

Restoring my Soul

A five day devotional guide

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Receiving illumination

When Jesus taught Nicodemus about being 'born again', He identified three distinct elements of the new birth. He said a person must be 'born from above', 'born of water' and 'born of the Spirit' in order to see and enter the kingdom of God. What does it mean to be born to see the kingdom of God?

When an unbeliever responds to the gospel message their human spirit, or identity, is regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit so that they can see the kingdom of God. Jesus said that a person who receives this capacity has been 'born from above', or 'born to see'. When a person has been born from above, the eyes of their spiritual sight are 'illuminated' and they see the kingdom of God. They also see a way forward in life that is no longer bound by their flesh. Their perspective and decisions are no longer based on the information accumulated through their natural senses, and then processed by their fallen mind and its agendas. Having become spiritual, they can discern and eagerly pursue all that God has prepared for those who love Him. The apostle Paul described this spiritual sight as the ability to 'know the things freely given to us by God, who is Spirit'.

When a child is born into a Christian family that is part of the kingdom of God, they are already born from above and have the spiritual capacity to receive illumination. The danger for a child who grows up in a Christian home is to reach their young adult years without learning how to receive, and respond to, illumination. When Jesus explained the subject of illumination, He described the human spirit as 'the eye [spiritual sight] of the body'. He said, 'When your eye is clear, your whole body also is full of light'. Significantly, He proceeded to say, 'Then watch out that the light in you is not darkness'.

References:

Joh 3:5
Tit 3:5
1Co 2:9, 12.

Further Study:

John 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 30

The light that is in you

It is possible for a child in a Christian family to grow up attending the church program, participating in family devotions, singing at church meetings, partaking of the communion and even playing in the orchestra, without learning how to receive the word and the illumination it brings. In this way, the 'light' that is in them is really the 'darkness' of religious information and conformity.

The prophet Isaiah said, 'Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who *substitute darkness for light* and light for darkness ... woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!' The prophet spoke these words to God's people because they presumed to be righteous, without having a genuine relationship with God. If a young adult presumes upon salvation because of their proximity to the church throughout their childhood, then they risk becoming legalistic and judgmental. They will approach fellowship based on religious information and will compare themselves to others in an effort to determine who they are and where they fit.

The writer to the Hebrews described the transition from childhood to mature Christian adulthood. He said, 'Everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is an *infant*. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.' A Christian will remain an 'infant' if they fail to train their spiritual senses. We train our spiritual senses by seeking out, and applying ourselves to, the word of righteousness and the illumination it brings. There is a point for every young person when they must take up their own initiative to fellowship in the word of God, beyond their family devotions. While ever their application to the word of righteousness remains only a participation in their parents' commitment to the word, they are not 'weaned' and continue to need 'milk' from their parents.

References:

Isa 5:20-21 Ecc 2:3
Heb 5:13-14 Isa 9:2
Mat 6:23

Further Study:

Matthew 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 31

Delight in the Lord's word

A person's application to the word of God trains them to understand and accept the things of the Spirit. It is vital that every young person be established in the fellowship of the word proclaimed at communion, because this is the context where relationship with God is sustained. Without a personal and disciplined approach to the word of God, an untrained person will progressively consider the things of the Spirit foolishness. The temptation throughout the middle Young Adult years is to draw away from fellowship. This is a confused response. Instead of using their emerging adult accountability to become responsible for maintaining fellowship, they use it to take control of their own life and 'make it themselves'.

In contrast, a maturing young adult will possess the testimony, 'I delight in the Lord's commandments, which I love'. This is because they have grown sensitive to illumination. They will confess that the words Jesus speaks are *spirit* and *life*. They will be able to discern between competing influences in their life. Firstly, they will know the things freely given to them by God. This means they will recognise the provisions, opportunities and constraints the Father has prepared for them. Secondly, they will differentiate these things of the Spirit from the temptations of the world. Illumination will enable them to appraise worldly opportunities that only appeal to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.

