

# Kingdom Living Today

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

## 36. Do You Cooperate Together In Your Sanctification?

“DO NOT BE INCONSIDERATE OF THE WIFE OF YOUR MARRIAGE COVENANT. SHE IS MY SUITABLE HELPER FOR YOU THROUGH WHOM YOU MUST LEARN TO LOVE LIKE MY SON JESUS LOVES. AS COMPANIONS TOGETHER, YOU MUST SEEK TO BE LIKE HIM AND TO DO MY WILL.”

The air was filled with joy as the fellowship family sat around Jack and Dee’s living room. “Juan, I’m really glad you’re back from Afghanistan!” Jack exclaimed, expressing the grateful hearts of all the fellowship family couples present. Juan blushed with happiness, while his wife Lita snuggled tightly under his arm.

“It’s great to be home, and especially to see all of you again,” he grinned. “And I thank my Lord for enabling me to come back early and be assigned to head up the bomb demolition unit on base here.” As he spoke, Lita pressed in even more closely.

Jack smiled as he glanced around the room at everyone and then reached for his wife’s hand. “Dee and I wanted to spend this time with all of you so we could review together some of the biblical framework in which our Lord views our marriages.”

“As we’ve mentioned many times before,” Dee added, “most of the commands in the Newer Testament are in the plural rather than the singular sense, as in *our* rather than *my*. Jack and I want to be supportive of each of you couples as your relationship grows *together* in Christ’s likeness.”

Jerome nodded as he added, “I remember from the Restoration Ministries website that one of the purposes God ordained for home fellowships was for older, wiser couples to help younger husbands and wives while their problems are still small. (See Titus 2:3-8) The way extended families live so far apart from each other these days, that’s all the more needed!”

“That’s true,” Jack affirmed. “And that’s why Dee and I thought some open discussion on some of the foundational considerations for marriage may help us be preventative—so we can put into practice the biblical principle to forestall problems you all might encounter before they arise. (Colossians 1:28) How does that sound to you all?”

“Let’s go for it!” Lacie interjected with her usual enthusiasm.

Jack began, “One of the first goals God has for marriage is companionship. He gave Eve to Adam to fulfill this need when He said, ‘*It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.*’” (Genesis 2:18)

“Genuine companionship grows out of oneness of spirit in which both of you want your marriage to be filled more and more with the love and motives of Jesus,” Dee said, squeezing Jack’s hand. “God intended that marriage reflect the divine relationship between Christ and His body of all who love and trust in Him. That’s why He declares that ‘*a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.*’ Then Paul refers to this covenant union as ‘*a profound mystery*’, connecting the intimate spiritual union of Christ and His called-out ones.” (Ephesians 5:31-32)

Harry spoke up, “I remember that point from *The Gospel of the Covenant Is The Pilgrimage to Salvation* article. Our Father intends for our marriage covenant to be the phys-

**Restoration Ministries International (restorationministries.org)**

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

ical representation of the spiritual Covenant He offers us through Jesus!" (Ephesians 5:25)

"That's true, Harry," Jack said as he introduced another element into the discussion. "A key part of a married couple pressing on together in their sanctification into Christ's likeness is the completeness a wife brings her husband." (Genesis 2:23-25) He smiled warmly at Dee. "A good definition for companionship is two people who *complement* each other—they fill in the weak areas each of them alone has, and find that their relationship together is far more than just a sum of their individual traits and strengths."

Dee added, "In our sanctification into Christ's likeness, our Father intends for a married couple to reveal the fruit of the Spirit of Jesus within them through the changes only He can make—especially sacrificial love and respect." (1Peter 4:8)

"What does respect look like in a marriage?" Nate asked, eager to know since he and Jessica had only been married a couple years.

"That's a good question," Jack responded. "I believe the basis to respect begins with Jesus's command in Matthew 7:12: '*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*' When someone takes the time and patience to be considerate of you the way they want you to be toward them, respect begins. Respect then deepens as each person sacrifices more of themselves on behalf of the other. And from respect, the love of Christ is nurtured."

"Could you share some examples?" Jessica asked.

"Well, one that comes to mind," Dee noted, "is taking the time to understand the differences between the genders. While Jack was in the Navy, several studies were conducted concerning the differences between males and females. They found that we're 97% different!" Chuckles followed that statement. "Getting to know these differences and understanding why God made us so unlike can really be a blessing in your marriage. It's almost like mining for gold."

Jack added with a serious tone, "But failure to appreciate the differences between you and your partner can result in years of painful fighting, and that leads to a lack of both respect and peace in your marriage." Everyone nodded, having tasted the sorrow of that pathway.

"We've all recognized over these months that you've encouraged us to get to know each other's spiritual giftings," (1Corinthians 12:1,4-7) Jan smiled appreciatively at the older couple. She turned to her husband, Harry, as she added, "Misunderstanding each other's gifts of the Holy Spirit can also bring a lot of frustration into a marriage."

Jack appreciated her observation. "This is especially true with the gifts of prophecy, exhortation, and discerning spirits." (Romans 12:6-8) With the first two gifts, people think you're being pushy or judgmental. And if you're able to discern spirits, you have a sense when things aren't of God; but because you can't explain it rationally, others doubt you."

"I remember when Dee had us women read one of the Restoration Ministries newsletters entitled, '*You Belong to Me*,'" Keisha observed. "I committed to memory four points they brought up about a godly wife so I could make them a way of life for Jerome's sake: • She seeks to be the best Christ-like helper of her husband; • She seeks to be a public compliment to both Jesus and her husband; • She enjoys the protection of her husband's Godly authority; and • Her husband finds it easy to praise her Godly qualities.'" (1Peter 3:1-6; Proverbs 31:10-31)

**Restoration Ministries International (restorationministries.org)**

The other women listened intently as Keisha spoke, earnest themselves in their desire to please God and their husbands.

