

Kingdom Living Today

Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World

1. Divine Discontent

“MY WORD IS LIVING AND ACTIVE.
SHARPER THAN ANY DOUBLE-EDGED
SWORD, IT PENETRATES EVEN TO
DIVIDING SOUL AND SPIRIT,
JOINTS AND MARROW;
IT JUDGES THE THOUGHTS AND
ATTITUDES OF THE HEART.”

Once again the Sunday morning worship service had come and gone. Brett broke the uncomfortable silence on the way home with a sigh. “These past few months of going to services have gotten harder and harder for me. I keep coming away frustrated and sometimes resenting that we even went.”

Lacie reached over and lightly touched his arm. “I know you’ve been feeling more and more uncomfortable there for quite awhile. When you first started telling me you thought it was a “divine dissatisfaction” that the Holy Spirit was arousing in you, I got nervous. I thought, ‘He’s going to want to leave our congregation and go someplace else, and I’m going to lose all the friends I’ve made these past twelve years.’”

“Lacie, “ Brett nodded, “I knew you were upset that we might leave. But I just can’t go on putting in time in a pew and all those committee meetings when I know our Father has so much more for us!”

“Well, dear, I want to ask your forgiveness for giving you the ‘cold shoulder’ whenever you talked about it. It took a few weeks for me to realize the turmoil you’d been going through. All I could think about was *me* and how much I dislike change!”

Brett turned to his wife of 15 years with a warm smile. “I was hurt when you started to withdraw from me during that time, and I do forgive you. In fact I don’t really blame you. Even I didn’t understand what was going on inside me except this growing discontent every time we attended another service.”

Before Brett could say another word Lacie broke in enthusiastically. “While I was getting dressed this morning, I prayed that the Holy Spirit would give me some insight about this growing frustration in both of us. I just couldn’t drive home another day from services with us complaining about it. Then, I heard a soft voice within me answering my prayer.”

Brett was all ears as Lacie continued, “The Spirit revealed to me that our frustration began when we decided to get up early each day and read the Bible together. The more we’ve read and prayed for God to help us put His Word into practice(Luke 6:47,48; 8:21), the more uncomfortable we’ve gotten with religious programs and ritual.”

Perking up, her husband responded, “I think you’re right! During these early mornings together the past few months, we’ve begun to experience our Lord in a wonderful new way!(Psalms 5:3). I know we’re both changed inside because we’re both so hungry to deepen our love for Jesus and to live like His Word tells us.”

Restoration Ministries International (restorationministries.org)

Lacie grinned as she picked up his fervor. “ I feel that way, too. And I’ve noticed that when we ask for His wisdom to put His Word into practice, it’s like Jesus is sitting there with us(Matthew 18:18-20). Thank you, hon, for leading the way in this.” (Ephesians 5:25-27)

Brett glowed in her gratitude, then added, “Well, I appreciate the hurdle *you* had to overcome in getting up early, my little nighthawk! But your willingness to go to bed earlier so we could meet with our Lord together long before I needed to go to work has actually spurred me on. So I want to thank you too.”

A peaceable calm settled in the car. “Brett, what do think is happening in us as we go through God’s Word together?”

He chuckled. “I think the Bible is becoming for us the double-edged sword that God says it is.(Hebrews 4:12) As we discuss His Word, His Spirit is exposing attitudes and behaviors in us that don’t line up with Jesus.”

“I’m so glad,” smiled Lacie, “that we can encourage each other and help each other in the changes He wants to make in us. I love our Lord so much, and I want for both our lives to please Him!”(Hebrews 13:21)

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Several days later the sun was streaming through the living room onto the young couple seated closely on the cushioned loveseat. “Lacie, do you remember that older couple we met in the park several months ago?”

Lacie tilted her head in thought. “Yes, it was shortly before we began to get up early and go through the Bible together. If I remember right, their names were Jack and Dee.”