The outcome for every person who desires to live by illumination is a steadfast commitment to fellowship. Fellowship is the context where grace for life is available. The testimony of someone who has experienced illumination will forever be, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

References:

1Co 2:14
Psa 119:47
Joh 6:57, 63

1Jn 5:19
1Jn 2:16

Further Study:

Psalm 19

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 1

Recognising new creation

When Jesus spoke to Nicodemus about the need to be 'born of water', He was referring to a person who receives the incorruptible seed of their foreknown name by the word of the Father. This seed contains the Spirit of the Father. Through His Spirit, the seed of a new believer's sonship germinates within their heart and they are a *new creation*. They are born as the unique son of God that the Father named from before the foundation of the world. At this point, the Father has not yet sent the Spirit of the Son into the heart of the believer, causing them to be born of the Spirit. A child who has been born into a Christian family that is in the kingdom of God is already a new creation. They already possess the incorruptible seed of their predestined name from the heavenly Father.

Godly parents are mandated to raise their covenant children according to the potential sonship contained in this seed. By the grace of God, they are equipped to sanctify their children to the expression of their incorruptible name. This is a tremendous responsibility bestowed upon Christian parents. They are equipped to recognise when the other law, worldly influences, or false projections of identity are operating within their children. Applying discipline steers children away from the disobedience associated with these wayward paths. Discipline affirms and encourages true abilities, capacities and character traits that reveal a child's foreknown name.

The danger for a child in a Christian home, who is beginning to recognise their accountability as an adult, is to 'love the darkness rather than the light'. This occurs when someone who has grown up in the church rejects the name and works prepared for them by the Father, despite having known illumination in their spirit.

References:

1Pe 1:23

Joh 3:19

1Jn 3:1

Heb 12:15-17

Rev 13:8

Further Study:

Genesis 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

Selling all

Somewhere around twenty years of age, a child who has grown up in a Christian family will need to graduate from participation in their parents' discipleship to a commitment based upon their own faith and conviction. The Father seeks a commitment from every young person to personally know and relate to Him in this season of life. We note, in the Old Testament, that every person twenty years old and upward was counted in the census of the Lord's people, required to make offering, and regarded as ready to fight, or war, the good fight of faith as an adult.

We have often used the term 'lordship crisis' to describe the decision that every young person faces in taking up their discipleship. Having grown up discerning the things of the Spirit (born from above), a young adult must choose to accept the lines prescribed by the Father's plan for their future. When a new convert touches 'born of water', they also face the crisis of choosing God's will for their life. Practically, this will involve 'selling all' their own aspirations, dreams and goals for the sake of 'buying' God's plan for their life. This is a stark moment for a new believer, often accompanied by great rejoicing, because they have found the treasure of sonship.

For a Christian child, the crisis of discipleship can cause them to forget that this treasure is already hidden in their heart! The enticements of the flesh, the apparent opportunities available, and the attraction of the 'big wide world', can seem more glorious than being a son of God. Sadly, some young adults depart from fellowship at this point, telling themselves they are not resisting God, deceived in believing that they can fulfill His will another way. However, the Scripture clearly warns us that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one, and there is no life outside the fellowship of God.

References:

Num 1:2-3
Exo 30:14
1Ti 6:12

Mat 13:45-46
1Jn 5:19

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Luke 18

Proverbs 3

Flesh and Spirit

When Jesus explained to Nicodemus that a person must be ‘born of Spirit’, He was referring to the action of the Father to send the Spirit of the Son into the heart of a believer who has already been born as a son of God. When a new believer receives the Spirit of the Son, they receive a share in the divine nature. They also receive the capacity to live by the faith of the Son of God. The evidence that a Christian has been born again is that they cease from striving to prove their own righteousness and, instead, live to reveal Jesus Christ. As they demonstrate the righteousness of Christ, who is the substance of their own sonship life, the divine nature within them will continue to be formed until they are a fully mature son of God.

We rejoice in the truth that a child who has been born into a Christian family that is part of the kingdom of God, already possesses the blessing of the divine nature. They already have the Spirit of the Son dwelling within them. As they grow, the exercise of their godly parents is to apply the sword of the word to attitudes and actions that are motivated by the ‘other law’. In this way, parents are inviting and training their children to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, to see these selfish motivations and behaviours removed.