During the brief pause that followed, Juan spoke up, somewhat embarrassed. "What about sex in our marriage? I mean, how does that fit in with wanting to be Christ-like together?"

Jack smiled at the young soldier, realizing it took a lot of courage to ask the question. "Remember, God gave intercourse to Adam *before* he and Eve sinned. He meant it as a holy expression of the loving appreciation they have for each other." (Song of Songs 2:10-17)

"That point was also in the *Gospel of the Covenant*," Jerome broke in. "When a man has intercourse with his wife, they're renewing their marriage covenant. That's why the writer of Hebrews could admonish, *'Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure [undefiled], for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.'*" (Hebrews 13:4)

"That's a good point, Jerome," Jack said. "Your love for each other needs to be expressed in ways of *enjoying* each other. This goes not only for intercourse but also to laughing together and doing things together that add joy to your marriage." (Song of Songs 8:6,7)

Holding her baby Riley, Jessica asked, "Would you go over where children fit into God's design for marriage?"

"I'd like to respond to that," Dee replied. "Beginning with Adam and Eve, God wanted mankind to be fruitful and fill the earth." (Genesis 1:28) At the end of the Older Testament He gives us another specific reason for marriage: to raise up children who will love and serve Him. In the words of the prophet, *'Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring.'*" (Malachi 2:15)

Jack added, "Dee and I believe that this command is a bridge going back to why God chose the patriarch Abraham. He's a role model 'father' to us who follow Jesus. Listen to what God says: *'For I have chosen [Abraham], so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just, so that the LORD will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.'*" (Genesis 18:19)

"This is the area you and Dee have been emphasizing," Harry blurted, "the extended spiritual family support of our entire fellowship in raising our children!"

"Exactly!" Jack exclaimed. "And I want to commend all of you in how you've become spiritual aunts and uncles to all the children in our fellowship family."

After a pause Lita broke in softly, "Now that Juan is home, I'd like some insight about being under my husband's protection."

"A husband's protection of his wife involves an intertwined set of biblical principles," Jack began. "It flows from the command, *'Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.'*" (Ephesians 5:25) The first protection a husband provides is to guard his home against those things that would rob it of peace."

Dee added, "This is where our trust in God enables us to trust our husbands when they correct us or exclude things that would rob our homes of peace. Remember, God wants our husbands to help us be free from the curse of Eve, of wanting to rule our homes." (Genesis 3:16; see also December 2003 newsletter, *Develop Christ-likeness—Destroy the Curse of Eve*)

Lita looked puzzled. "I don't understand..."

"Do you remember when we women got together a few weeks ago and talked

about how we have a larger corpus callosum connecting the two sides of our brain?" Dee asked. "Because of our fast thinking processes, without our husband's input we can get into situations that rob our homes of peace. A woman who trusts the God Who gave her to her husband as a suitable helper has no trouble trusting her husband when he has to say 'no' for the good of their peace."

"And the same is true for us husbands," Jack added. "When we trust God that the helper He's given us is suitable for us,<sup>(Genesis 2:18)</sup> then we can trust our wives to give us the counsel we need. That's why we're told, '*Her husband trusts her from his heart, and she will prove a great asset to him.*'"<sup>(Proverbs 31:11,CJB)</sup>

Dee looked around the room. "In light of this trust, I'd like to ask each couple which one of you detects problems in your marriage first?" A show of hands indicated it was about even, with as many men as women being the first to recognize a problem between them.

She went on, "Jack is the first to detect when we have problems, so I've needed to develop a trusting willingness to fully hear him out, and especially be considerate of his feelings when he does speak up. It took us several years before I recognized how I was hurting Jack because he was citing problems I just couldn't see."

Those in the room who were the first to detect tensions in their marriage nodded agreement about the emotional pain of being shut out when they voiced problems.

"Again, you can see where '*doing for others what you'd want done for you*' comes in," Jack asserted. "Connected to this whole topic of hurt feelings, I have one more question. How many of you were raised in homes where it was difficult to share your emotional wounds?" Hands flew up around the room.

Dee jumped in, "How are you all doing *now* in expressing your feelings?"

Everyone admitted that it was an area of struggle for them to share their feelings.

Jack went on, "I gather from what you're indicating that your parents didn't have healthy ways to resolve differences. And that's affecting you today with your spouse and probably with your siblings." Everyone acknowledged the truth of those words.

Harry spoke up. "I can see that if we're ever going to change so that our marriages reflect the increasing character of Jesus, each of us needs to be purposefully sensitive to the emotional pain we cause others, especially our spouse."

"That's right, Harry!" Jack proclaimed. "And the problem is that this culture is weak in expressing feelings, and sterile when it comes to resolving hurt feelings."

Brett asked, "Could you explain that a little more?"

Jack replied, "From the Hebraic viewpoint, personal feelings are part of our dignity. Our feelings represent the strong emotions we attach to particular people and the things we value. But the stoic influence of Hellenism now dominates how people relate to others. So when your spouse, for instance, brings up their hurt feelings, you respond defensively like they're blaming or manipulating you." Everyone acknowledged how they'd each fallen into that insidious trap.

As Dee went to bring out snacks, Jack concluded, "If you'll guide yourself in your marriage and with other people by applying Matthew 7:12, '*In everything, do to others what you'd have them do to you,*' you're summing up everything the Law and the Prophets call for. That's the essence of Biblical love. We'll keep reviewing these foundations until they've become a way of life for all of us."