

Kingdom Living Today

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

5. The Godly Will be Persecuted

"I WILL REFINE YOU, THOUGH NOT
AS SILVER; I WILL TEST YOU IN THE
FURNACE OF AFFLICTION.
AND YOUR FAITH—OF GREATER
WORTH THAN GOLD—MAY BE PROVED
GENUINE AND RESULT IN PRAISE,
GLORY AND HONOR TO ME."

A few days after having dinner with Brett and Lacie, Harry was having coffee during a break with a co-worker at the engineering company where he was employed.

"You know, Harry," said Frank looking into his coffee mug, "you're not any fun anymore. Ever since you and your wife started getting into the Bible you've changed."

Harry was somewhat startled by the abruptness of Frank's comment and quickly asked, "What do you mean?" Leaning forward, Frank sounded somewhat embarrassed. "You know. You don't go out with us guys after work anymore and have a few drinks before we go home. We can't even tell a dirty joke with you around because we feel uncomfortable." (1 Peter 4:3,4)

Harry, however, was so grateful to his Lord for the wonderful changes that had been happening, especially at home. He paused for a second then replied with a smile, "I can't tell you that I'm sorry, Frank, because I'm not. Ever since Jan and I began getting up early in the morning to pray and seek God through His Word, our marriage has been filled with a love and joy we never could have imagined." Looking puzzled, Frank just shrugged. Both men knew it was time to get back to work.

Later that day Gene, the owner of the engineering company, called Harry into his office. "I just had lunch with Frank. I have to tell you, we talked about you and how things have changed." Gene looked away a moment shaking his head. Then he spoke scornfully to the man who'd been a reliable employee for many years. "Listen, Harry, we don't want to hear about your newfound convictions. And we don't care what the Bible says. (Proverbs 29:27) Do you understand me?"

Harry hesitated for a moment trying to think of a reply, but none came. So he just nodded his head that he understood.

Gene cleared his throat, then put a pile of engineering specifications in front of Harry. "Two weeks ago I told you to alter the specs on this construction contract. We can get a big kickback from the construction company if we let them use inferior materials. I'll even cut you in on some of the money if you do it." (Ezekiel 22:13)

There was no hesitation as Harry replied, "I can't do that. Not only would I be sinning against God, (Leviticus 19:11) but I'd be guilty of putting people in danger by using inferior material. I refuse to change any of those specs!" (Proverbs 11:3)

Gene didn't hesitate either. With a face hard as stone he yelled, "Then you're fired! You can clean out your desk and leave today. We don't need any Bible thumpers around here!" (1 Peter 4:14)

Restoration Ministries International (restorationministries.org)

*Sharing the Hebraic Foundations of the Earliest Followers of Jesus
Preparing Today's Followers of Jesus to Fulfill Their Part in His Kingdom*

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Sitting close to her husband on the sofa Jan gently took her husband's hand. He glanced gratefully at her as he spoke. "I guess I should say I'm sorry for losing my job, Jan, but I couldn't follow Jesus with integrity and do what they were asking."(Psalms 26:1)

Jan turned Harry's face between her hands and looked at him with eyes of love and admiration. "Honey, I'm so proud of you! I don't know what the future has in store, and honestly, it doesn't matter.(Psalms 18:30) You did what Jesus would have done, and that's all that matters to me. I'm happier now to have you as my husband than at any other time in our marriage!"

Tears of gratitude flooded his eyes as Harry wrapped both arms around his beloved wife. "I so appreciate hearing you say those words! But in light of our current financial situation, we're going to have to cancel that three-week trip to Sweden to visit your parents."

Still beaming with joy that Harry had stood up for Jesus, Jan shook her head. "That doesn't matter. I remember the saying, 'God doesn't close one door without opening another.' We'll just prayerfully wait on Him to see what He does."(Psalms 27:14)

A blanket of peace seemed to settle around them both. "Jan, would you mind if I didn't look for another job for a few weeks? As I was coming home from the company today I had the strongest sense that God wanted me to take some time to get to know Him on a deeper level."(Psalms 119:57-60)

Jan's loving smile said it all. "I think that's great as long as you include me in this!" Harry's serenity matched his wife's. "That would be my pleasure!" He paused for a second then asked, "What do you think about calling Brett and Lacie and talking this over with them?"

Jan reached over to the phone with a grin. "I'll call right now and see what they're doing."

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Saturday at lunch time found the four of them seated around a picnic table at the park. Brett reached out his hands to the other couple. "Harry, Lacie and I both believe with all our hearts that you did the right thing at work. And, we want you to know that if you need anything from us, please don't hesitate to ask."

Harry fought back tears as he responded from his heart, "We both really appreciate hearing that. Right now we have enough savings to hold us for a while. What we want to do is spend some time getting to know our Lord better. You don't think that's wrong in light of the command that a man ought to work to support his family, do you?"(2 Thessalonians 3:10)

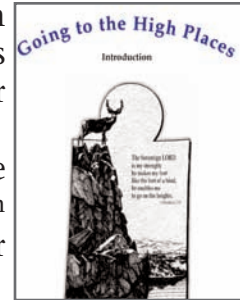
Jan jumped in before Brett could answer. "Well, I don't think it's wrong at all! Our Lord has provided us with what we need for such a time as this. And I think he's giving us this gift of time to be able to press on together."(Luke 10:40-42)

Lacie clutched Jan's hand and chimed in, "Brett and I will be right alongside you both through this. I have to tell you, I can't wait to see how Jesus is going to lead you!"