Every person is born with the other law at work in their members, urging them to seize control of their life, rather than submit to God who is the source and definer of all life. The other law is the expression of *carnality*. The Scripture describes carnality as ‘living and walking after the flesh’. The danger for every person who has been born of the Spirit is to continue living carnally. It was for this reason, Paul asked the rhetorical question, ‘Having *begun* by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?’

References:

Gal 4:6

Gal 2:20

Col 3:4

Rom 7:23

Rom 8:4-7

1Co 3:3

Gal 3:3

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Galatians 5

Proverbs 6

Trusting in God

The Scriptures teach that every Christian is on a journey. When a person is born of the Spirit, it is only the beginning. Paul expressed this clearly when he said, 'Not that I have already obtained or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus'. Having been born of the Spirit, we cannot please God by any merits of our flesh. For this reason, we gladly die with Christ so that our fleshly propensities are cut from our thinking and behaviour. When we participate in the circumcision of Christ, we put the deeds of the flesh to death and remain alive in the Spirit.

A young person who has been born of the Spirit should trust in God completely. Whether it be finding employment, continuing in participation and service at church during busy periods, dealing with relational problems, or seeking a courtship, a young adult who is born of the Spirit must trust God and not revert to self-serving control.

Jesus said, 'The wind blows where it wishes and you hear the sound of it, but do not know where it comes from and where it is going; so is everyone who is born of the Spirit'. When Paul described a person who is born of the Spirit, he said, 'Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.' A person who is born of the Spirit is able to understand themselves. Jesus was saying that a Christian who is born of the Spirit will take heed to God, who is Spirit, concerning their predestined name and works. The wisdom by which they function will not be earthy, sensual, and based on selfish ambition promoted by the other law. It will be the wisdom described by the apostle James as coming 'from above'.

References:

Php 3:12 1Pe 3:18
2Co 1:9 1Co 2:11
Joh 3:6, 8 Jas 3:17
Col 2:11

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 7

The grace in which we stand

Having entered the kingdom of heaven, we have a standing in the grace of God. We have been joined to the Lord and are one Spirit with Him. The grace in which we stand is the fellowship of God. It is worth noting that 'the grace in which we stand' is no different from 'prevenient grace'. There is only one grace of God. When God gives grace, He is giving of Himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. God is referred to in four key ways in Scripture: God is word, God is love, God is Spirit, God is life, and the life of God is the light of men. These do not merely describe God; they are the essence of who He is.

The apostle Paul taught that we received our introduction into the grace in which we stand, through faith. This is the faith of the Son of God that we received from the Father, enabling us to believe for sonship and then to be born of water and the Spirit as sons of God. As sons of God, we are baptised into Christ and joined in Him, by the Spirit, to the fellowship of Yahweh. This is the context of the grace of God in which we stand. Grace is God's capacity for His will to be done. To stand in grace is to be equipped to participate in the fulfilment of God's will as a son of God and a member of the body of Christ.

It is from the cross, through Christ's offering, that the grace of God is fully expressed in the face of Jesus Christ. From His marred face, the light of the glory of our sonship that comes from the Father is shone into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. We are being transformed into the image of sonship that we see shining from the contrite face of Christ.

References:

1Co 6:17
Rom 5:2
Joh 1:1, 4
1Jn 4:16

Joh 4:24
1Jn 1:5
2Co 4:6
Isa 52:13-15

Further Study:

John 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

Come learn from Me

When we look upon Christ whom we have pierced, we are invited to join Him in the fellowship of His offering. This was Christ's invitation when He said, 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle [meek] and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.' Coming to the point of meekness through bankruptcy of spirit and mourning, is the call of the gospel. The Lord said, 'But to this one I will look, to him who is humble [poor] and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word'. Importantly, we note that the Hebrew word for 'contrite' means 'bruised'. Evidently, those who are contrite are willing to be yoked to the Lord in the fellowship of His bruising. Here they find rest for their soul.

It is through the ministry of the word, from those who are joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, that the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shines in the hearts of those who are humble and contrite of spirit. This is how we obtain the grace of life. As sons who are born of God, this grace is the *grace in which we stand*. It can be described in four dimensions. The first is the word of God. God is *Word* and the word is the will of God expressed. *The word of His grace* enables us to become those who do God's will as Christ's disciples. The grace of God is allowing sons of men to do the will of God. The word of His grace touches our humanity, enabling recovery of what has been damaged by sin and the circumstances of life. By the word of His grace, we are recovered to be who God predestined us to be, so that we can stand in restored identity.

