

# Kingdom Living Today

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

## 30. Today's Decisions Cause Tomorrow's Consequences

**"WHEN I COME IN MY FATHER'S GLORY WITH MY ANGELS,  
I WILL REWARD EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO WHAT THEY HAVE DONE.  
ON THAT DAY EACH OF YOU WILL HAVE TO GIVE AN ACCOUNT OF YOURSELF."**

The cozy living room in Nate and Jessica's apartment was brightly lit by both the glowing lamps and the warm, welcoming smiles of the young couple.

"We're really glad you could come over," Nate said as Jack and Dee made themselves comfortable on the sofa. "Jess and I have two important matters we need guidance on."

"We're glad to help any way we can," (Psalms 37:30) Jack replied, fondness in his eyes.

Jessica blurted anxiously, "One of the situations has haunted us from our past. The other has to do with Nate's job."

"Why don't you lead us in prayer, Nate," Dee asked. "There are two or more of us here in the Name of Jesus, so let's ask the Spirit of our Lord for revelation." (Matthew 18:20)

After Nate finished praying he continued holding Jess's hand and turned to Jack and Dee. "We hadn't mentioned this before, but we wanted you to know that we lived together for over a year before we got married." Jess added, "At the time I felt it was a good idea. I thought we could find out if we were right for each other before making a final commitment. Even my church-going mother thought it was sensible. My Dad didn't agree with it, but he didn't put up any stop signs either."

Jack understood how damaging fornication was to a marriage even years afterward, and asked a probing question. "So what's changed with both of you?"

Nate looked down before answering with a regretful sigh. "We'd seen in the Bible that there's no place in the Kingdom of God for those who have sex outside of marriage. (1Corinthians 6:9) We've both confessed our sin," he added as he looked at Jessica and squeezed her hand, "but we feel convicted that there's more we need to be doing. I guess that inside we both sense that the deep kind of love our Lord would have us develop in our marriage is being hindered by our premarital sex."

"Well, what the Spirit is convicting you of is true," Jack replied as he looked deeply into the faces of the young couple. "The Word of God tells us to flee fornication because every other sin a man does is outside his body. But when a man fornicates, he's sinning against his own body." (1Corinthians 6:18-20)

"I don't think I understand," Jessica responded, puzzled.

"I may not understand all there is to it myself," Jack answered honestly. "But what our Lord has shown Dee and me over the years we'll be glad to share with you both." (Job 12:12)

"Please do!" the young couple implored. "We really want to hear."

Jack glanced at Dee, who nodded. Then he turned toward Nate and Jessica. "First, we want to describe some of the possible symptoms you've probably both been experiencing with each other."

Their eyes were wide and startled. "You know what we've been going through?"

"Let's see," Dee interjected. "Jess, you've probably often felt Nate was insensitive

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to your needs.”

Jessica blurted a resounding “YES!” before she could catch herself.

“And, in response to him not meeting your needs,” went on Dee knowingly, “you decided to treat him with coolness. You’ve probably even talked about him unfavorably with your Mom or friends. Maybe you’ve bad-mouthed him to others even when he was with you.”

Jessica’s face dropped with shame. “Guilty on all counts.”

Now Jack jumped in. “Nate, you most likely reacted to her coolness by becoming more demanding.”

Before Jack could go on, Jess burst in, “Yeah, like a tyrant!”

Turning to Jessica, Dee asked, “Did you start having doubts and begin to question whether Nate even loved you?”

“Yes, many times! How did you know?” Jess reacted almost as if Dee had been watching her through a security camera.

“It doesn’t matter how Jack and I know,” Dee smiled gently. “What’s important is that you recognize the consequences of premarital intercourse.”

“I can see that we really blew it more than we realized,” Nate admitted.

“Nothing is beyond what Jesus can heal as you cooperate with His Spirit to develop His character in your marriage,” Jack affirmed. “Dee and I have both been witnesses to what He can do if we’ll wholeheartedly seek Him.”(Psalms 119:2)

Jessica leaned forward earnestly. “Are there any other symptoms that are hurting our marriage because we chose to do things the world’s way?”(1John 2:15-17)

Dee responded, “Jess, let me ask you this. After you’d give Nate the cold shoulder, would he start buying you things?”

With a gulp, Nate jumped in, “Yes, I did! This is getting to be really weird.”

“Oh, it’s not weird at all,” Jack stepped in. “It’s the normal path our sin nature takes when we violate God’s Word. We try to purchase favor from others in order to be accepted by them.”(Ecclesiastes 7:7)

Jessica’s sudden anguish poured out in tears. “I just felt so awful when I accepted those gifts. I felt... I felt like a prostitute with Nate paying me.” It was a while before anyone spoke because they were sensitive to the severity of Jess’s pain.

Nate held her hand tightly and said with sorrow, “My buying things to make Jess happy became so bad that it drove us into some heavy debt—even this house she wanted that we can barely afford. I became so discouraged I began hanging around work not wanting to go home. This left Jess feeling even more alone and angry.”

Then Jessica confessed, “I responded to him being away so much by making myself busy so he wouldn’t think I needed him... We’d hardly been married two years and I was ready to leave him.”

“Why didn’t you, dear?” Dee asked, wanting to know what had held the young woman back.

“My high school friend Nicki called me right in the middle of this and asked me to lunch,” Jess replied, tilting her head at the memory. “I didn’t know she’d become a follower of Jesus and had been praying for me every day. God had shown her that my marriage was hurting and that she needed to encourage me to hang in there. She said help was coming!”(Proverbs 27:9)

“And how did that help arrive?” Dee inquired curiously.

