

Kingdom Living Today

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

8. When the Righteous Gather As Extended Family

“MY FOLLOWERS SEEK FIRST MY KINGDOM AND MY RIGHTEOUSNESS. THEY’RE FAMILY WHO BREAK BREAD IN THEIR HOMES AND EAT TOGETHER WITH GLAD AND SINCERE HEARTS, PRAISING MY FATHER AND ENJOYING THE FAVOR OF ALL THE PEOPLE.”

“Those guys are sure having a wonderful time playing horseshoes in the backyard,” Lacie laughed as she looked out the kitchen window. She, along with Dee and Jan, were getting the food ready for supper. The other wives peeked out at their husbands and at Harry and Jan’s son, Josh, having fun together.

Jan was delighted to see her son joking with the other men, thoroughly enjoying himself. “I think Josh is getting a kick out of being Jack’s partner! He’d always enjoyed time with his late grandfather especially, and Jack’s so much like him.”

“I’m sure Jack is enjoying Josh just as much,” Dee responded. “Jack likes to look into the spirit of a young man and try to discover how God intends to use him later on. (Proverbs 22:6) We’ve found that it’s important for a young person to understand his bent and spiritual gifting. Then he can better cooperate with his parents as they help prepare him for a life that will bring glory to our Lord.” (Ephesians 6:4; Luke 1:17)

Jan’s face was aglow. “After having listened to Harry recount his breakfast with Jack and Brett the other day, I can see that’s right in the character of Jack’s role as a shepherd. You both must have learned a lot from raising your own sons!”

Lacie joined in. “Dee, since you’re now a grandmother, Brett and I could sure use some help with our kids. My Dad passed away years ago, and my Mom lives 10 hours away so we don’t see her very often. I’d sure love for Kirk and Kelsey to spend time with some older folks to help ‘grandparent’ them!”

The women smiled warmly as they watched eleven-year-old Kirk and nine-year-old Kelsey take turns tossing a ball for Jack and Dee’s dog to retrieve. “We’d love to spend time with your children, Lacie,” said Dee gently. “Just observing how they interact with each other and with other people helps us figure out their strengths and weaknesses. That way we can help you and Brett work on their character.”

“Dee,” Jan blurted out, “you and Jack seem to know each other so well, especially in spiritual matters. I mean, I’d love for Harry and me to work together as well as you two do. Do you have any suggestions?”

Dee smiled as she answered. “Well, our Lord has grown me over the years to become the helper Jack needs me to be. We both want so much for our Lord to be lifted up in people’s lives! And in order for each person to live out their part in His Kingdom, they have to know each other *in the spirit*, not according to the flesh.” (2 Corinthians 5:16)

Jan tilted her head at that. “I’m not sure I know what you mean, Dee.”

“Jan, I see you as a woman with a gift of mercy. (Romans 12:8) You appear to me as someone our Lord would use to reach out to the down-hearted and others who’ve lost hope.”

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“That’s me,” Jan responded with a chuckle. “Harry tells me that I’m always looking out for ‘strays’! But I do really feel fulfilled when the Spirit uses me to help restore hope to someone.”

Dee turned to Lacie. “And you, young lady, have gifts of administration and exhortation. (Romans 12:8) I’ve observed how you’re able to organize everything that needs to be done and cheerfully delegate each task. I also believe that the Holy Spirit has given you a wisdom that’s motivated by seeing people *put it into practice* what He speaks through you. That’s the core of the gift of exhortation — a combination of encourager and admonisher depending on what’s needed.”

Lacie beamed, “Brett and I used the book from Restoration Ministries that Jack suggested, *God’s Instruments For War*, and those two gifts came up very high for me!”

Jan’s face lit up. “That’s right! When Harry and I went through the questionnaire in the book, I was high in mercy, followed by the gift of service. And, that’s exactly how I see myself doing my part in the Kingdom—through mercy and service.”

All three ladies stood there enjoying the new revelation about each other “in the Spirit.” Then Dee proposed, “How about us three getting together each week like the men are doing. (Titus 2:4,5) I don’t mean early in the morning, but sometime during the day.”

Jan spoke first. “I’d really like that! I work part-time at my sister’s boutique, but I’m off Tuesdays and Thursdays.”

“I home school Kirk and Kelsey,” noted Lacie. “But each week I alternate with two other home schooling moms to take each other’s children for a few hours. I’m sure one of the other mothers would agree to either Tuesday or Thursday.”

Dee reached out and hugged both women. “Great! Why don’t you call me on Monday and we’ll set up a time and place.”

Just then the men walked in from the backyard howling as Josh jokingly rubbed in how he and Jack had won at horseshoes. Jack gave the teen all the credit. “You really helped an old blind man!” The men laughed all the harder. Brett put his hand on Jack’s shoulder and remarked fondly, “You were no slouch!”

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“Josh, would you like to thank our Lord for the meal we’re about to share?” They all bowed their heads as Josh prayed hesitantly at first, but ended with a fervor of thankfulness that everyone responded to with a hearty “Amen!”

As they were passing the food, Jan piped up, “Would you mind if I asked a question?” Jack looked at her and nodded. “You asked us here on a Saturday afternoon for our Sabbath gathering. How did you pick this time?”

Jack was glad she’d asked. “First, let me say that neither the time we gather nor the day we treat as our Sabbath is locked in concrete. It’s open to change and is something we can all discuss as we look into God’s Word together. Over the years we’ve seen that the Sabbath is a gift from our Father—a twenty-four hour period of refraining from tasks that would rob us of the refreshment our Lord desires for us on this day of rest (Mark 2:27). It’s also a special time set aside to honor and worship Him without the distractions we have the rest of the week.” (Exodus 20:11)

Dee added with a smile, “In our home we apply the Bible’s command for our Sabbath this way: we owe it to God that at the end of the twenty-four hours Jack and I are spiritually, emotionally and physically refreshed, prepared for the next six days of work.”