References:

Mat 11:28-29
Mat 5:3-5
Isa 66:2

Joh 1:1
Heb 10:7
Isa 57:15-17

Further Study:

Isaiah 53

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

Dimensions of His grace

There are four dimensions of the grace of God in which we stand as Christians. The first dimension of grace is the word of God, and the second is the love of God that begets sons and then nurtures them through fatherhood and motherhood. God is love and, by His love, we receive grace to live as sons of the Father. The work of fatherhood and motherhood is to raise sons in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. This instruction causes us to live as sons, not regarding lightly the discipline of the Lord or losing heart when we are reproved by Him. The grace of God accomplishes its work in our lives when we accept that our suffering is from the hand of our loving Father.

The third dimension of grace is the capacity to reveal another. The Holy Spirit gives the capacity to reveal Christ and one another. God is Spirit and, by His Spirit, grace abounds to us so that we can walk each day by the Spirit and be sanctified to our name. We can only be a slave in His house by the Spirit. Our work as a slave in the Master's house is to reveal Christ's sonship, not our own. We are not expressing our own name, but are doing everything as unto the Lord.

The fourth dimension is the grace of life received and expressed through offering. Offering is *life* shining as light. We receive grace to join the fellowship of Christ's offering. God's grace trains us to *offer ourselves* as living sacrifices, zealous for the good deeds prepared for us by God. Through offering, our works shine forth as light. People see our good works and recognise that we are sons of God and give glory and praise to our heavenly Father. The grace of His life enables us also to walk in the light as He is in the light, finding fellowship with our brethren.

References:

IJn 3:1 Mat 5:16
Tit 2:11-12, 14 Rom 12:1
IJn 4:16 IJn 1:7
Heb 12:5-6

Further Study:

John 17

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

The God of all grace

The grace of God is not something we merely 'get' from God. God is not sitting in heaven with a big bag called 'grace' that He reaches into every time we feel a bit weak. He is 'the God of all grace'. Just as there is the one life of God, so also the grace of God is the one grace, expressed as the *manifold*, or varied, grace of God. When God gives us grace, He is giving of Himself. We receive His capacity for His will to be done in our lives.

The Scriptures tell us that we access the grace of God *through faith* in Jesus Christ. The grace of God is accessible to those who have entered the kingdom by faith. Having gained access, the imperative is to remain in grace and prove ourselves to be disciples.

We are weak in the sense that we do not know how to live as a son of God. Paul highlighted our weakness and need for help, when he said, 'The Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should'. As we cry out in this weakness, we are led by the Holy Spirit to the throne of grace to receive mercy and to find grace to help in our hour of need.

This hour of need is our everyday reality, not something we *need* every now and then. We *need* to remain joined to the travail of the Spirit, so that we are led by the Spirit and not by the lusts of our flesh. Our need is created by the fact that our flesh cannot obey God. Every day, we *need to* put off the flesh and be made alive in the Spirit. Our prayer is for the will of God to be done; not for grace to supplement or take away our weakness. We are not trying to access the grace of God by natural means, but rather, 'by the Spirit'.

References:

1Pe 5:10

1Pe 4:10

Rom 5:1-2

Rom 8:3, 26

Heb 4:16

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Romans 8

Proverbs 13

Remaining poor in spirit

Our participation in grace is by the Spirit, by the faith of the Son, and by becoming poor in spirit. Paul showed us how this works: 'to keep me from exalting myself, there was *given me* a thorn in the flesh'. God afflicted Paul so that he would live by the Spirit and not by the flesh. Knowing Paul's propensity to pride, God worked for Paul's good by causing him to walk in weakness.

Accompanying this affliction was the grace that made Paul adequate for every good work. This is because the power of God is made perfect in weakness. And it is the grace of God which enables us to cease trusting in our flesh, and helps to deliver us from our propensity to sin. The grace of God gives us the strength to suffer according to the will of God. We find this grace in fellowship with God, obeying Him and acknowledging His lordship. If we neglect these things, there is no supply of grace.

