

- THE FAMILY -

"But from the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother, and the two shall become one flesh; so they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate."

Mark 10:6-9



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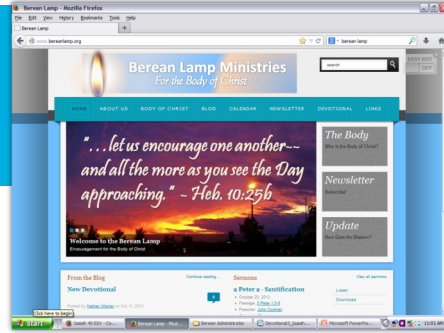


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The Berean Lamp Ministry seeks to:

1. Encourage and strengthen the Body of Christ by providing the means for each of its members to share their spiritual gifts with one another, rooted in the Word of God, thereby growing into deeper union with one another and with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:12-31).
2. Minister to non-believers; be a witness for Christ and a testimony to His Body in the world.

We would appreciate your help in contributing to the content and in spreading the work of this ministry. Thank you, and God bless.

- Pastor Scott Moller

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Family and the Church

By Scott Moller

The family has always been God's created design for mankind. However, the Church today is losing its foundation of family, both in the Body and in its leadership, despite the emphasis that the New Testament puts on family in the Church.

Paul instructed Titus to *"appoint elders in every city as I directed you, namely, if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict"* (Titus 1:5-9).

Paul started his qualifications for a Church leader with the foundational qualification of family. The foundational requirement for Elders is that they be husbands married to one wife, and if they have children, that their children are Believers. Apparently, the family is so important to God, that it is a prerequisite for leadership in His church—and the leadership is an example for the Body. Does the modern Church take God's Word seriously? No. Today, the Church is abandoning God's design of the family, ignoring the words of direction God has given us for understanding the importance of family and its purpose according to His perfect plan (see our Scriptural Primer on p. 15).

It should come as no surprise that the more we ignore God's directions about the family and God's desire for it to raise *"godly offspring"* (Malachi 2:15b), the more the foundation of the Church is crumbling. The Christian family is becoming more and more like the

world, but we are supposed to be a particular, holy, and set-apart people—*"a people for God's own possession"* (1 Peter 2:9b).

How can the Church be honoring to God when it neglects God's Word—when we don't diligently pass God's Word on to our children as we are commanded to do? *"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up"* (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

As the Church walks away from God's Word, the family suffers and our children walk away from the Faith.

We need to be faithful and diligent in obeying God's Word, so that we can apply His directions to our personal lives, our families, and the Church—that we would honor Him and be a testimony to the world in these last days.



A Family Not of Man

By Nathan Warner

“But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”
(John 1:12-13)

“This important verse, therefore, teaches us:

1. that if men are saved they must be born again.
2. that their salvation is not the result of their birth, or of any honorable or pious parentage.
3. that the children of the rich and the noble, as well as of the poor, must be born of God if they will be saved.
4. that the children of pious parents must be born again; or they cannot be saved. None

will go to heaven simply because their “parents” are Christians.

5. that this work is the work of God, and “no man” can do it for us.

6. that we should forsake all human dependence, cast off all confidence in the flesh, and go at once to the throne of grace, and beseech of God to adopt us into his family and save our souls from death.”

(Barnes’ Notes on the Bible, John 1:12-13)

THE NATURAL FAMILY

God created the family, natural and spiritual. Natural families are a product of the natural relationships that God designed between a husband and wife, which produces children, who in turn produce children with their husbands and wives in a cascading, exponential effect so that mankind would *“be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing*



By Betty Harstad

that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:28b). God’s design for the family was supposed to be a nurturing, protective environment for the young, so that their emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being would be nurtured until the time of their maturity when they would leave and begin their own families.

Unfortunately, sin corrupted God’s perfect plan for the family. Adam and Eve’s sin not only affected them but also all their descendants. Sin caused separation from the presence of God and has caused widespread breakdown in the natural order that God created for the family. Both the effects of sin on nature and man’s personal sin disrupts the stability and protection of the family causing a wide range of harm including emotional, physical, and sexual abuse, orphans, prostitution, widows, etc.

Regardless of the condition of your family, each individual bears personal responsibility to God for their sin. This will result in God’s judgment and eternal separation from His life-giving presence. Fortunately, God has made a way of redemption for mankind, and it also is a family.

THE SPIRITUAL FAMILY

God’s family is of His making and is perceived spiritually. This is the family, or household, of God, which we can only enter if we are born again, which means you must *“repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38). God’s Holy Spirit adopts people into God’s own family.

