

Kingdom Living Today

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

9. Women of God share authentic fellowship together.

“OLDER WOMEN IN CHRIST TEACH
YOUNGER WOMEN WHAT IS GOOD,
BEING LIKE-MINDED,
HAVING THE SAME LOVE,
BEING ONE IN SPIRIT AND PURPOSE.”

“Sorry I’m late!” smiled Lacie apologetically as she jogged up to the two waiting women. “Kirk forgot his backpack so we had to go back and get it before I dropped the kids off at their friends’ house.”

The afternoon breeze blew gently as it rustled the autumn leaves. Jan and Dee had been chatting for a few minutes and didn’t mind waiting at all. “We’re so glad you could come! We’ve been recalling how wonderful it’s been for our Lord to bring us together as extended family in Jesus. It seems as though we’ve known each other for years instead of just weeks!”

Lacie couldn’t have agreed more. How greatly she needed an older woman in her life to help her mature in her walk in the Spirit as well as help her fill her home with more peace and joy. “Thanks, Dee, for suggesting we get out and walk! I really value your input, and yours too, Jan. Sometimes I find that I’m feeling sorry for myself and kind of lonely. I guess it’s because Brett and I were so used to all those meetings and activities at our former congregation. I didn’t feel a need then to personally seek out how our Father wanted me to use each day to fulfill His purposes.”^(2 Timothy 2:20,21)

“I understand what you mean, Lacie,” nodded the older woman as they walked along the park pathway. “Sixteen years ago Jack and I grew frustrated enough in our spirits to realize our Lord wanted to do a new work in us apart from depending on organized religion as our spiritual format. And while we found that drawing close to Him both individually and as a couple quickly deepened our seeing Him at work in and around us, we still experienced a sense of loss.^(Psalms 37:3-7) All those people we’d spent years doing “church activities” with took offense at our absence. I couldn’t believe how much slander and gossip about us took place among people we thought had been our friends!”^(Psalms 41:6)

Jan sighed. She too had found people turning the other way when she encountered them at the market or in other public places. “I hadn’t realized when Harry and I chose to get off the “religious program treadmill” that people would take it as a personal insult against them!^(1 Peter 3:16,17) We only wanted to reorganize our relational priorities so we could focus once again on Jesus, crucified and resurrected, and how our marriage might reflect Him more!”^(Philippians 3:10)

Dee grabbed the hands of the two women on either side of her. “Sometimes the very ones we considered friends are the people who turn against us.^(1 Peter 3:15,16) But

Father God is sovereign, and when you're responding to the direction and prompting of His Spirit, you have to follow His command!"(1 John 1:3-6)

At that, Jan interjected, "Speaking of following His command, Harry and I are so excited about the door our Father has opened up for us in Sweden!(Luke 11:10) I called my sister, and she and her family and all my aunts and uncles there can't wait for us to come! They're organizing a family reunion during our 3 weeks in Huddinge, and I know Josh is looking forward to seeing his cousins again. It's been 6 years since we were last there, so they'll have a lot to talk about — even if they have to work through broken English together!"

"Are any of your relatives followers of Jesus?" asked Lacie.

"Well, not that I know of," responded Jan. "In fact, I googled *Sweden/religions* to find out the spiritual condition there. The State Church of Sweden is Lutheran, and while 8 out of 10 Swedes are members, only 1 out of 10 regard "religion" to be important in their daily life. And I saw that Islam is starting to make inroads — it's second only to the State religion in followers!"

"That sounds pretty much like the statistics I've read about most of Europe," said Dee softly. "But it's also a great opportunity for you and Harry and Josh to show them the difference — the authentic Jesus!"(Colossians 4:5,6)

"I know you're right," answered Jan. "I read that among the young people there, Christianity is no longer taught in the public schools, nor are they learning about Jesus in their homes. So most of them are biblically illiterate. But, like young men and women here in America, they're finding that materialism and education and all their personal technology are unable to fill the spiritual void in them. It's an emptiness I know that God is allowing them to experience because He wants them to seek Him!"(Isaiah 55:1-3)

"That sure is the heart of our Father, isn't it?" added Lacie. "Yet so many people want to believe in a warm, fuzzy god of love and forgiveness who doesn't have any righteous standards — someone who fits their image! They expect their god to do their bidding because they have no idea what the mighty and awesome God of the Bible is really like."(1 John 4:1,2)

"You can bet we'll be coming before our Lord specifically on behalf of your family, Jan. He is the only One Who can prepare the soil of their hearts for the Seed of truth in Jesus.(Luke 8:11,15) And you can bet that Satan is going to try to interfere to disrupt your relationships so that their ears won't hear and respond!"(Mark 4:15) Dee was speaking from experience, and well understood the sorrow of missed opportunities and misunderstanding among her own relatives.

Jan looked fondly at both of her sisters in Jesus. "You know, so many times people have said 'I'll pray for you' but I knew they'd forget as soon as the conversation was finished. But I know in my heart that you two are bearing this burden with me, and that you'll keep Harry and Josh and me before His throne every day."(Galatians 6:2)

Dee slowed down her pace and said, "Let's begin right now with this particular opportunity to see our Lord work in a mighty way and be glorified in it!" The trio stopped and held each other's hands right there on the path. "Father God, we come to you in the name of our Lord Jesus, knowing that you don't desire for anyone to be lost but that all respond to Your call to repent. (2 Peter 3:9) Thank You for your long-

suffering patience. Please prepare the way for Jan and Harry and Josh to be Your instruments and ambassadors to their relatives in Sweden. Open the door of faith for them, Father.^(Acts 14:27) And open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to You, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place in Your family.”^(Acts 26:18)