'Poor in spirit' is a place of bankruptcy and a place of freedom. We are free to rely wholly on God and to receive what He has determined. A person who refuses to become poor in spirit is proud and lifted up. Instead of giving them grace, God opposes them because of their pride and refusal to submit to Him and to their brethren in Christ.

Every Christian must embrace being poor in spirit as a continual way of life. Like the apostle Paul, we must learn not to trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead. This is what it means for us to say, 'I am crucified with Christ and *I no longer live*, but Christ lives in me. The life I live, I now live by the faith of the Son.'

References:

2Co 1:9 Pro 3:34
2Co 12:7, 9 1Pe 5:5
Rom 8:28 Gal 2:20
Jas 4:6-7

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 12

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 14

What is a covenant household?

A covenant household is sanctified to the purpose of God in His Everlasting Covenant. The Everlasting Covenant is the agreement of the three Members of the Godhead to *bless mankind* by including us in Their fellowship and giving us Their life. The purpose of the Everlasting Covenant is to bring forth a multitude of sons of God.

In the context of this covenant, what is a Christian marriage? The apostle Paul put it succinctly when he referred to a family being named under heaven at the point of marriage. We know that marriage does not endure in heaven, but under heaven it is the context for man's participation in the bringing forth of godly seed. This context is the family, which is a household. It is established when a woman offers herself completely to be redefined in relation to this man, and a man gives himself completely to love this woman as Christ loved the church.

This sacred union is a household. Through its ongoing sanctification, a household can be enlarged by procreation and, wonder of wonders, the children are already heirs with Christ (and their parents) from the moment of conception. They are set apart from their mother's womb, because they already belong to the Everlasting Covenant. This is due to the offering and faith of the parents, whose marriage covenant is made in Christ.

Both marriage and parenthood are very conscious commitments of love and stewardship, completely sanctified by the fact that the children, the man and the wife, are all the possessions of the Lord. Parents don't own their children; but they have a stewardship towards them which no other person may violate. This stewardship is the care of nurturing the divine nature, which children possess from the moment of conception.

References:

Eph 3:15 Eph 5:28-31
 Mat 22:30 Col 3:18-20
 Mal 2:15 Psa 127:3

Further Study:

Ephesians 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Children in a covenant household

The Scriptures teach that a child born to a Christian parent receives the seed of God's life (divine nature) when they are conceived, and are, accordingly, a son of God from their mother's womb. Even though a child of the covenant is born with the seed of the divine nature, they must acknowledge that they have another law within them. If they prefer to live by this law, then they cannot be the son that God wants them to be. So how are they delivered from this 'other law'?

Paul explained that it is by the circumcision of Christ. The circumcision of Christ is applied to children through the godly discipline of their parents. When parents are participants in the circumcision of Christ, they will ensure their children are brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. This is the means by which a child grows as a firstfruits believer. They will hear, believe and obey the word of God, because they are being delivered from another way of thinking and behaving.

The grace required to nurture and train children will only come as a husband and wife live in right order before the Lord. This means that a man must function as the head of the house. He must seek headship from Christ, so that he can be led by the Lord, and in turn lead his wife. The wife must commit to be the unique helper of her husband, to be defined in relation to his headship. It is in this respect, only, that a woman is 'weaker' than her husband – that is, in relation to headship. In all other aspects of life, she can function with personal initiative as a certain kind of firstfruits, standing as a sister to her husband. When a husband and wife are able to walk in the fellowship of one spirit in right order, they will have access to 'the grace of life'.

References:

Act 3:25 Col 2:11
Isa 61:9 Rom 7:23
Isa 65:23 1Pe 3:7
1Co 7:14

Further Study:

1 Peter 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 16

The culture of a house

What is the culture of a Christian house? The apostle Paul wrote some notable instructions to families concerning their culture and conduct. He understood that the covenant promises are available to every family when they live together in a specific manner. Obviously, every household will have minor differences, but their godly culture should be the same.