While all natural families proceed from human sources as designed by God, there is no human source for God’s family. The Apostle John emphasized this with a three-fold statement: God’s children are not born of blood, the will of the flesh, or the will of man.

“NOT OF BLOOD” - HUMAN DESCENT

The Greek here is plural, meaning “bloods” or “bloodlines.” Man’s family bloodlines have

been extremely important to him throughout all human history. Many of earth’s wars were fought to position one family bloodline in power over another – or to spread their bloodline over the earth. A bloodline is like a modern surname – it is a line of descent.

For example, in prophecy, the Messiah’s bloodline was to descend from King David, and Jesus fulfilled that through His mother Mary and His adopted father Joseph. But His most important lineage is that of His true Father Who is God. God ensured this happened for the sake of His Word, as He promised to David that one of his sons would reign over the earth forever.

Your family bloodline influences how people treat you. A Rockefeller or Windsor will be treated differently than a Smith or Johnson, because of their family’s name and what it represents. The Jews believed God treated them differently because they were descended from Abraham by blood. This is true in as the Jews were a bloodline chosen by God through His promise to Abraham to live according to His purposes. But they went so far as to believe (wrongly) that tracing your bloodline to Abraham meant you were automatically enrolled in God’s spiritual family.

However, bloodlines mean nothing to the family of God, for irrespective of bloodlines, lineage, and names, Jesus purchased men for God with His life blood. In Heaven we see the Elders sing *“a new song, saying, ‘Worthy are You to take the book and to break its seals; for You were slain, and purchased for God with Your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation’”* (Revelation 5:9). It does not matter to God if you do not know where you came from, whether you are descended from sovereigns or slaves, or if your family is righteous and Godly – what matters to Him is whether or not you personally are adopted into His spiritual family.

“NOT OF THE WILL OF THE FLESH” – THE WAY OF LAWLESSNESS

Man’s fallen nature is preoccupied with the will of his flesh. This is man’s fee-will to do

what he wants, which is *“only evil continually”* (Genesis 6:5b). This “will of the flesh” is patterned after the will of Lucifer who inspired man to be self-willed and rebel against God. Lucifer willed to “do what he wanted” without consequences, and he sought to make himself like God by sheer lust and desire according to his will. In the same way, he inspired us to eat the fruit to also make ourselves like God by giving into *“the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life”* (1 John 2:16). Since that time, man lives to do the works of his flesh, *“which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God”* (Galatians 5:19-21).

The will of the flesh is to make us the center of attention – to make us “king of the hill.” Man works these things into his family so that they will carry on these works and not God’s works in the earth. But the truth is that man cannot live according to the will of the flesh and achieve salvation. They are mutually exclusive, *“for the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and*

those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Romans 8:6-8).

God’s family of adopted believers does not proceed from the will of the flesh, nor does it live to do the works of the flesh. It is freed from bondage to the will of the flesh and the futility of our ancestor’s ways. In this way, you ought to know *“that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ”* (1 Peter 1:18-19).

“NOT OF THE WILL OF MAN” – THE WAY OF LAW

Throughout all history, man has tried to make himself acceptable to God by his works, according to his own will. People ask, “What must I do to be acceptable before man or God?” Man answers, “follow this law to do this, and you will be justified,” but it is always according to the will of man, not the will of God. Man tries to remake, or rebirth himself by his own will through his own morality, so that he can “atone” for his sins and “justify” himself before man or God.

Man seeks atonement or justification because we all know we do unacceptable things, and we seek a way to justify ourselves according to someone’s law (of our own making or a religion or organization), so that we can say,



*“Train up a CHILD in the way he should go, Even
WHEN he is old he will not depart from it.”*

(Proverbs 22:6)

"I've done more good than bad in my life." This even applies to the atheist, as his "moral law" may require him to "save the earth" or champion "social justice" to be justified for his "sins" according to his will or the will of his peers. No matter your persuasion, we all seek to justify ourselves by man's laws, because the requirements of God's Holy Law are too difficult to achieve, for it does not allow any sin in man if he is to be accepted as a child of God.

Therefore, man cannot atone for his own sin, much less the sins of others. Man's morality can never measure up to the requirements of God's Law. Man cannot be born into God's family by the will of man, regardless of whether that will is our personal will or the will of religions, organizations, fraternities, governments, etc.

SLAVERY TO NATURAL ORIGINS

For most of world history, children were born to take over their family's purpose, keep the family name going, and preserve the bloodline. There has been a sort of slavery to your ancestry. If you were born into royalty, you were automatically to serve in that capacity. There were few, if any ways out of this. If you were born to a cobbler, chances are you would become a cobbler. In most cases, the will of your family determined your position in society. Sometimes, the society made a decision for the child. For example, if you were born out of wedlock you were automatically "illegitimate," a "bastard" to the world system.

