

# Kingdom Living Today

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

## 26. Stand Firm In Your Trust; Be Courageous And Strong

**"JESUS IS FAITHFUL AS A SON OVER GOD'S HOUSE.  
AND WE ARE HIS HOUSE, IF WE HOLD ON TO OUR COURAGE  
AND THE HOPE OF WHICH WE BOAST."**

"Grandpa!" Josh yelled with delight as Jack entered the young man's hospital room. As he approached the bed of his spiritual grandson, Jack could see the broken arm in a sling and the grisly evidence of an awful beating.

"You look a lot better than your Mom reported," Jack grinned teasingly, though inside his heart was breaking at the sight. "I take it you didn't win the fight..."

"Oh, but I did!" Josh responded with a note of triumph that had the angels rejoicing with him. "I never struck a blow, but I won a soul for Jesus." (Matthew 5:38,39)

Jack pulled up a chair alongside Josh's bed. His heart was filled with expectancy knowing a testimony to his grandson's faith was unfolding. "Josh, tell me all about it."

The teen smiled crookedly through swollen lips. "I'd just finished trimming Mrs. Winslow's hedge—she's the widow who lives down at the end of our street." Jack recognized the woman's name and nodded for Josh to continue. "As I was walking home I noticed three older teenagers across the street talking with the Sizemore twins, who are 10. I stopped to watch for a moment because something didn't seem right. That's when I saw Zack Sizemore hand the older boys some money, and they handed him something back. I just knew it was drugs."

Grandpa's face wrinkled with concern as he asked, "So what'd you do?"

Josh continued with a twinkle despite his obvious physical discomfort. "I yelled at those guys to stop and started to walk across the street toward them. They just stood there glaring at me as I got closer. That's when I sensed this might end up in a fight."

"Didn't you think it might be wiser to turn the other way?" Jack inquired.

"The thought crossed my mind, Grandpa. But instead, I lifted up a prayer asking Jesus to help me. (Jeremiah 1:19) That's when I heard your voice quoting some things you shared with me a few weeks ago."

That sparked Jack's curiosity. "What was that?"

"Something written a long time ago: 'All that's necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.'" Josh stated it like a military order. "I didn't want to be someone who did nothing when evil's going on right in front of me. That's when a Bible verse you'd discussed with me came into my mind: '*Like a muddied spring or a polluted well is a righteous man who gives way to the wicked.*'" (Proverbs 25:26)

"Wow, Josh!" Jack exclaimed as he leaned over Josh and gently hugged him. "I'm so proud of you! But I sure never thought my counsel to you would end up in you being hurt."

"That's okay, Grandpa," Josh affirmed the older man. "I was still a little scared until I heard inside me the second passage you'd talked about with me. It was some-

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thing like, *'My righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I won't be pleased with him.'* It went on that God doesn't want us to be people who shrink back and are destroyed, but people who trust and are saved."(Hebrews 10:38,39)

Josh could see on his Grandpa's face tears mingled with pride in this courageous 15-year-old. "I stepped up to the guys and told them that what they were doing was wrong. Then I told the twins to give the drugs back. That's when the biggest of the three guys hit me from behind." He shifted slightly on the bed to relieve some pain. "I landed on the ground and he jumped on me and kept beating me all over. I think it's when I hit the ground that I broke my arm, but my insides were pretty banged up too. That's why they're keeping me here overnight for observation."

Jack anguished for his grandson as he pictured the scene. "I'm so sorry this happened, Josh."

"Please, don't be!" Josh interjected joyfully. "Jesus got the victory!" Jack's jaw dropped as the teen continued, "As I was being clobbered, I refused to hit him back.(Luke 6:29) Instead I shouted, 'In the Name of the Lord Jesus, I order you to stop!'(Psalms 118:10,11) And he did! He looked at me like a dog tilting its head when it hears a sound it can't recognize."

"So he stopped hitting you?" Jack blurted.

Pausing for just a moment to make a triumphant point, Josh gleefully exclaimed, "Oh yeah! He got off me and just stood there. Then tears started to fill his eyes."

"Tears???" Jack asked incredulously.

"Yup! In a few moments he was actually crying! He told me how much his mother had been praying and fasting for him to change his ways." Josh closed his eyes briefly to thank Jesus again then went on. "I told him that I forgave him. Then I put my hand on his shoulder and began to pray for him. Nick's his name."

Jack just needed to ask, "Weren't you in pain, Josh?"

"I remember I really hurt, but I also know I was filled with more joy than anything I've ever experienced." Josh grabbed Jack's hand with his own. "When I get out of the hospital, I'm going to start meeting with Nick, Dan and Adam and teach them the way you've taught me."(2Timothy 2:2) He paused for a moment then added, "Grandpa, would you pray with me that the hearts of those boys might be open to what the Lord would have me share with them?"

"You bet I will, Josh. In fact, let's do that right now." As the gray head bowed next to the youthful one, prayers like incense rose steadily to heaven as a pleasing fragrance to God.(Revelation 5:8)

Past the bruises and the cast on his arm, Jack could see a young man of God laying in that bed. If it were only to experience this moment of loving triumph, then Jack's life had been worth it all. But our Lord had a lot more for Jack to finish before he'd see Him face to face.(Acts 20:24)

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Two days had passed since Josh's attack. His mom, Jan, looked gratefully around the room at the loving faces of these sisters in Jesus. The gals from her fellowship family had gathered at Dee's to pray and encourage one another.

After assurances that her son was mending well and now at home with Harry

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engaging his son in a concentrated chess match, Jan spoke with grateful tears. “Harry and I can’t thank you enough for all your care for us. Those meals were great, and we were so surprised to find that basket of fruit on the table when we brought Josh home. He especially loved the cards from all your children!” (1Peter 4:10) she grinned, basking in the support of these women who genuinely loved her as a sister in Jesus.

