**VOLUME 65 *March 2012***

**THE FAMILY GOD**

Greetings in the name of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ!

We pray this 65th edition of our Living Logos newsletter finds you blessed and highly favored, abounding in the work of the Lord and being fruitful in every good work!

Well, for the past couple of months we have been talking about the subject of our personal relationship with God…

Two months ago, we began talking about the life of God that is available to all those who have called on the name of the Lord and how that abundant, resurrection life is found only in knowing God. We defined the eternal life that Jesus came to provide us with as not just going to the sweet by and by someday, but as knowing God in the here and now! We, therefore, saw that the gift of eternal life is having a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ and having an intimate relationship with Him. Then, last month, we talked about the steps to returning to our first love- which is the love we have for the Lord in the beginning of our Christian walk. We saw from this not only how we can return to the Lord if our heart has departed from Him, but also what a relationship with God should look like.

You see, this is the gist of what Christianity is all about- personal relationship with God- and this is what God desires above anything else! He is looking for a passionate, loving relationship with His creation! The sad thing is, however, that many Christians do not understand this. Many believers have a much different view of what God wants from us. Let me explain…

**FAMILY- GOD’S IDEA FROM THE BEGINNING**

Many Christians have this view of God as a distant and harsh God who is only concerned about our service for Him. They even believe that, individually, we are little and insignificant to Him. But both of these mindsets are so far from the truth! God created us for a higher purpose than just our works or our service! He created each and every one of us to come into a relationship with Him and He desires this above anything else that we could do for Him. I would describe it like this: **God desires you and I to first become a part of His family and then for us to pursue this close, personal relationship with Him as any family member should have with one another.**

When one studies God’s Word, one thing becomes very apparent: God is a family-oriented God. He created man in His likeness and image, so therefore, these desires we have for relationships (i.e. the love for our husband or wife and the love for our parents or children) are God-instilled and originated from Him. So it should be rather clear that family and relationships have been God’s idea from the beginning. So if God is the Author and Originator of the family, it should be quite obvious that relationships are important to Him.

You see, many of the ways things are in this world are a mirror of the way things are in God’s kingdom. God created things the way they are in this world, minus all the curse and sin that is in it. Therefore, when you consider one of the greatest gifts of life- relationships- we are looking into a big part of God’s heart and into His plan for His creation.

So to use the terminology we use where I am from- God is the ultimate “family guy!” More accurately, you could say that He is the ultimate “family God.” This becomes even clearer if you consider the examples He uses to illustrate the covenants he has made with man over the centuries. And this is exactly what we are going to talk about this month- the two kinds of relationships God uses to describe our new and better covenant with Him. In doing so, we will discover that He is “**the Family God**!” So let’s begin, shall we?

**TWO KINDS OF RELATIONSHIPS**

When one studies the New Testament, we see two predominant relationships that are meant to exemplify our covenant with God- the relationship between a husband and a wife (us playing the role of the bride of Christ) and the relationship between a father and his children (God being our Father and us being called the children of God). These two kinds of relationships are the two most often used analogies which are meant to describe our union with God under this new and better covenant.

So why do you suppose God used these two examples to illustrate our union with Him? It is because, as I just made the point of, God is all about family and relationship! He is a family-oriented Creator- desiring a relationship with His creation!

Now here is a good question- Since these two kinds of relationships are used to describe our relationship with God, do you reckon we could look at these two kinds of natural relationships and learn something about what God desires out of us in regards to our relationship with Him? Absolutely! There is no doubt that we can look into what makes a good and healthy relationship between a parent and their child and between a husband and wife and, therefore, see what would improve the quality of our relationship with God. So let’s look at what makes these two kinds of natural relationships healthy and prosperous and, in turn, learn how we can develop our relationship with God…

**RELATIONSHIP #1- THE FATHER & HIS CHILD**

Let’s begin by looking at the first relationship that we ever experience in life- the relationship between a child and a parent…

What makes a healthy relationship between parents and their children? Well, in order to answer this question, we need to first look at the parent’s role in this relationship…

A parent must desire to spend time with their children- pouring into them the love and instruction that children so desperately need. Now God, being the parent figure in this relationship, absolutely fulfills His role! He desires more to spend time with us than we desire to spend time with Him and He is always ready to draw near to us when we draw near to Him. All He needs is just an invitation.

And why does God desire time spent with us so much? Is it because He feels some kind of responsibility as our Creator? God forbid, no! He wants to spend time pouring into us for the same reason any good parent desires to spend time with their children- because they love them! You see, God loves you so much that He wants to spend time pouring out His love in your life. This is why He desires a relationship with you! This is God’s greatest desire for each and every one of us- to pour out His love in the lives of His children and then to have that love reciprocated back to Him!