There is a bond in family and a pressure to submit your will to your family's will – to carry on the family line – to fill your father's shoes or slip into your mother's apron. We live to do the works of our father and mother. You are raised being told, "This is who we are, and this is what we do," and your father's works were your inheritance. There is enormous pressure to live up to your family's will—to carry on the ways and beliefs of your ancestors. The world tries to tie you to the identity it has created for you. This is true whether you are born American, Chinese, Russian, or Japanese as well as atheist, Buddhist,

Hindu, or Muslim. The world tries to tie you to the natural, fleshly situation you find yourself in. Most peoples in the world are heavily influenced by their heritage, ancestry, family beliefs, and inheritance. The decisions they make often come after some consideration about who their parents are, what their name means in the world, what their decisions will do to that name, and how it will affect their inheritance in the world. To bring the world's shame on your family name still drives people to such extremes as suicide.

At the same time, the world looks askance at people who don't have families or who come from "low" bloodlines. Every culture and society has its "rejects," who are determined to be so according to the will of man. Historically these have been orphans, prostitutes, slaves, widows, outsiders, etc.

Yet, your natural origins have nothing to do with the Kingdom of Heaven—you could be born into a brothel and grow up as a cult priestess and still be eligible for adoption into God's Kingdom on equal footing with all other adopted Believers. God has made a point of showing that your natural origins or background have no bearing or influence on your position in God's family. Firstly, He illustrated this in the line of Christ (the rightful King of all the earth) where we find a redeemed prostitute (Rahab), a slave (Joseph), a widow (Ruth), and an outsider (Ruth) with Jesus Himself being "adopted" by his human father Joseph. In God's Kingdom, your origins do not matter to how God treats you. They also should not affect how you are treated in the Church.

Believers are not bound to the nature of their birth, the ways of their ancestors, or the will of their natural families (except where your new Father proscribes honor, respect, or obedience—but never at the expense of your identity in your adopted identity as a child of God). Where the world once told you, "This is who you are, and this is what you are supposed to do," God now says, "You are My child, imitate Me." Where your father told you, "This is who we are, and this is what we do," God now says, "This is who you are – this is how you

are to behave in my family.”

“FAMILY” CAN BE AN IDOL

Unfortunately, many in the Church have taken the attitude of the world when looking at the outcasts of society. Some idolize their “ideal” family and put it on a pedestal which raises judgment against those who don’t meet their standards. Throughout history, Christians have appropriated the world’s views and been guilty of looking down on people because of their birth or circumstances.

In recent years, idolizing the “ideal” family has become prevalent in some Christian circles where they have almost placed a stamp of “salvation” on fulfilling the Genesis command to be fruitful and multiply, at the expense of teaching personal accountability to God and responsibility to respond to God for salvation. They see raising a family as preeminently important in their Christian walk, even at the expense of the Gospel.

Others stress the importance of a lineage of Godly men and women in their family, a bloodline of Believers, rather than focusing on the saving grace of Jesus Christ in each person’s life. This attitude automatically puts Christians down who are the first Believers in their unbelieving families—as if a “Christian” bloodline somehow changes our position in God’s Family. This is an affront to the Gospel of Jesus Christ! For the Scriptures clearly say *“there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus”* (Galatians 3:28).

Yet, many Christians have an entitled attitude because of their human origins. They feel that because they came from “good, godly, Christian families” they are a step up in Godliness and nearer to Heaven. Others believe that because they were brought up in a Church and share in that heritage, they are automatically part of God’s household.

However, the truth is that you cannot become part of God’s family by these human methods, and your salvation does not rely on anyone else—it is between each man or

woman and God.

HOW DO YOU BECOME GOD’S FAMILY?

Unlike a natural family in which you have no control over your origins or parentage, God’s family is one of adoption – a process by which anyone can become a child of God and claim Him as Father. But in order to be adopted, something had to make it legally possible. In order to open a way for adoption to be possible, Jesus had to stand in our place of condemnation under God’s Law and take upon His sinless self the righteous judgment due us for our sin, *“so that He might redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Galatians 4:5).

To be adopted, each person must personally *“repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost”* (Acts 2:38), *“so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name”* (John 20:31). This life comes by the gift of the Spirit, which causes us to be born again as a new creation in God’s family, *“for you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’”* (Romans 8:15) *“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God”* (Romans 8:14).