Abraham's house gives us a very clear picture of a covenant household. We see, for example, that he was a man disciplined by the proceeding word of God. It's helpful to remember that we receive the word of our name as a seed in the Everlasting Covenant, which comes by His word. When it is spoken, the word requires a response of faith - to believe and obey. Hence, we can describe a covenant house as a house disciplined by the word of present truth. In the example of a family home, the parents are disciples, who understand how to run in lines of obedience because they too are under authority. They, therefore, can train up a child in the way he should go.

Parents are called to live as spiritual people who are love-slaves of Christ. In this way, they can commend their children to their heavenly naming, beyond their natural heritage and family. The mandate of a covenant home is to nurture each son of God toward fruitfulness in every season.

Christian parents should also be people of offering who readily integrate in fellowship and will actively practise a love of the brethren. They will be ministers of reconciliation and their children will learn how to be reconciled with Christ when they are caught in a trespass or deviate from the fellowship which is in Christ. They will value the fellowship of the saints and will guard it, and their own hearts, by dealing with offence. They will manifest the truth that 'we know we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren'.

References:

Pro 22:6 2Sa 23:5
1Jn 3:14 Gal 6:1
Gen 18:19 Deu 6:7

Further Study: Deuteronomy 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 17

Addressing carnality

Even though a child of the covenant is born with the seed of divine nature, they must acknowledge that they have another law within them. If they live by what they think is best, then they cannot be the son whom God wants them to be. How are they delivered of this 'other law'? Paul explained that it is by the circumcision of Christ. In practical terms, the circumcision of Christ is the action of God which cuts away our flesh and its influence upon our behaviour. We commit to this circumcision in baptism when we die with Christ, in order to be raised with His capacity, no longer relying upon our own. We are thus able to walk after the Spirit.

When a person is joined to the circumcising work of the Father, they can become a firstfruits believer. They can be the good ground in 'the parable of the sower'! These people are able to hear, believe and obey the word of God because they are being delivered from their carnal way of thinking and behaving. Only a heart described as 'good ground' can bring forth the fruit of godliness from the seed that has been given. When a whole family grows in faith this way, they become a firstfruits household. They are, therefore, concerned with revealing Christ and bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

A covenant household will be committed to removing the corrupting effects of carnality, sin and compromise. Carnality and sin will manifest in the form of a false or alternative culture, which begins to oppose the formation of godliness in the children. These influences are usually sourced in our own familiar (tribal) bonds which, sometimes without being formally acknowledged, have the power to be established as the ruling covenants of any home - Christian or not.

References:

Col 2:11

Rom 7:23

Php 3:3

Luk 8:15

1Co 16:15

1Pe 1:18

Further Study:

Galatians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

Identifying carnal cultures

A carnal Christian family will believe that the will of God can be achieved by the efforts of the flesh. They may be very diligent in many areas of the Christian life, but will find that they have no answer to the dilemmas their children face, because the answers require being led by the Spirit. There is a kind of presumption that can operate in families who happily proclaim the word, while hypocritically refusing to live it themselves. This will produce lawless children, who have no regard for authority in the body of Christ. Their parents will make all kinds of compromises, in the name of love and family, but the children will despise their parents all the same. Marriages that do not relinquish their fundamentally romantic base will create a family context in which headship has no authority. The woman's view of life will always prevail. Sons will grow up angry and confused, while the daughters will have no respect for men. They will seek the compensations of lifestyle and comfort instead of doing the will of God.

A covenant house does not simply sanctify itself away from wickedness, allowing itself a very wide latitude to live something broadly called 'Christianity'. Our lines of sanctification are not drawn right on the edge of sin and corruption in the world. This will result in the children being lost or very badly formed. A covenant household, by contrast, recognises that the real threat lies in the deceptive nature of what is familiar and what seems 'good' to us. This is the light that so easily becomes darkness, because we don't see it. This is why we must commit in love, at a fundamental cultural level, to ongoing fellowship in the light with the Lord and our brethren. This sincere love will strengthen us to be delivered from all the vain traditions of our forefathers, ensuring that we are not merely carnal households, but become truly spiritual firstfruits families, living in the bond of the covenant.