Brett looked amazed. "I never thought of it that way. We've usually ended the day feeling worn out and ragged."

"We're intent on applying the Bible," interjected Jack, "based on the *Spirit* of the law, not on keeping the letter of it.^(2 Corinthians 3:6) It's the Holy Spirit Who gives life and freedom to applying God's Word."

Jan pursued her original question. "So how did you come up with Saturday?"

Jack smiled at her persistence. "Most people don't work on Sunday, so we wanted to leave that day as their special family time together to be refreshed in their own relationships. By meeting late on Saturday afternoon and extending it into evening with fellowship and worship, it not only puts our Lord first but leaves Sunday free."

"I like that application!" announced Harry. "That rings true to me as the Spirit's way of caring for the well-being of our Father's children."

Jack assured them, "All of this is open for each household to review and come up with an application that suits their families and schedules. But let's make sure we set aside a twenty-four hour Sabbath rest as a gift from His hand." Nods of agreement confirmed his admonition.

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As Harry, Brett and Josh cleaned up after the meal, the ladies sat on the sofa looking through Dee's photo album. Jack was on the floor laughing with Kirk and Kelsey as they played tug of war with Sonny the dog using an old towel. Jack found a way to help Sonny win by tickling the giggling kids.

In between rounds of tugging Jack asked the kids, "How do you two like being home schooled?" They looked at each other with grins. Kirk answered first. "I really like it. It's not just academics like kids in public schools have. Mom, and later Dad when he gets home from work, spend a lot of time helping us see life from God's point of view."

"Yeah," chimed in Kelsey. "Ever since our parents met you and your wife, helping us develop the character of Jesus has really become their priority. But what I like the most is that they don't *tell* us as much as *show* us through their own lives. I've seen both Dad and Mom ask forgiveness from us when they've blown it. They never did anything like that before!"

"Maybe sometime this week I can stop by and spend some time with you both," suggested Jack. "We'll ask your folks if Dee and I can take you on some kind of 'field trip.' Would you like that?" Delighted to hear that these two neat, older adults wanted to spend time with them, the kids reached out toward Jack and hugged him.

At that moment Dee caught Jack's eye and gestured toward her watch. Jack realized that the time was later than he thought. He often got lost in the time he spent with people, and Dee would gently get him back on track.

"Let's all gather together," he called out. The sofa and chairs were arranged in a circular fashion around the living room to facilitate discussion and participation. "You kids can either sit with us adults or you can play on the rug in the middle here as long as you don't make too much noise."

The kids decided to stay on the floor and began to pull out the Legos that Jack and Dee had in a toy box they reserved for such occasions. Josh, just about to sit next his parents, changed his mind and joined the two younger kids with the Legos.

Jack was the first to speak. "I called each of your families a couple days ago to prepare you for our gathering. Anybody remember the verse I cited?"

Jan responded quickly, “I looked it up and memorized it! 1 Corinthians 14:26: *‘When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.’* And I also recall that you told me that the original word for “church” means the *called-out ones*—the people our Lord Jesus has called out of the world’s way of doing things!”

“That’s good, Jan! I want each of us “called-out” ones, whenever we come together, to be prepared by the Holy Spirit to participate—kids included. This will help keep us ready to “one-another”, and also ensure we aren’t locking the Spirit of our Lord out of our gathering by just spectating.”^(2 Thessalonians 1:3)

“I remember in the *Jesus in Your Home* video series,” Brett commented, “that they stress two points about gatherings. The first is, if Jesus doesn’t show up, why should we?^(Matthew 18:20) In other words, are we just getting together for a social time, or to bring praise and joy to our Lord? And, the second point is to never treat children like “second-class citizens” in the Kingdom.^(Matthew 18:10) They have something to offer God too!”

Lacie added, “Having both of these as our goals has caused our family to spend intentional time getting ready for our gathering together with you all.”

Kirk looked up to see if there was an opening for him to share a thought. “Even on our way over here, Dad asked us to look inside ourselves to see if there might be any sin we hadn’t confessed. He told us that every time we gather we should always be prepared to have communion together.”

Jack and Dee grinned with delight at each other and looked with approval at the boy. Dee exclaimed, “Your conviction as you spoke gave me goose bumps, Kirk. They weren’t just words from your mouth but from your spirit!^(3 John 1:4) I just wish I was your age when I first learned these truths.” The other adults nodded in agreement.

The evening was filled with praise as each one suggested or led out in a song. Several shared testimonies of answered prayers and situations where God’s intervention was recognized. Two or three discussed insights they’d gotten from the Bible during the week. Then Jack led them in communion, reaffirming the stipulations of the Father’s Covenant before passing the elements representing the body and blood of Jesus.^(1 Corinthians 11:24,25) He left it up to each father to decide if his children should partake.

As their time together drew to a close Jack placed his hands on Dee’s head and prayed a blessing over her, and through her for his children and grandchildren. He then encouraged Brett and Harry to do likewise with their wives and children.

Jack and Dee hugged each one as they exited the front door that evening. Josh, somewhat out of character for him, held onto Jack as tears filled his eyes. “Two of my grandparents are dead and the other two live far away,” he sniffed. “Would it be okay if I call you ‘Grandpa’ and ‘Grandma’?”

They hugged him with delight as they searched Harry and Jan’s face for approval. Both nodded ‘yes’, so the older couple told Josh how much they’d like that, especially since their own grandchildren lived out of state.

Kirk and Kelsey quickly looked at their own parents, who nodded approval. “We’d like you to be our ‘Grandma’ and ‘Grandma’ too!”^(Proverbs 17:6) And with that, a group hug ended their evening together.