You can only enter the family of God through Jesus Christ, for the Father *“predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved”* (Ephesians 1:5-6). Even so, Amen.

The Family of God Growing Together

By Ginny Larsen

In the family there are different relationships where we form bonds, learn to love, learn to bear with another, learn to forgive, and learn many things about our relationship with God as His children. God shows us His love for us in many ways. He is the author of relationships and family. He gave us family for a purpose.

God gave us the husband and wife—a relationship said to be symbolic of Christ and the church (Ephesians 24-32). By this relationship, we have children and experience the tremendous bond of love between a parent and child, which is how God refers to us, as His children (John 3:1). As children we learned the love of our mothers and fathers, and we see the perfect love of our Heavenly Father. We also have sisters and brothers in a family and in God's family we have sisters and brothers—

not through blood, but through His Spirit given to us, causing a new birth into His family. It is not the earthly family that teaches us so much of His love, because not all earthly family relationships are good. Some are corrupted so much by sin that they become bitter relationships. No, it is God's love that teaches us what a true family is and what love is, and His examples of the type of relationship He created through the family shows us the immense love He has for us in those different types. As we live in our families in step with the Spirit, we demonstrate His love to our family and others.

Following, is an older article I wrote on relationships in the body of Christ. We are learning to be a “family” in Christ together, and though flawed, we will be continually learning this throughout our sojourn here below. These are things we need to learn as believers in our earthly families as well as in our family in Christ. *“Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another”* (1 John 4:11). *“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates*



By Maria Madsen

his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother” (1 John 4:20-21).

RELATIONSHIPS IN CHRIST

It would be helpful today to read the entire chapter of Colossians 3 for the background of what I would like to share today.

“If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory” (Colossians 3:1-4).

“And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him” (Colossians 3:10).

We are to put on the “new man” – the new image of Christ in us, which Christ has made us and which is “hidden in Him” (v. 3) to be revealed when we are with Him. Put that on now and put off all those things that cause aggravation in relationships – those fleshly things that bother us or clash in our personalities with one another, knowing that in our life in Heaven, those things will disappear as that image of Christ and love is pure and perfect between us all together in Christ and from us to Him. Just as His love is perfect, our love for one another will be perfect without any fleshly differences. Personality clashes and flesh rubbing against flesh will then be gone. So as they happen now, be “forbearing” (v. 13), and put on what you see in Christ (v. 12) knowing that it is your portion. *“And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness” (Ephesians 4:24).*

As we increase in the knowledge of God and the image of His Son within us, all the more we are able to “put on” that image in our

daily walk. We learn to walk in what Christ has already made for us – that image which is hidden now in Him. We have been made a “new creation in Christ Jesus.” *“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).*

Though we are a “new creature” (and only that “in Christ”), we are yet learning to know Him and put that image on outwardly that He has put in us inwardly. We are yet growing in that. But as we are continually renewed in the knowledge of that image, we are more and more being outwardly conformed to it. We don’t learn to put on that image by looking inward and seeing if we find it there. No, it is “hidden in Christ,” and we must look heavenward for it. We must fix our eyes on things above, His redemption, His life, His finished work, and His attributes, learning of Him. The more we see Christ, the more His image is being formed in us. The more we live in that, the more our affections are on Him and what He is preparing for us. If our affections are on things here below and what they can do for us in our temporal lives, we live according to that, and guard those things. *“Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure” (1 John 3:2-3).*

This can only be by faith in what Christ alone has done. His finished work must be believed in and apprehended for oneself by faith, as we learn more of what He has done for us, in us, and saved us for, the more we are by faith enabled by the grace He alone gives, to walk in that new creation He has made us. Again, it is by faith. It is **His** work. We submit to and walk in that work. Unless we understand **His** work, and our position given “in Christ,” we will not be able to “put on Christ.” The “putting on” is under condition of what was first stated in v. 1: “being risen with Christ” (Colossians 3:1). We must see ourselves as now risen with Him positionally, because God, Who is outside of time, sees all

things as finished in Christ, for He, *“even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:5-6).