Nate looked at Jess with a chuckle and answered for the both of them, “It was when we ran into you two in the park that day.”

Jessica added joyfully, “You two were the help God had promised through my friend Nicki!” Words of praise to God rose up among them in response, Jack finishing with a prayer of thanksgiving.

Nate then turned to Jack and Dee, his youthful face serious once more. “Now that we’ve exposed the symptoms of what our messing around has caused in our marriage, what would Jesus have us do?”

“Let’s tackle that,” Jack replied resolutely. “First, when you two fornicated, Jessica was still under the authority of her father in God’s sight. You undermined the authority of her father, Nate, even if neither he nor the two of you recognized it.”

As Nate had been getting to know the nature of biblical headship in his own home, (Ephesians 5:23) he could sense the truth in Jack’s words. “So what should I do to correct this?”

“I’d encourage you to go to Jess’s father and ask forgiveness for having intercourse with his daughter before you were married,” (James 4:10) the older man responded.

Nate took a moment to search his own spirit for confirmation, then answered, “That’ll be hard, but I know it’s the step God wants me take.”

“What about me?” Jess implored. “I’m just as guilty. What should I do?”

Dee answered with a tender smile at the earnest young woman. “It’d be helpful if you went to your Dad as well and asked forgiveness from him. I bet there’s a place of pain in his heart that needs what only forgiveness can heal.”

“But I hurt too!” Jess shot back suddenly with tears filling her eyes. “Doesn’t my father need to ask *me* for forgiveness for not being the Dad I needed?”

Dee took Jessica’s hand and asked, “You weren’t very close to your father growing up, were you?”

Choking back sobs as she recalled her childhood, Jess murmured, “No, his career took him away from home a lot. And, even when he was home, he played golf with his buddies whenever he got the opportunity.” She paused then added with a sigh, “Almost all the discipline of me and my brother was left in my Mom’s hands. She’d get annoyed at us and scream. We never knew what was going to set her off. I think she was just overwhelmed by all the responsibility.”

Dee reached over and hugged Jess. She’d seen this scenario repeated so often in her years of working alongside Jack to help families. “The ‘god’ of corporate America has cost many families the blessings God would have given them if men hadn’t sought their rewards in this world.” (Psalms 17:14)

“This actually leads into our second situation,” Nate interjected. “The company I work for wants to promote me to a position which will have me traveling at least two weeks a month. As I’ve looked at the biblical mandates for a man as a husband and father, (Deuteronomy 6:5-7; Ephesians 6:4) I’m really having doubts about this promotion.”

Jack laughed as he shook his head. “I’m sorry. A decision I had to make years ago like yours flashed in front of my mind.”

“I know what it is, too,” Dee replied with a chuckle.

“We’d like to hear!” Nate and Jess entreated at the same time.

"Many years ago in a life far different than the one I have now, one of my assignments in the Navy was Personnel Officer. As part of this job I was required to put together retirement ceremonies."

"I'm just getting started," Nate blurted. "I haven't even thought of retirement."

Jack smiled. "It's what God showed me during that assignment that I want to share with you. I'd intended to make a career of the Navy. In fact, I'd just received a promotion myself and had been selected for command."

"So what happened?" Jessica asked, feeling a kind of suspense growing.

"In all but one of the retirements I conducted," Jack replied sadly, "the men retiring weren't married to their first wife."

"Wow! All but one?" Nate exclaimed in disbelief.

"Yup," Jack continued. "The one who still had his first wife followed Jesus as Lord of his life, and he'd made career choices to forego advancements that would have jeopardized his responsibilities as husband and father. I can still picture his retirement ceremony, surrounded by his family. That was by far the happiest one I handled."

"So is that what caused you to leave the Navy?" Jessica inquired.

Jack shook his head. "No, that came a year later. After I became a follower of Jesus, the Holy Spirit told me to resign."<sup>(Proverbs 3:5,6)</sup>

Dee chimed in, "Because of Jack's experience in Personnel, we could look back years later and appreciate what God had saved us from in raising our own family."

"I don't understand," Jessica interposed.

"Our Lord was merciful to us. Jack was quickly advancing in the Navy, which meant he'd have to spend more time away from home." Dee's face furrowed. "He'd already been on four deployments, three of them in combat. I'm not sure whether I or the kids could have survived the next 10 years with him being away from us even more."

Nate cut in, "I'm really glad you shared that with us. God gave me Jess as my wife. And then he's blessed us with Riley, the first of what we hope will be several more children. They're gonna need me! It's Jess and the kids first, and everything else second."

"That's a wise decision," Jack exclaimed as he reached over and hugged Nate. A time of prayer followed, the young couple affirmed in the steps they were going to take.

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"Jack, this is Nate. Jess is on the other phone too. Could you and Dee come over for dinner on Friday?" Jack gestured for Dee to get on the phone.

"Are you and Jess having problems?" Jack asked with concern.

"Not one bit!" Nate exclaimed. "We went to Jess's father the day after we met with you and Dee. When I asked for his forgiveness, he wept! The words out of his mouth after forgiving me were, 'I wish someone had done this for me.'"

Dee voiced, "I don't understand."

Jess jumped in. "It seems that my parents fornicated too before they were married. When I asked Dad forgiveness, he held me as we both cried. It was like our Lord was releasing us all from a prison. Even my Mom got in on the repentance."

"That's why we want you to come over for dinner," Nate added. "They want to meet you and find out how they can become followers of Jesus too!" Joyful "Hallelujahs!" filled the phones.