Jesus, and I ask that You would pour out Your Spirit upon Your church. Fill us with the knowledge of Your will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that we would walk worthy of You in all things; that Your church would be fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of You.

May the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom, that we may teach and admonish others in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs—singing with grace in our hearts to You, Father.

I pray that Your church would walk in holiness, sanctified completely by You—that our whole spirits, souls, and bodies would be preserved blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thank You, Father, that our faith grows exceedingly, and our love abounds towards others. We walk in godliness; and it profits us in all things, having promise in this life and in that which is to come. Thank You that You have given each member of the body a special function with which to serve and glorify You! Order our steps as we each take our place in Your building fitly framed—Your habitation.

Allow us to be examples in word, in conversation, in love, in spirit, in faith, and in purity—we are vessels of honor, set apart for your use in drawing all people to You.

Lord, I pray that the communication of our faith might become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing that is in us by Christ Jesus. We will delight forever to do Your will. We love You, Father. Amen.

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