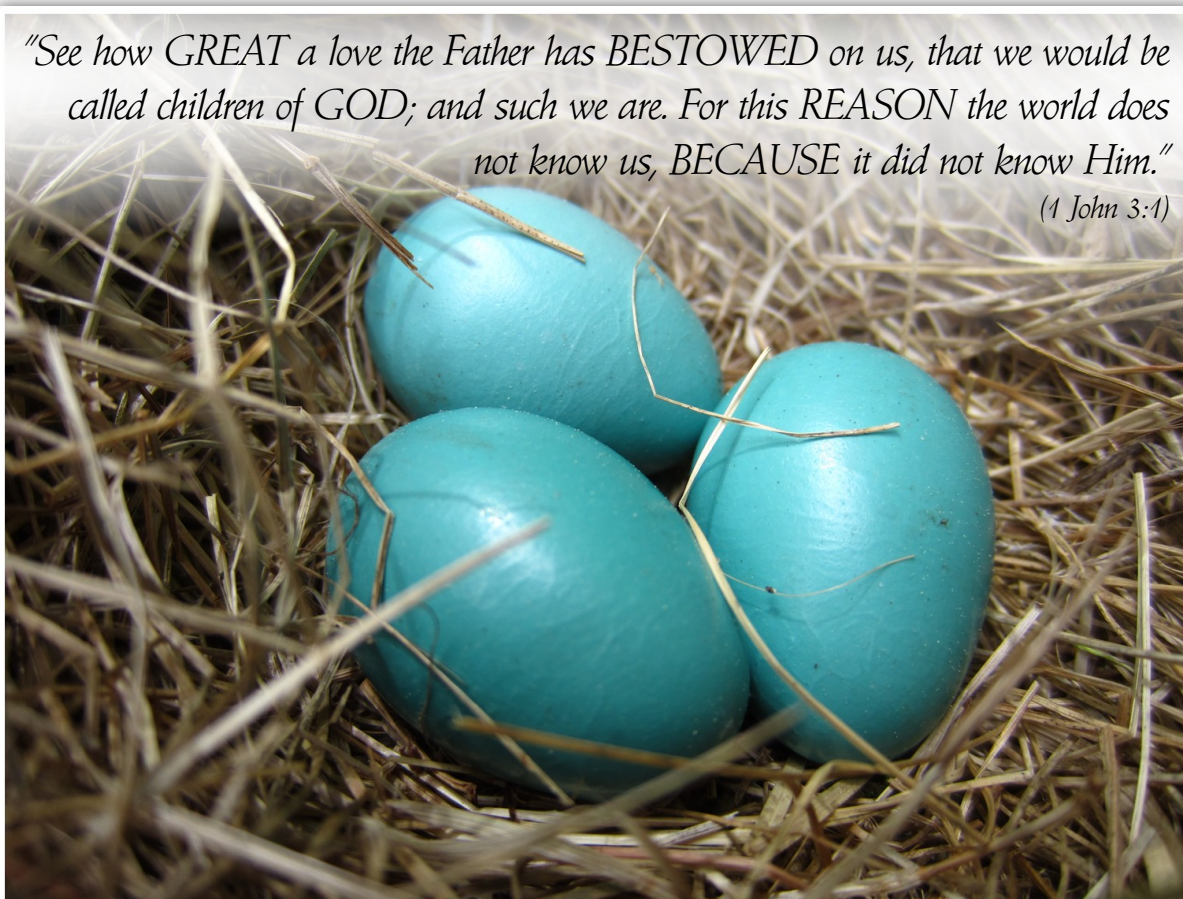
He sees us there in the Heavens with Christ already. The rest of His instructions in this chapter are all based on this. And even as we put off our own fleshly things, and put on Christ in His loving others, we also need to see them as that new creation in Christ, also loved by Him. Therefore, we must be forbearing with them, even as Christ is with us in these bodies of death! We need to be merciful and gracious with our differences and irritations. Our brothers and sisters may not sin against us, but they may just rub us the wrong way in personality or likes or dislikes or scruples, etc. Should we avoid others in the body of Christ because of these things and cling to those who are more like us? No. We need to “put off”

our own preferences and love as we are loved by God. We need to put on Christ in His love, not thinking of ourselves or our preferences for one over another, but of His love for each one. When we see each other in His love, we see each other very differently. Putting on His love, is putting on the *“bond of perfectness”* (Colossians 3:14b).

This is something I’ve been becoming more and more convicted of in my own life. Most of our friendships are formed because of mutual interests or needs. We tend to spend more time with the person who validates us in some way and agrees with us. We tend to avoid people who stretch us or make us feel uncomfortable in any way. What if God sees something you don’t see? What if he sees Himself in you both and is wanting to use each of you in a relationship to help each other see the flesh for what it is, that we might put it off and embrace His image in each other. Sometimes it takes some work to do that. I have to ask myself, am

“See how GREAT a love the Father has BESTOWED on us, that we would be called children of GOD; and such we are. For this REASON the world does not know us, BECAUSE it did not know Him.”

