

Kingdom Living Today

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

2. Confidence in the Spirit of Christ

"I GUIDE YOU IN THE WAY OF WISDOM
AND LEAD YOU ALONG STRAIGHT
PATHS. HERE I AM! I STAND
AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK.
IF ANYONE HEARS MY VOICE AND
OPENS THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN AND
EAT WITH HIM, AND HE WITH ME."

The ride home from meeting with their congregation's pastor found them reflective. As they pulled into the driveway, Lacie commented, "Brett, I'm glad we explained to the pastor and to our friends in the congregation what we're doing here at home. I don't want them to think we're just trying to get away from them."

"I'm glad we did, too, Lacie." A slight frown creased his brow. "It just seems so hard for people who *aren't* searching God's Word themselves to understand how earnestly we want to pursue His Kingdom purpose each and every day.^(1 Thessalonians 2:4) And if we're constantly feeling like we have to take part in all kinds of programs and activities, we don't have much left for either drawing close to our Lord or for each other."^(Matthew 6:33)

She nodded in agreement. "It's hard being misunderstood by others, but I have no doubt we're in God's will in prioritizing Him and how He wants to work in our marriage. I just wish Jeremy and Kristen could have joined us in this journey. She's my best friend!"

No sooner had Lacie spoken when Brett eagerly jumped in. "I don't know if I told you, but I mentioned the Restoration Ministries website to Jeremy and he told me he's going to check it out. He wants to download *The Gospel of the Covenant* so he and Kristen can go through it together. Who knows where this may all lead?"

That perked her up! "It'd be really nice to have other people who want to please God with their lives the way we want to.^(Colossians 1:10) I'm going to keep praying for them!"

He smiled lovingly at his wife. "Well, our Lord has been so gracious to us to reveal through His Spirit how pleased He is that we're actually *applying* the Bible to our lives and not just reading it!^(James 1:22-25) He knows our hearts, and I'm sure there are others he'll bring our way in His timing."

"You're right, Brett," she smiled back. As they got out of the car she added, "While you were at work yesterday I began to look at *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation* article from the website. It really got me thinking about how little we ever hear about *obeying* God, and how our obedience is evidence of our *love* for Him!"^(Nehemiah 1:5)

"You're right, Lacie. All we ever hear about is God's grace, which I'm so thankful for. But we never hear about His holiness and righteousness and justice. Maybe because we've been taught so little about the Older Testament, we've forgotten how

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often we're commanded to *fear* Him."(Psalms 128:1; 2 Corinthians 5:11)

Brett unlocked the door. Lacie paused for a moment then commented, "Since the Older Testament *is* the Hebrew Scriptures(Acts 17:2,3), that was the *only Bible* the Jews had when Jesus was on earth.(2 Timothy 3:15-17) There *was* no Newer Testament! Everything He taught He drew directly from the Hebrew text!"(Luke 24:27)

"It's as if the Church has laid aside the very Bible Jesus used, as though that's irrelevant to Christians!" Brett's voice was tinged with frustration. "Yet throughout His ministry He repeatedly called His own to trust in Him with the same kind of obedience and love that the Older Testament calls for."(Deuteronomy 6:3-6; John 14:21)

Lacie fully agreed. "As we go through this article together, let's make sure we *do* trust Him the way His earliest followers did — with a heart that's ready to obey."

As they hung up their coats Lacie revealed something that had been on her mind for awhile. "Brett, sometimes I think that my 'going forward' during an altar call so long ago has really been meaningless to me. I mean, the pastor just asked if I agreed with some verses he read, and when I said I did, he declared me "saved" in front of the entire congregation that morning. They all stood up and applauded! But I still had the feeling that something wasn't right."

He nodded slowly. "It's the same with me, Lacie. I went forward at a youth rally to 'give my life to Christ' like a lot of my friends did. There was a lot of hype, and I went along with the crowd. But now that we've been reading the Bible together, I realize that no one ever told me I needed to *repent* of my sins — to *turn away* from them so I could turn to my Father for forgiveness in Jesus.(Acts 26:20) The rally speakers just emphasized how loving God is and that He'd accept me just as I am, even if I had no intention of turning away from my sinful actions and attitudes.(but see 1 John 3:7,8) It sure seemed like it didn't matter what my heart was like!"

She shook her head at the folly of it. "I *know* that can't be biblical! Now that we've both intentionally been spending time in God's Word to see our lives from *His* perspective, I realize that neither of us has understood the true Gospel before. But I'm puzzled by something, Brett. Why at *this specific time* do you think we both have this yearning to follow through with whatever God wants us to do?"

He pondered her question a bit as they walked into the living room. "That very thought crossed my mind yesterday as I was driving home from work and praying. It was almost as if God wanted me to know that we weren't alone in our spiritual journey."

"What do you mean, Brett?"

"Well, all of a sudden I was reminded of that older couple we met in the park about two or three months ago. I had the strongest sense that they've been praying for us all this time."(2 Thessalonians. 1:11)

Her face lit at the memory as they sat down together. "We talked with them for hours, and I realized they were the first people we ever met who said they 'followed Jesus.'"(John 10:27;12:26)

"Right!" he laughed. "They never talked about religious things, but described a *way of life* that serves the Lord(1 Peter 1:13-16). Had you ever heard so many testimonies of answered prayers and divine encounters? Those are the first people I think I've ever met who truly live to bring glory to God!"(John 15:7,8)

That brought a warm smile. “And remember after we left them, we both commented how much their love for each other had the aroma of Christ in it!(Proverbs 5:18,19; 2 Corinthians 2:15) And I agree with you that I too sense that they’re praying for us! Especially since they were the ones who encouraged us to get up early to pray together and purpose to apply the Bible to our lives.”(Mark 1:35)

“Well, we sure saw the fruit of that in *their* lives!” he laughed. “And I think the Holy Spirit has answered their prayers as we’ve been searching His Word together each morning these past few months.” A tender hug sealed their decision to keep pressing on.

Brett suddenly chuckled over a thought that had just crossed his mind. “Ever since our time with Jack and Dee, I’ve been spending a lot more time reading my Bible whenever I have a few extra minutes.”

Lacie looked over at him quizzically. “I’ve noticed a Bible in the bathroom but I never got around to asking you why.”

Brett’s sheepish grin turned into laughter. “When you and Dee took a walk around the park by yourselves, Jack told me that he uses bathroom time to read the Bible. When he first started following Jesus he wondered how he could spend more time in the Word of God. So he recommended to me what he came up with: to read the Bible whenever he was answering the call of nature. That’s why I keep a Bible there.”

They both chortled. “Actually, you’re right, Brett. I can think of lots of times when I’m doing nothing while I’m waiting for someone or I’m stuck in traffic. I could be memorizing a verse or reviewing a passage we’d discussed that morning.”(Psalms 119:15)

It was dawning on them how important it was to be opportunistic about searching out God’s Word whenever they could.(2 Timothy 2:15) Brett reached over and grabbed his Bible from the table next to the sofa. Opening to 2 Timothy 3:16,17, he read it aloud slowly so both of them could relish what the Holy Spirit was telling them: “**All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be *thoroughly equipped for every good work.***”

Lacie replied softly, “That’s what I want for us, dear — to be completely prepared through God’s Word for any and every encounter we have!”(1 Peter 3:15)