So from God’s standpoint in our relationship with Him, He is doing His part! He is the perfect parent who is longing to pour out His love and grace on all of His children. But what about the children’s role? What about the part we have to play in this relationship with God? You see, parents have desires of their children and there are things a child can do to minister to their parents. So let’s look at some of these natural examples of what ministers to a parent’s heart and learn how this can be applied to the relationship we have with our Heavenly Father…

**BLESSING THE LORD**

Did you know that the Bible tells us that we can actually “bless” the Lord? It tells us repeatedly to “bless the Lord”, and while blessing Him is simply another way of describing how we praise Him, it also describes the affect that we have on Him when we praise Him. Yes, there are things we can do in our relationship with our Heavenly Father that ministers to His heart just as a child can do things that bless his or her parents. So if you are a parent, think about some ways that your children can bless you or have blessed you…

One of the primary ways I can think of that our children “bless” us is when our children do or say something good without us having to tell them to. You know, we spend a lot of time instructing our children in how they should act. For example, we have to remind our children to say thank you repeatedly. But what really ministers to us is not when they say thank you because we reminded them to, but when they say it out of a sincere heart and without being told to. In other words, they are doing more than just saying thank you; they are *being* thankful! This means the world to any parent and makes us proud of our children!

Did you know that God is no different? He does not mind instructing us and giving us guidance, but it blesses Him and makes Him proud when we purpose in our own heart to do and say the right things (2 Corinthians 9:7). It is the motives of our heart that God is looking at. He, as any earthly parent, desires for His children to begin to do what is right without being threatened or even reminded. He wants us to do and say what is right because we want to, not because we are told to or are afraid of the consequences if we don’t.

So let’s take this another step further… What does a parent desire from their children in regards to their direct relationship with them? They desire exactly the same… They desire their child’s love- not just acts of love, but they want their genuine love with pure motives. Let me explain... Sometimes children know how to act to get something they want, you know? They know how to come to their parent and hug & kiss them when they want something. But it means the most to the parent when the child comes and hugs & kisses them just because they love them, not because they want something in return. That is when those acts of love truly minister to the parent’s heart.

Again, God wants the same from us… He wants our praise, worship, and thanksgiving- not because we are trying to get something out of Him- but because we are genuinely in awe of how good our Father is and how much He deserves our love! You see, God discerns the thoughts and intentions of our heart and clearly sees the motives of what we are doing (Hebrews 4:12-13). So if we want to make our relationship with God even better, we need a heart like this… We need a heart that does not come to God only when we are experiencing a crisis or when we need something from Him. **We should seek to minister to our Father by seeking and praising Him just as strongly in the times of peace and plenty as we do in the times of loss and lack.** This will bless the Lord!

Think about it… If all your children ever talk to you about is what they want you to buy them and what they want you to do for them, would you consider that a good relationship? Of course not! Sure, you want them to express their needs to you, but if that was the only time they ever communicated with you, wouldn’t that hurt your feelings? What you desire is their pure fellowship! This would include them telling you about their day, them asking you for advice, them telling you how much they love you, etc. That is what blesses a parent!

Likewise, our Heavenly Father desires us to simply communicate with Him from sincere and pure motives- fellowshipping with Him over His Word, sitting at His feet inquiring of Him, conveying our heart to Him, and simply just loving on Him. He wants us to have a relationship with Him that is enveloped in sincerity, not in selfishness.

**RELATIONSHIP #2- THE HUSBAND & HIS BRIDE**

So now that we have briefly discussed a couple of the things that make for a healthy relationship between a parent and their child, let’s spend some extra time looking at the other natural relationship that we see used to describe our new covenant with God- the marriage relationship!

In Ephesians chapter 5, we see one of the most in-depth teachings on the subject of marriage in the Word of God. The Apostle Paul delves into the responsibilities of both the husband and wife in verses 22-33, but I want you to notice that in verse 32 he makes a powerful statement… In this verse, he says that although he was speaking about the natural roles of husbands and wives, he was also speaking of the relationship between Christ and His church.

You see, in many different passages of Scripture, the people of God are likened to a bride and Jesus is likened to the Groom (see Matthew 25:1, 2 Corinthians 11:2,& Revelation 21:9 ). This makes it very clear that this new covenant that we have entered into is considered a marriage between Christ and His church. Therefore, we can conclude that a good and healthy relationship between a husband and wife in many ways mirrors what a good and healthy relationship between Jesus Christ and His bride looks like.

So let’s look at this example of a husband and wife so that we can learn how to have a better relationship with our Divine Groom…

**QUALITY TIME VERSUS QUANTITY OF TIME**

Undoubtedly, the greatest element to developing any healthy relationship is *time*- the time two individuals spend together. This is true especially in a marriage… You see, it is impossible to build a good relationship with your spouse if you never spend any time with them. And, likewise, our relationship with God will never reach its full potential if we never spend time with Him.

But what you might hear a husband and wife say who might be having problems in their marriage is that they do spend plenty of time with each other yet their relationship is still not prospering. But it is not just having someone physically present (or, in God’s case, spiritually present) that makes for a healthy relationship. Both parties need to be engaged- acknowledging each other and being there mentally and emotionally, not just physically.