(1 John 3:1)



By Maria Madsen

I seeking relationships for myself, or am I allowing God to bring whatever relationships in my life He chooses for His purposes and not mine. Sometimes we “bear with” one another, as the Lord does us, and continue walking in that love, putting off ourselves, putting on Christ. Sometimes we are hurt by friends who don’t reciprocate our feelings. We can’t make people like us. We can’t make people agree with us. But we can love them regardless.

Think of it – in Heaven there will be no favoritism among ourselves, no jealousy, and no slighting one another in favor of someone else’s friendship, but there will be the bond of perfectness in our love for one another just as we are loved by Him. All of the sinful flesh will be done away with – all those things that we tend to do without realizing it because of our own flesh and it’s comfort preferences, likes, and dislikes. We hurt one another without meaning to or realizing it because we prefer one over another in the body of Christ. We form “clicks.” We leave someone out because we may not feel we have as much in common with that one or maybe they have a personality

that is harder for us to warm up to. We can’t help that in the flesh we are drawn to some more than others. All those things are done away with in Christ as we put on the “bond of perfectness” in His love. Those in this place look past all, and they love for Christ’s purposes, not our own. They bear with little personality irritations and love the brethren as we are all in Christ. We are all His, and He has stamped His image in each of us. The freer we are of the love of self, the freer we are to love the unlovely, not looking to get something out of it. *“And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful”* (Colossians 3:15).

If the “peace of God” is in our hearts, it comes from knowing He is in our hearts and has justified us and has put us “in Christ,” removing all doubt of our eternal life in Him, then we are also able to be ruled by that peace with each other in the body of Christ, as a “family,” not quarrelling with one another but understanding ourselves as all of His body, united under His headship. His peace acts as our “umpire” in all our relationships here. As



By Patty Buswell

true Believers we are not individuals with our own interests, but one body filled with His Spirit, growing together under Him, being builded together as a dwelling place for Him. Can He have any other dwelling place than perfect love?

“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the

point of death, even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:1-8).

There are so many things within ourselves that can separate us. There are so many differences of personalities, likes, dislikes, opinions, ways of doing every day things, etc. We can let them cause hurt in the body of Christ and in some cases even divisions. We hold onto grudges and hurts. We side with one over another on issues that do not relate to eternity. It happens in families, it happens in friendships, it happens in churches. We are quick to speak up our opinion to put down someone else’s instead of taking an interest in them and listening. We are quick to have the last word to make sure we are validated, disregarding the other. Do we always have to make sure we are heard? Have we really listened with interest in what the other is saying?

But we must “let this mind be in us that was in Christ.” If He, the Son of God, could humble Himself taking on the form of flesh, taking the form of a servant, can we humble ourselves



By Patty Buswell

enough to serve one another? Can we allow God to use relationships He brings in our lives to serve Him rather than serving ourselves? We have the mistaken idea sometimes that God will only bring people into our lives that will be a strength and encouragement to us, so we don't allow others in. Sometimes we are called to be a strength and encouragement to others, and sometimes we're just called to love and bear with someone who is not so lovable, simply because they are His. He loves them and we are to love them no less. He sees their need for friendship, how hard it is in the natural for them to have that, and He is their friend. He wants to work in each of your lives in ways neither of you see.

I can't help but think of how drained the Lord must have gotten from the people around him, being God in the flesh, and knowing all He knew, yet putting up with sinful men with all their temperaments and self-serving attitudes. Some people drain you. If you ever have a hard time putting up with someone, just think of how much the Lord has put up with you! Should you do less toward your brother?

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:12-14).

Above all – love—which is the bond of perfectness. This is what we are being perfected in, and ultimately will be perfect in love.

Abba, Father, enable us now and each day, more and more, as we gaze on things above to put on Christ in all His love. Amen.

*"Therefore be IMITATORS of God, as BELOVED children."
(Ephesians 5:1)*



By Natalie Warner

A Scriptural Primer: THE FAMILY

While there has been much debate and disagreement about what constitutes a natural family throughout history, God's Word gives very clear direction on what the family is. The basic foundation of a family first appears in God's creation of man, which finds its completion with the sexes.

MALE AND FEMALE

"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.' Then God said, 'Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed; it shall be food for you; and to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the sky and to every thing that moves on the earth which has life, I have given every green plant for food'; and it was so. God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good" (Genesis 1:26-31 NASB).

God's plan for Adam and Eve was that they would provide for and help one another in a special bond of love, companionship, and intimacy. God also made man male and female, so that they could fulfill the command of their purpose to be fruitful and multiply.