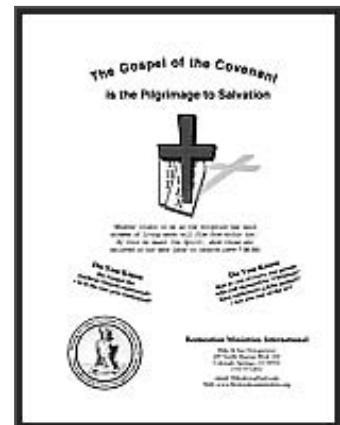
Nodding in agreement, Brett said, “Just as we were leaving them that afternoon, Jack handed me a slip of paper with a website address on it. I stuck it in my pocket and pretty much forgot about it until two days ago when I wore that jacket again.”

“And...?” Lacie wondered.

“Well,” smiled Brett, “the web address was **Restorationministries.org**. I recalled that Jack recommended I download an article entitled *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*. The little I’ve read so far has opened my eyes to how our Father in heaven sees our marriage.”

That got Lacie’s attention. “What do you mean?”

Brett turned to face his wife, taking her hand between his. “For one thing, I found out that our Father intended for our marriage covenant to be the *physical representation* of the *spiritual covenant* He offers us through Jesus.”(Ephesians 5:29-33) He continued, “That’s why God refers to Himself as a *husband* to His people Israel in the Older Testament, and Jesus as the *Bridegroom* to the Church!”(Isaiah 54:5,6; John 3:28-30)



Lacie’s eyes widened. “I’ve never heard that connection before! If that’s true, then we can’t claim anything about our relationship with our Father that we aren’t living out in our marriage.”

“That’s how I understand it, too, Lacie. And some other things at the website gave me totally new insight about our own marriage covenant.”

Leaning eagerly toward him, she asked, "Like what?"

Brett was on a roll. "Well, the article said, 'If you want to know about my love for Jesus, watch it in how I love my wife.' (Ephesians 5:25-28) And this one you'll like: "A wife is the highest gift God could give a man."(based on Genesis 2:21,22; Proverbs 18:22)

He couldn't miss her pleased smile as she responded, "Wow! That makes me feel really special from God's perspective!"

Brett's eyes filled with love for his bride. "That's not all! A man's *agape* love for God(Matthew 22:37) is the same *agape* love God calls for in a husband toward his wife!"(Colossians 3:19)

Lacie beamed back at him. "So what you're saying is that a husband's love for God is also witnessed in the love he shows in his marriage." She paused for a moment, looking down thoughtfully. Then lifting her eyes she asked, "Do you know what that one truth would do for so many couples in our congregation who seem to have lost their love for each other?"

Brett agreed. "I do! And I'm really looking forward to going through *The Gospel of the Covenant* with you. I think that as we discuss it, it'll help us cooperate with the changes our Lord wants to make in us. And Lacie, I saw they had a video series on the website entitled *Jesus In Your Home*. That sounds like something really good for our home."

Picking up on her husband's keen determination she replied, "Let's watch that! But, hon, what are we going to do about our frustration with those weekly church services and all those programs and meetings they expect us to attend?"

Brett was quiet for a moment, then continued, "I've been praying a lot about that. Why don't we leave "religion" behind for a while and concentrate on the changes our Lord wants to make in us as a couple." He added, "I think we need to rely on the promise of Jesus that where two or three come together in His name, He's with them.(Matthew 18:20) We can worship in our own home like the first followers of Jesus did,(Philemon 1:2; 1 Corinthians 16:19) and He may even bring some others our way who are equally hungry to draw closer to Him! What do you think?"

A warm smile accompanied her answer. "I think the Holy Spirit gave that guidance to you. Let's do it and see how our Lord leads us." Lacie paused. "I know we'll miss some of our friends from the congregation, and we'll certainly be misunderstood. But I believe with all my heart that this is what God wants from us now."

There was no doubt in Brett. Putting his arm around his wife, he said, "A few days ago we were reading Hebrews, chapter 13 together. Some of those verses apply to what we've been discussing here."

Lacie reached over to the coffee table and picked up her well-worn Bible. "Let me look... Here it is: "*And so Jesus also suffered outside the city gate to make the people holy through His own blood. Let us, then, go to Him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace He bore. For here we do not have an enduring city, but we are looking for the city that is to come. Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise — the fruit of lips that confess His Name*" (Hebrews 13:12-15). "Brett, I have the feeling our Father is setting us on a new course in our journey with Jesus!"