“And Father,” interjected Lacie, “we’re well aware that the enemy of our souls wants to keep these precious people in the darkness of lies.^(1 John 5:19) We ask in the mighty Name of Jesus that the unclean, lying spirits be bound and gagged in their lives so that their ears will hear and their hearts see their sin and detest it.^(Romans 7:18-20) Your Spirit brings conviction of sin,^(John 16:8) Lord, and we ask that even before Jan and Harry and Josh arrive in Sweden, you’ll be at work to prepare their relatives to repent.^(Acts 26:20) May they encounter the true gospel of Jesus and run to Him in love and trust, Father!” ^(Hebrews 2:9)

Jan was overwhelmed by the love her sisters in Christ were ministering to her as His vessels. “Father God, thank You that where two are three are gathered in the Name of Jesus, He is in our midst! We do love You and trust that You will go ahead of us and work mightily for Your Name’s sake.^(1 John 3:21,22) Amen.”

The three hugged one another with joyful tears. Dee looked at them both as a mother would her beloved daughters. “Someone once shared with me this word picture that I think will be helpful to you. Imagine that in each of our lives are a certain number of “God sightings” — encounters with the true Gospel and with the Spirit’s power at work that ultimately have led us to respond to His call to repent and come to our Father through Jesus. For some it may take 85 “encounters” and for others only 5. You don’t know where your particular testimony or service in His Name will fall along someone’s particular life journey. You may be right on the cusp of being able to harvest them as Kingdom fruit. Or, you may meet them early on in their spiritual search; they need to hear what you share with them, but you’re more of a sower than a reaper.”^(1 Corinthians 3:6-8)

The other two were listening intently. Dee continued, “Sometimes I’ve felt burdened by guilt that I didn’t see any signs of spiritual responsiveness in the one with whom I was sharing. But their response isn’t under my control! Only my obedience to the Spirit is.”

She went on as Jan and Lacie nodded their agreement. “Other times I’ve come under the conviction of the Spirit, realizing that He’d been prompting me to speak up or call or e-mail someone, but I’d resisted Him. Maybe I felt I’d be rebuffed or insulted by the person I spoke to, but at any rate, I knew in my heart that I’d grieved Him and missed an opportunity. But that produced the godly sorrow that compels me to not want to refuse any prompting He gives now!”^(2 Corinthians 7:10)

Jan nodded with understanding. “If I assume that just because I’ve told someone the truth, that person should immediately respond positively, that’s presumptuous! I’m just a vessel through whom the Spirit works,^(2 Corinthians 4:6,7) and it’s up to Father God and that person whether they respond. Father extends the grace for them to hear, but the person can choose to accept it or reject it at that particular time. They may still be clinging to the god of this age, unable to see the light of the Gospel.”^(2 Corinthians 4:3,4)

“How grateful I am that He is so faithful!” exclaimed Lacie. “As I look back, I know someone must have been praying for me, because God finally got my attention to want Jesus as my Lord far more than I wanted to keep on sinning! When I saw my utter depravity in my own heart, then I received His gift of grace and forgiveness.^(Psalms 51:17) So how can I ever look down on someone who’s as lost as I was back then? His love for me has grown compassion in me for those who have yet to encounter Jesus.^(Colossians 3:12) At the same time, it keeps me alert to opportunities to be available for Him to use me in someone’s life!”^(Galatians 6:9)

Dee beamed with joy at the wise insights of these two younger women. “That love and alertness helps each of us to make the most of every opportunity we have, especially since it seems that the days are more evil than ever!”^(Ephesians 5:16) In fact, just yesterday I was at Walmart, and it seemed like a really slow day there. I was the only one in line for my cashier, and I couldn’t help but notice great sadness in her face. I inquired, and she teared up. She told me she’d just found out her mother has cancer and didn’t know which way to turn. I told her that I have found great comfort in my Lord Jesus, and asked if she’d like me to pray with her about her Mom.”^(2 Corinthians 1:3,4)

Lacie was startled. “You mean that you prayed with someone right there in Walmart?”

Dee smiled. “What a blessing to be able to lift her and her mother before our Father so that He might show Himself both loving and mighty in their lives!”^(Psalms 62:11,12) And how gracious of our Father to keep other customers away so we could have this brief, intimate moment with Him. In fact, right after we prayed, the next customer came up. I’ll never forget the hope I saw in that gal’s eyes as I left. Glory to Him alone!”

“I never thought of praying with people I don’t know,” commented Jan. “But being alert to when the Spirit prompts me to come alongside someone just to affirm that they’re important to God sure sounds like something Jesus would do!”^(Galatians 6:10) Thanks for recommending that to us!”

“Well, dear,” smiled Dee, “if I just *talk about* prayer but don’t put it into practice, I’m being hypocritical. After all, He’s been so faithful to me that I want that gratefulness to flow out to others for His glory!”^(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18) It’s His love at work in me that empowers me to serve Him in this way. And I know how pleased He is when I bear witness to what I’ve seen and heard when He works through me.”^(Acts 4:20)

By this time the ladies had returned to their cars. “I’d better get going,” said Jan. “I have to pick up Josh from soccer practice. But I’m so glad we had this chance to talk!”

“Me, too!” smiled Lacie. “I’m so encouraged that we can get together to learn from each other and lift up Jesus in our midst. Are both of you available next week to walk and talk?”

Dee was encouraged by their eagerness. “I’d love to. And let’s be sure we keep in touch when other ‘God-sightings’ or needs come up during the week.”^(2 Thessalonians 2:16,17) My spirit soars to share this kind of fellowship with you!”

Each went her way, rejoicing that they’d loved one another in Jesus and spurred one another on to serve Him as they serve others.^(Hebrews 10:24)