THE FALL OF MAN

The Fall of mankind through rebellion against God's Word brought the effects of sin into marriage and the family—through the ef-

fects of the Fall on nature and the effects of man's sinful heart. *"To the woman He said, 'I will greatly multiply your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; yet your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you' Then to Adam He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it"; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; By the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground, because from it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return'" (Genesis 3:16-19).* From Adam and Eve's sin, we see the origin of death, pain, suffering, disease, lawlessness, murder, etc—disrupting the perfect design of the family.

Mankind did not begin to be fruitful until after the Fall in Eden. The first children to be born to mankind were Cain and Abel: *"Now the man had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, 'I have gotten a manchild with the help of the Lord.' Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground" (Genesis 4:1-2).* Shortly hereafter, we see how the Fall affected man's sinful heart as he began to disrupt and destroy the fabric of the family: *"And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him" (Genesis 4:8b),* and it went on and on: *"Do not profane your daughter by making her a harlot, so that the land will not fall to harlotry and the land become full of lewdness" (Leviticus 19:29).*

HUSBAND AND WIFE

Soon after creating man as "one," God changed man into "two," that they would be rejoined as "one" in marriage: *"The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man 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.' For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed" (Genesis 2:22-24).

"But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. Stop depriving one another, except by agreement for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer, and come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Corinthians 7:2-5).

DIVORCE IN MARRIAGE

In Jewish custom, men could break their union to their wives for almost any reason. In those times, the woman was left without any protection or livelihood. In God's eyes, divorce is abominable because it is a betrayal of trust, a proof of unfaithfulness, and a rejection of commitment—all of which God requires of man, for God is faithful and committed to us.

In God's eyes, marriage is foundationally about faithfulness and commitment more than our modern view that it is about finding "happiness" or "true love."

"But to the married I give instructions, not I, but the Lord, that the wife should not leave her husband (but if she does leave, she must remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband), and that the husband should not divorce his wife. But to the rest I say, not the Lord, that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he must not divorce her. And a woman who has an unbelieving husband, and he consents to live with her, she must not send her husband away. For the unbelieving husband is sancti-

fied through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now they are holy. Yet if the unbelieving one leaves, let him leave; the brother or the sister is not under bondage in such cases, but God has called us to peace. For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?" (1 Corinthians 7:10-16)

"It was said, 'Whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce'; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for the reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, 'You shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord.' But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, 'Yes, yes' or 'No, no'; anything beyond these is of evil" (Matthew 5:31-37).

"Some Pharisees came to Jesus, testing Him and asking, 'Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any reason at all?' And He answered and said, 'Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh"? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate.' They said to Him, 'Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?' He said to them, 'Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way. And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery'" (Matthew 19:3-9).

Part of God's dislike of divorce is because He desires faithfulness in His creation. The other reason is because God's purpose in marriage is larger than just the husband and wife.

"And this second thing you do. You cover the Lord's altar with tears, with weeping and groaning because he no longer regards the offering or accepts it with favor from your hand. But you say, 'Why does he not?' Because the Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth, to whom you have been faithless, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did he not make them one, with a portion of the Spirit in their union? And what was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the wife of your youth. 'For the man who does not love his wife but divorces her, says the Lord, the God of Israel, covers his garment with violence, says the Lord of hosts. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and do not be faithless'" (Malachi 2:13-16).

MARRIAGE BEHAVIOR

God desires husbands and wives to be committed and faithful to each other in a special bond of honor, love, and subjection.

"Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7 ESV).

"Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her...So husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one

ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ also does the church, because we are members of His body. For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and shall be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh" (Ephesians 5:22-25; 28-31 NASB).

TEACHING CHILDREN ABOUT GOD

God said of Abraham, *"I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him"* (Genesis 18:19).

God wants families to diligently focus on teaching their children His Word: *"These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).*

"Hear, my son, your father's instruction And do not forsake your mother's teaching; Indeed, they are a graceful wreath to your head And ornaments about your neck. My son, if sinners entice you, Do not consent" (Proverbs 1:8-10).

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth. Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Ephesians 6:1-4).

CHILDHOOD DISCIPLINE

Because of our fallen nature, sin is in the heart of all mankind. Our self-will expresses itself early in our youth and must be corrected before it creates a pattern for life.

"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a

child; The rod of discipline will remove it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

“Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6).

“The rod and reproof give wisdom, But a child who gets his own way brings shame to his mother” (Proverbs 29:15).

Discipline is not intended for punishment’s sake, but to correct and strengthen children to develop a disciplined life. In this light, parents must not use discipline unjustly.