References:

Gal 6:7 Jer 31:29
Gal 3:3 Gen 3:6
Jas 1:22-25 Mat 6:23
Luk 6:42

Further Study:

James 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Desire for Christian marriage

Mature young adults will desire to be joined in Christian marriage. The Lord explained that marriage is part of His Covenant and is designed to serve His purpose of bringing forth many sons. Malachi recorded, 'Did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks *godly offspring* [seed].' Jesus explained that this has been God's intention since the beginning, saying, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'.

A covenant home will be established when two individuals, who are disciples, desire to be joined in one spirit in Christian marriage. Their desire for marriage signals their maturing awareness of the privilege of participating in a further aspect of the Everlasting Covenant. Their motivation to be joined in one spirit reflects their understanding of how godly seed will be brought forth.

This motivation will be culturally aligned to the sanctification of one person in relation to the other. The 'will of God' is described as 'your sanctification'. A maturing young adult will demonstrate personal stewardship concerning their sanctification. This will include such things as the knowledge of who they are in the Lord, submission to the lordship of Christ, a capacity to steward their own life and resources, reliability and growing maturity in all matters of offering, personal devotion to the Lord, and love of the brethren.

For a man, such areas become a proving ground for his emerging headship. How he oversees and orders his life will demonstrate his readiness for marriage. For a man and a woman, a shortfall in such areas will help to highlight where they need to find the regenerating power of the word of God in their lives.

References:

Mat 19:5-6 Eph 3:14-15
 Mal 2:15 1Jn 2:14
 1Th 4:3-4 Psa 119:9-11

Further Study:

Genesis 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

The purpose of courtship

A courtship tests the reality of a desired union between a man and woman. A courtship that leads to marriage will result in two accountable young people, each one known by and knowing the other, choosing to be sanctified in the exclusive bond of covenant relationship. A marriage is often only as good as the courtship that has led up to it, and it is vital that the culture of courtship is not compromised, corrupted or dismissed in any way. Where corruption does creep into a courtship, it will trouble the marriage, children and culture of the home, until it is squarely faced and dealt with in fellowship.

If the courtship is walked out in the light, there can be great confidence going into marriage. A couple can know that the blessing of children will be a participation in the will of God, not simply the will of the flesh. Furthermore, they will be strengthened and illuminated in their mandate to steward and multiply the divine nature in the home, understanding the order of headship.

That is, God has provided mankind with an order by which His life would flow from the Father, to the Son, to the man, to his wife and then, together, they are charged with the role of imparting God's life to each member of their family. Christ is the Head of the man and man is the head of the woman. This is an inviolable order, upon which rests the measure of whether grace is able to flow to the household. It is by the grace of God that children are nurtured and secured as sons of God. In this respect, marriage and parenting are essential features that participate in the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant.

References:

Pro 18:22 1Co 11:3
1Th 4:3-7 2Co 2:7
1Jn 1:6-7 1Pe 3:7

Further Study:

Proverbs 31

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 23

The commitment of Christian parents

Christian parents must demonstrate a commitment to raise their children in the covenant of sonship and not allow them to be brought up by a surrogate person or under any other covenant. God has committed this mandate to parents and it must be personally fulfilled by parents. Our extended family cannot raise our children, nor train them in the fear and nurture of the Lord. God has given parents this privilege, and it comes with a very large accountability. The apostle Paul declared, 'Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord'.

Christian parents must firstly ensure that they are not harbouring any alternative covenants in their marriage. These other covenants are often the unspoken power within many households. These false covenants can involve such things as the man serving the wife's agenda, putting family ahead of the Lord, compromising with worldly culture or not crossing the children's will. All of these alternative covenants will have a significant impact upon their children and may even lead to their destruction. God holds every parent accountable. Jesus said, 'If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea'.

The major question for every Christian household is: what or whom are we serving? A covenant household will reply, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord'. As Christian parents, we must learn to walk carefully but purposefully, so that we cause our children to be 'the good man' whose steps are ordered by the Lord. This is what it means to train them in the way they should go. When they are trained this way, they will not depart from the Lord. Rather, they can become pillars in His house, standing firm, who 'go no more out'.

References:

Psa 127:3 Psa 37:23
Eph 6:4 Pro 22:6
Mat 18:6 Rev 3:12
Jos 24:15

Further Study:

Joshua 24

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 24