

# Kingdom Living Today

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

## 27. Enter His Presence With Thanksgiving And Praise

**"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 EACH OF YOU."**

Lacie deposited her fruit salad into Keisha's refrigerator and turned to smile at Dee. "What a great idea for each family to bring a different salad for our fellowship gathering! she exclaimed. "That way we don't have to fuss in the kitchen over the food."

Dee chuckled as they walked down the steps into the grassy backyard where everyone else had gathered. "Jack thought it might be fun if we women joined the men and the kids for some fun rather than having to focus on food prep." They joined up with the others as she added, "He thought the kids would get a kick out of seeing us Moms playing a variation of baseball that Jerome found on the Internet."

Conversations died down as Jerome held up a huge foam ball. "I trust that this will be fun for all of us to be able to join in. I realize some of us may be athletically challenged." He paused as knowing looks and giggles spread throughout the faith family. "That's why we're going to play with this really soft ball so no one needs a baseball glove."

Nine-year-old Kelsey interjected, "Wow! I think even I can catch that!" The other youngsters piped in with their own comments as Jerome continued, "The pitcher has to throw underhand, and there's only one strike per batter. After three strikes, we change sides. There are no forced outs, but get this: You can have as many players on a base as you need to, but they have to run in the order they arrived." Two hours of hilarity went on before the entire group entered the house to clean up.

Josh stood next to Jack as they waited for a turn at the bathroom sink. "Grandpa, I have this strong feeling that we should have communion before we do anything else. What do you think?"

The older man put his arm around the husky shoulders of the almost-16-year-old. "I think the Spirit of our Lord inspired that thought in you, Josh. In fact, would you mind leading us in communion?"

"Could I?" Josh blurted, totally surprised by Jack's invitation.

Jack's face beamed as he responded emphatically, "Yes, you can!" He paused as his love for this grandson in Jesus filled his eyes. "Make sure you let the Spirit of Christ guide you so this becomes an expression of your heart as you lead us in renewing our Covenant with our Father."<sup>(1Corinthians 2:13)</sup>

Josh motioned toward a private place in the back of Jerome's yard. "I'm going over there for a few minutes to pray." Jack nodded, understanding the heart of this young man to want to be clean and prepared before His Lord before he spoke.<sup>(Psalms 24:3-5)</sup>

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

A few moments later Jack approached the ladies in the kitchen who were just about to set the food on the tables. "Could we hold up on the meal for a while longer? I sense that our Lord has other plans than for us to eat right now."

The gals had gotten used to this expression on Jack's face, a look that reflected spiritual discernment the Lord had given him. They all gathered in the family room, some on the sofa and chairs, others snugly comfortable on the rug.

As Josh quietly led them to examine their hearts for anything of which they needed to repent, a stillness filled the room.<sup>(1Corinthians 11:28)</sup> He then asked each person to affirm in their heart their love and obedient trust in their Lord and King with a steadfast determination to walk in His will.<sup>(1John 3:23,24)</sup> He also brought up the need to have the kind of forgiving heart that Father calls for in His Word.<sup>(Matthew 6:14)</sup> The bread was broken and passed around, and the cup shared by all who were in covenant union in Christ.<sup>(1Corinthians 11:23-27)</sup>

As the last person finished the cup, Keisha broke into a beautiful song. Her daughter Maya joined her, as it was a hymn they'd both been singing throughout the week. Other delighted voices were added, and other both new and familiar songs were lifted, interspersed with prayers of thanksgiving.<sup>(Ephesians 5:19)</sup> An hour passed when the last of the spontaneous worship came to an end. Joy, pure joy filled everyone's heart.

As he looked around at his extended family in Jesus, Jack could sense the Lord's pleasure in being enthroned in their praises. Laughter erupted as Lita's daughter Lily's little-girl voice squeaked, "Is it time to eat?"

Young Kirk quickly broke in, "Can our family share something first?" Everyone knew it must be important because Kirk was known for his love for food. For him to delay eating got everyone's attention.

"This morning we helped our neighbor, Mrs. Armstrong, move into a senior high rise. It was only our family and her son, and she had a lot to move." Encouraging smiles prompted him to go on. "Getting the stuff onto the truck wasn't hard, but we knew that getting it up the elevator to the apartment on the second floor would be. So Mom prayed that God would send us some help."

Kirk gestured for his sister Kelsey to continue. "When we got to the high rise, there was already another family helping their grandmother move to the same floor Mrs. Armstrong was going to be on. Dad introduced all of us to the father and uncle and three teenagers. They were just about finished when we got there and the father walked over to Dad and said, 'The Lord put it on our hearts to help you all. Could you use our assistance?' Wasn't that neat?!"

Lacie wanted to get her two cents in. "We had a wonderful time while we worked together, sharing about our Lord with each other. All of us sensed the Divine timing of our encounter, and when they left we all hugged each other like we were family!"

Nate and Jessica, the young couple Jack and Dee had been discipling, sat in wide-eyed awe. As Jessica repositioned little Riley on her lap she couldn't contain her amazement. "I got goose bumps, ya'll... *big* goose bumps! My heart is praising God with every thump!"<sup>(2Corinthians 9:12,13)</sup>

Nate's joy was equally apparent. "I'm so glad to hear how our Lord blessed you all. You were so kind to Mrs. Armstrong, and our Father showered that on you in answer to Lacie's prayer."