Brett asked, "Harry, do you have any leading in what our Lord wants you to focus on?"

“Actually, we do,” Harry answered. “We’re going to go through the *Going to the High Places* series on the Restoration Ministries website. That twenty-part series has a lot to say to us about our ongoing pilgrimage with our Lord Jesus!”

Jan’s fervor matched her husband’s. “Like you two, our hearts are yearning to walk more closely with the Shepherd of our souls. (John 10:4,14) We want to leap on the “high places” of Christ-likeness so our character will be conformed to that of Jesus!” (2 Samuel 22:33-35)



Brett commented, “We’d noticed the *Going to the High Places* series at the website but didn’t know what it was about.”

Jan filled him and Lacie in. “The series is a study guide for each chapter in the Christian classic, *Hinds Feet on High Places*. The book is a prophetic allegory to help people pinpoint their old fleshly ways that have hindered their identity in Jesus and then overcome them.”

“I’m interested already!” Lacie piped up. Turning to Brett she proposed, “Maybe you and I can go through that series too.” Brett agreed. “I just got a CD with all of the writings from the Restoration Ministries website. I’ll print out the *Going to the High Places* series tonight.” [http://www.restorationministries.org/html/booksCD.html]

Harry looked around at each of them, breathing in the joy that beamed from each face. “Let’s hold hands and thank our Father for His wonderful presence in our midst, and for the hope He’s holding out to each of us!” (Romans 15:13)

Just as they lifted their heads Lacie blurted, “Look over there by the parking lot. It’s Jack and Dee!” She shouted and waved. “Hey there! Over here!”

As Jack and Dee approached their table the younger couple sprang up. Brett immediately wrapped his arms around Jack as Lacie did with Dee. Grinning from ear to ear Brett laughed, “We can’t thank you two enough for what’s happened in our lives since we met you what seems like eons ago!”

Lacie was still holding Dee’s hands when a thought came to her. “You and Jack have been praying for us ever since we’ve met, haven’t you!”

Dee broke into a howling laugh. “That’s true. And, each and every day it was a delight for Jack and me to lift you both before our Lord for whatever work He wanted to do in you.” (2 Thessalonians 1:11)

Brett turned to Harry and Jan as they looked on with amusement. “Jack and Dee,” said the younger man, “I’d like to introduce you to Harry and Jan.” As greetings were exchanged, Harry wanted to let Jack and Dee know how divine the timing was for their meeting. “I praise our Father for you two arriving here in the park at the precise time we were here. This is where this journey of change began, isn’t it, when you met Brett and Lacie? What was it, about three months ago now?”

Jack couldn’t help but return the smile lighting Harry’s face. “It *was* about that long ago. In fact, this is our first time back to the park since then. Dee had a strong sense from the Holy Spirit that we were supposed to come here. (Acts 11:12) In fact, one of our kids called and wanted to come over and we had to schedule them for another time.”

Brett gestured to the picnic table and asked, “Do you two have time to hear what

our Father has been doing with the four of us?” Jack and Dee answered simultaneously: “You bet! We ALWAYS want to hear how our prayers are being answered!”

Six animated people shared laughter and praise and empathy as they delved into each other’s lives. It wasn’t hard to do; no awkwardness disrupted their sweet time together since they all earnestly desired to become all that their Lord Jesus wanted them to be.

They marveled at the beauty of the Father’s fabric in weaving together people’s lives for His purposes. At times their joy broke into such loud chortling that others in the park turned to see what was going on.^(Psalms 5:11) In fact, as one young couple was leaving the park with their baby, they paused by their table for a moment. “We just had to thank you,” the husband smiled, “for all the joy you couples seem to share. That’s the kind of relationship we’d like to have with others sometime in our life!”

Jack asked them to wait a moment as he scribbled his phone number and “Restorationministries.org” on a business card. He handed it to the young man, encouraging him to go the website. And, with equal enthusiasm, he encouraged him to call them.

The older couple excused themselves for a bit and walked the couple and their baby to their car. When Jack and Dee arrived back at the table they were both beaming. As they were sitting down Lacie said excitedly, “Before you got here, I bet you two prayed for a chance to reach out to someone as Lord Jesus would!” Jack and Dee nodded with grins that seemed to touch their ears.

“Wow,” exclaimed Brett, “that’s making the most of every opportunity, isn’t it! We need to be doing that too.”^(Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5)

The wind was picking up and they all felt the encroaching chill. Dee invited both couples to their home that evening for supper. “It won’t be fancy,” she chuckled, “but we’d sure enjoy having you join us!”

Together they all made it happen. As the two younger couples finished getting directions before a quick stop at the market, Jack was reminded of a verse he’d memorized just this past week:

*“All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people **may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.**”*^(2 Corinthians 4:15)