“It was our pleasure,” the rest agreed, reaching out to pat her arm. Jan added, “I couldn’t believe it when I saw that our lawn had been mowed and the garden weeds pulled! I know Josh really appreciated that, since that’s his usual chore and he’ll be out of commission for several weeks.”

“Speaking of caring for our homes,” Keisha remarked, “Jerome and I want to have you all over for our next fellowship gathering. I know our place isn’t big, but with a little rearranging of the furniture, we can all look each other in the face and “break bread” together!”

Dee smiled broadly at the younger woman. “Keisha, that’s a wonderful idea! And we can each bring something for the meal so it’ll be a joy for you, not a burden.”

“Well,” beamed Keisha happily, “since we’re training Maya up in Christ’s character right in our home each day, I have a great little hostess in the making!”

The others chuckled at the delight in their sister’s eyes in being able to stay home and educate her daughter in godliness and wisdom and character. (Ephesians 6:1-4)

Lacie cleared her throat to speak. “Dee, sometimes I feel a little inadequate about being a ‘hostess’. I mean, you always make people feel so comfortable, and I’m more like a ‘Martha’ type, feeling like everything has to be just so.”

Dee smiled gently at the young wife. “Lacie, I used to feel that way too! In fact,” she added with a shake of her head, “I think I put so much pressure on myself to perform as a hostess that I forgot what genuine hospitality really is! Looking back, I’m sure the people who came over felt almost like intruders rather than welcome friends!”

“I can’t believe you were ever like that,” declared Lita. “You’re always so calm and smiling whenever I come over, even with my little girls! My own mother gets upset that they might break something, but you’re so gentle and patient with them!”

A chortle burst forth from the older woman. “You have no idea the work the Holy Spirit has done in me in that regard, Lita! When He directed me to those verses in Scripture that talk about hospitality as a command, I realized that I’d been looking more to my own interest rather than to serving others and pleasing my Father in that way! And I have to admit, I used to grumble about having people over.”

“YOU?” chorused the rest in astonishment.

“Oh yes,” she replied with a nod. “But the Spirit of Christ in me convicted me that I was choosing to sin rather than obey my Lord in regard to hospitality. (1Peter 4:9) And showing hospitality,” she added, “is specifically mentioned as a role for a woman who loves and follows Jesus. It’s right up there with helping those in trouble, raising children well, and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.” (1Timothy 5:10)

“I didn’t even know the Bible talks about having people in your home,” commented Lacie with a start. “I guess I just thought that inviting people over was optional—or like returning a favor when someone invites me over.”

“Now that I think of it,” commented Keisha, “didn’t Jesus proclaim that the willingness to take people in and offer them authentic hospitality marked whether they

were ‘sheep’ or ‘goats’ at His judgement throne?(Matthew 25:31-46) This is pretty serious stuff,” she remarked with emphasis.

Dee smiled kindly at the ladies around her. “The Scriptural command is to make hospitality your *lifestyle practice*, not just a one-time event.(Romans 12:13) Keep in mind that we’re not talking about putting on an event! It’s an *expression of love* for both God and for the ones He’s sovereignly put you in relationship with.”(Hebrews 13:1)

She paused a moment, then looked around with love at each eager face. “When Paul talks about the household of faith as ‘brothers and sisters’, he’s referring to the *relational family connection* Father calls for in the body of Christ.”(Galatians 6:9,10)

“I guess I never saw it that way before,” Lacie sighed. “My mother was almost a hermit, and we never had anyone over. But I can see what you’re saying as far as welcoming each other in Jesus as extended spiritual family. It changes my whole perspective on having people in our home!”

Jan added, “In Sweden, my relatives all get together regularly because we enjoy each other so much! I have to admit,” she paused reflectively, “that when I married Harry and came to the US, I was taken aback by the lack of hospitality here! It seems like people need a specific reason to get together instead of gathering because you care.”

“Funny you should mention that, Jan,” responded Keisha. “My family are mostly in the South, and no matter how little any of us may have had, we always welcomed each other into our homes. I think that’s why it’s so easy for Jerome and me to understand our relationships with you all as family.”

“That’s how it is with our extended families, too,” cut in Lita. “Among Latinos, our homes are places of inclusion. And now that Juan and I understand more and more the love of Jesus, we see our home as a place where we can share that love with others, whether they know Him as Lord of their lives or not!”

Dee was delighted to hear how these dear women were recognizing their homes as places of hospitality the way women who loved Jesus 2000 years earlier had. Their Hebraic forefathers had welcomed both strangers and friends into their homes as far back as even Abraham(Genesis 18:1-8)—a practice sorely absent, it seems, in the rush of modern American culture. “How sad,” she mused to herself.

Lacie again spoke, glancing down somewhat shyly. “I think my greatest fear is that I won’t measure up to others. I mean, what if my entree comes out awful, or if I forget to vacuum before everyone comes over?”

Jan reached over with a smile. “Lacie, you have such a loving, welcoming heart! Don’t allow those thoughts to agitate you. Satan would like nothing better than to implant unrest in you so that Biblical truth about opening your home to others might produce anxiety rather than joy.”

“Jan’s right,” Dee added. “Take those thoughts captive. Nip them in the bud and think instead of how Jesus would respond!(2Corinthians 10:5) When you see yourself as HIS hands and feet and heart, then you’ve captured the essence of hospitality.”

With that, the ladies grabbed each other’s hands and blessed and praised their Lord for His wonderful Presence in their midst.