“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

THE FAMILY OF GOD

Just as God created the natural family, He also created His spiritual family, but while the one proceeds through the natural creation, the other arrives by spiritual adoption through faith in Jesus Christ, for *“as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).*

“See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him” (1 John 3:1).

“For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him” (Romans 8:14-17).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved” (Ephesians 1:3-6).

“By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother” (1 John 3:10).

“You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, ‘My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reprov’d by Him; For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.’ It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, so that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:4-11).

“Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma” (Ephesians 5:1-2). Amen.

God's Leading of His Family

By Lynn Warner

God instituted marriage and family. The relationship between a man and a woman in marriage illustrates the relationship between Christ and His Church, as we read in Ephesians 5:25-32: *"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 water by 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. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 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."*

In this article, I am mainly addressing the father (husband) because of the parallels between the father of a family and the Father of Jesus Christ and the Church.

The father of a family begets children – he feeds, supports, and gives paternal care to them. The household must be managed—to manage and lead is “to direct and employ in the best manner for the best effect.” “To husband” also means to “direct and manage (originally it meant to farm – a farmer).” Management involves organizing, so that the parts may act together as one; it is to arrange parts in the best manner for use or service (definitions from Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language).

The father must decide how to manage the household for the best outcome. But how does he decide what constitutes “the best outcome”? His children have physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, and must be supported, nurtured, and taught. What is God’s “best out-

come” for His family? Let’s read Ephesians 2:18-22: *"For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone. In Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."* So God’s desire is for His children to be of the household of God through His Spirit, built together for a habitation of God through the Spirit. We are to be built as a family is built.

What are God’s methods of management to obtain a people with this description? Let’s turn to Ephesians 3:14-19: *"For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love. May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God."*

From this Scripture, we learn that God strengthens His children with might by His Spirit in the inner man. What is God’s purpose of this strength with might by His Spirit? It is BEING GROUNDED AND ROOTED IN HIS LOVE! It is to be so rooted and grounded in His love that His children may know the love of Christ and be filled with all the fullness of God. God describes His love further in Ephesians 4:1-6: *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God*

and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."

God gives many gifts to His children to nurture and nourish them, to encourage growth, to protect and aid, to teach and attend. In Ephesians 4:11-16, we read: *"And He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."*

We have read of God's strengthening with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith and that we may be rooted and grounded in love, that we may be filled with the fullness of God. Ephesians 5 describes ways God's love inspires, motivates, and enables Godly behaviors and relationships. But we don't just behave differently, we are different – we are a new creation of God! In Ephesians 5:23-24, we read: *"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

All these teachings are in direct contrast to the chaos, oppression, contradictions, and brokenness that the enemy (satan) works in the "sons of disobedience," through fear, false guilt/shame, and force. Satan teaches a false "love," which uses "tolerance" and "acceptance" of sinful, harmful behavior with

lies and deceptions. Many have had fathers and families that were in the worldly system. They were mismanaged and broken, which harmed and discouraged their members and reaped bitterness and rebellion.

But God is the true Heavenly Father of all who belong to Him through Jesus Christ. He renews His children in the spirit of their minds and creates a "new man," which *"after God is created in righteousness and true Holiness"* (Ephesians 4:23-24). We are to *"put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts"* (Ephesians 4:22). We are *"no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and of the household of God"* (Ephesians 2:19). We are adopted into God's household under His authority, management, order, stability, peace, and truth – motivated and empowered by His love. So, let us as brothers and sisters in Christ encourage and strengthen one another, following Jesus' lead, staying in His love and yielding to Him so that the peaceable fruit of righteousness will grow!



July/August Newsletter Theme— PRAYER

Submission Deadline: July 30

Publish Date: August 8

Prayer...

- What is prayer?
- How do you pray?
- Why do we pray and why are we supposed to pray?
- What is the purpose of prayer?

Verses on PRAYER

2 Chronicles 6:19 (NASB) — *“Yet have regard to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, O Lord my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant prays before You.”*

Psalms 35:13 — *“But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled my soul with fasting, And my prayer kept returning to my bosom.”*

Psalms 42:8 — *“The Lord will command His lovingkindness in the daytime; And His song will be with me in the night, A prayer to the God of my life.”*

Psalms 102:17 — *“He has regarded the prayer of the destitute And has not despised their prayer.”*

Psalms 109:4 — *“In return for my love they act as my accusers; But I am in prayer.”*

Psalms 141:2 — *“May my prayer be counted as incense before You; The lifting up of my hands as the evening offering.”*

Luke 18:7 — *“Now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?”*

Philippians 4:6 — *“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”*

Further Out—Sep/Oct 2017: PROPHECY