Kirk couldn't hold back his enthusiasm. "That's not all! During our prayer time this morning Dad prayed that we might find someone in the high rise who loved Jesus and would follow up on our talks with Mrs. Armstrong." He paused a moment, allowing his flare for the dramatic to break through. "Somehow, as Mrs. Armstrong was handing her keys to Dad near the elevator, they slipped out of her hands and fell right down the shaft to the bottom."

"Boy, that's a problem I've never seen," Jerome proclaimed with a shake of his head.

Brett took up this part of the story since he'd been the one left to solve the situation. "I sent Mrs. Armstrong up to the apartment to show Lacie and the kids where she wanted things. The manager's wife 'just happened' to come by at that moment and I explained to her what happened. She got her husband, who turned the elevator off and got a step ladder to get to the bottom of the shaft."

"So did you get the keys back?" asked Maya, trying to anticipate where the testimony was going.

"Oh, we got the keys back alright," Brett answered. "And, we got an answer to our morning prayer as well! As I talked with the managers, Phil and Cindy, I found out that they've been going through a lot of spiritual soul searching. They'd both become followers of Jesus just a few months before but never felt comfortable when they attended church services." He looked with love around the packed room. "I shared what we were doing in our fellowship family and gave them the address for the Restoration Ministries website and my phone number."

Several spontaneous prayers of thanksgiving followed. Then Josh asked to share his testimony. "I told you all how this cast ended up on my arm. It's been a little inconvenient but I'm grateful every time I look at it."

"Is this going to be about how we should find joy in suffering?" (1Peter 1:6,7) Maya asked, her girlish curiosity again trying to anticipate where Josh was going.

"It could be, Maya," grinned Josh. "Friday I met with those guys, Rob, Dan and Adam, who'd been selling drugs to the Sizemore twins. I gave each one a Bible and handed them each a copy of *Demolishing Your Strongholds* which Grandpa gave me. When I had them open to the page that listed all the strongholds, they were blown away."

"They saw a lot of those demons in themselves, didn't they?" Jack asked knowingly.

"They sure did, Grandpa. And, they wanted to get rid of their strongholds bad!" Josh affirmed. "It took about 2 hours for them to renounce each demonic spirit in the Name of Jesus and by His authority. (Luke 10:19,20) But I can attest that each guy was free!"

"How were you sure?" Keisha inquired.

Josh responded quickly, "By the tears that flowed down their faces. (2Corinthians 7:10) And by how amazed they were by the power of Lord Jesus to free them so they could have ears to hear when I then told them about Him. (Mark 9:38-40) They cried even harder when I told them He was God and that He loved them enough to take the punishment they deserved for all their wrongdoing." (1Peter 3:18)

"Praise God!!!" Lacie interjected. "My body may be here, but my heart's rejoicing in heaven!"

Everyone rejoiced with her, filled with an awareness that glory was all around them. Josh continued, "I asked them to show their parents what they'd filled in. And you know, they were glad to! I could see that *free* people really want others they care about to be free too!(John 1:41) We're going to get together twice a week, and I'll be taking them through the Gospel of the Covenant next."

Keisha jumped in with an update on her sister. "Several weeks ago we told you about my sister, Patrice, in Cleveland. She and some of my other family members have cleaned up their home from all unrighteousness and God is really honoring them."(2Corinthians 6:14-18) Overcome with grateful joy, she paused to wipe away tears. "With Patrice leading the way, my family's focus is to see everyone in that city experience spiritual freedom, especially the black men. And I know they won't rest until everyone in that city is spiritually free!"(Hebrews 2:14,15)

"That's wonderful news!" Lita declared with excitement. "I can see whole racial and ethnic communities becoming free and turning this nation upside down."

"Me too!" Keisha rejoined. "Patrice and the rest of our family have begun praying over their own neighborhood, and the people at Restoration Ministries are helping them prepare materials so they can do seminars with their neighbors in their homes."

Jack joyfully took in all the happy faces in the room and encouraged them all to keep praying for Patrice and for the boys Josh was reaching out to. Finally he announced, "I guess it's time to eat!" He didn't have to say it twice.

After the meal, Kirk, Kelsey and Maya got up to clear the tables. While they were in the kitchen Maya asked the other two, "How do the chores at these gatherings get assigned? Why are *we* clearing the tables and doing the dishes?"

Kirk and Kelsey laughed. "It's not that chores get assigned. It's more like recognizing what you *didn't* do, then pitching in to help."

"Huh?" questioned the young girl.

"If you didn't cook or set the tables, then you have to help clean up," Kelsey smiled as she put her hand on Maya's arm in a friendly gesture. "We're family, and each of us has a part to play so we can serve one another in love.(Galatians 5:13) As Grandpa taught us, 'There are no free-loaders in the Kingdom of God.'"(1Peter 4:10)

"I understand now," Maya acknowledged. "I remember Grandma Dee sharing with our Moms how important it is that all of us learn to willingly serve other people.(Proverbs 3:27) Let's get these dishes done and see how pleased they are!"

Back at the now-cleared dinner table Dee shared an encouraging observation. "Tonight the Spirit has made it even more evident to me why any fellowship family MUST have these mutual goals: that we help each other as brothers and sisters become more like Jesus and spur each other on in love to do our Father's will."(Matthew 12:50) Thoughtful nods followed her words. "To become more like Jesus is what enables us to embrace with joy the suffering that accompanies our sanctification(James 1:2-4). And our mutual dedication to fulfill our Father's desire to reconcile the world to Himself is what binds us together."(Colossians 1:19,20)

One soft voice followed by others began to sing: "Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, with cords that cannot be broken. Bind us together, Lord, bind us together, Lord, bind us together with love."(Proverbs 3:3)