Now there are two types of time that need to be practiced in a marriage in order to make it a successful relationship: Number one, there is the day in and day out time we spend with our spouse that is important. This is the time that we spend with each other on a daily basis where other people and things might be involved such as children, friends, and household responsibilities. Number two, there is what I call the “special” times with our spouse where we have concentrated one on one time spent with them. We would call these special times- “dates or intimate moments.” Both of these types of time that we spend with our spouse are important- neither being any less significant than the other.

Now the first type of time I want us to focus on are those special times… These dates or intimate occasions that we occasionally make with our loved ones are vital because, even though we spend hours every day with them, we are not always able to give them our undivided attention. This occurs because of the other responsibilities that come with our day in and day out activities and these prohibit us from being able to completely focus on one another. In other words, these special times are not always convenient because of the things that are involved in our daily life. Therefore, it is necessary that whether it is done weekly, bi-weekly, or even monthly, that we have special times where we get alone with our spouse and escape the cares of life in order to focus 100% on them.

Likewise, we need to do the same thing with our Divine Husband… We need to set aside “special” times where we get alone with God to give Him our 100% of our focus and attention. These times can be anything from the time we give Him every day, such as in the mornings or the times we get away for a weekend to spend a couple of days with Him. There is not just one way to do this either; the important thing is that we find the best way for ourselves to do it.

I encourage both of these examples… Make at least a small amount of time everyday for Him- preferably in the morning to get your day started right or at night if that works best for your schedule. Also, make plans periodically to get away with God for a day, weekend, etc. Although we need the daily time we give to Him, we also need these other times of getting away with Him to strengthen our relationship with Him. I like to call both of these special times we set aside for God our “dates with deity.” And what a glorious opportunity this is- to get one on one with our Creator in order to get to know Him better!

But there is something very important we must realize regarding spending one on one time with God- **A relationship cannot be dictated; it has to be developed**. In other words, you cannot make a relationship prosper just by rigid scheduling and self-discipline. While that might be necessary from time to time because of the weakness of our flesh, it is not the best way for a relationship to be maintained and developed. We cannot try and dictate a close relationship by determining that we are going to spend such and such time together because we have to. And in regards to our relationship with God, it is not healthy to always try and make those special times of fellowship with Him. Like I said, it is good when it comes to disciplining ourselves, but in terms of building a relationship, it will not be as profitable. Actually making plans to spend a certain night with Him every week can become very legalistic, and if it becomes a “law” to us, we will become condemned if we fail to live up to it.

You see, **God** **wants our time with Him to be spontaneous and Spirit-prompted**! In other words, He would rather us have a free-flowing relationship with Him, where we do not need to make ourselves spend time with Him. He wants us to enjoy our time spent with Him and not something we just feel like we have to do.

Think about it for a moment… Would you prefer your spouse having to discipline themselves to spend time with you or would you rather him or her just spontaneously spending plenty of time with you just because they wanted to? I guarantee that every one of us would choose the latter option. Why? It is because we want to be in their hearts! You see, we all want to be desired by our spouses. So if they only spend time with us when they make themselves or they make plans to, we can feel somewhat dissatisfied and devalued.

God is not so different… While He definitely appreciates someone who makes the effort to develop a relationship with Him, He too would rather have one who loves Him with all their heart to where their time with Him is not dictated by a clock or a calendar. He wants a people who spend time with Him not because they feel they have to or because of what it will do for them, but because they just love to be with Him. In short, **“God wants us to want to”** just as any husband or wife wants their spouse to want to be with them!

The bottom line is that God wants to capture our hearts. And when He has our heart, those one on one times with Him are so sweet and non-laborious! They are spontaneous and Spirit-filled! When our heart is inclined towards the Lord and our time with God is spontaneous and Spirit empowered, an hour with God might feel like 15 minutes instead of 15 minutes feeling like an hour. This is what those special times with God are supposed to be like- rich and not rushed, peaceful and not pushed, free flowing and not frustrating.

**CONSTANT COMMUNICATION**

Now although it is good to have these special times with our spouse, the vast majority of the time involved in a relationship is not going on dates. This is only a fraction of the time that a husband and wife will spend together. You see, although these date times are wonderful and necessary, relationships are not all about intimate contact and romance. We cannot have intimate moments with our spouse all of the time, can we? The majority of our time spent in one another’s presence is in the other type of time that I described earlier- the times involving other necessary things such as our children, jobs, hobbies, etc.

You see, the downfall of many married couples is that although they go on the occasional “date” and have the occasional “intimate” moments, they do not make the effort to strengthen their relationship with their spouse during the daily affairs of their life. They do not really communicate. They do not touch. They only practice these things when they go on dates and when they have special moments. **But by learning to “practice their presence” during these times where distractions are present is what takes a relationship from being just normal to becoming great!**

Most experts say that the first and foremost key to a healthy marriage relationship is **constant communication**! They say that a marriage relationship is maintained, not by special occasions or date times alone, but through learning to consistently communicate throughout the day in and day out activities of life.

You see, after we begin our new life with our significant other, things tend to become busy and cluttered. Usually, during the time we are married, life begins coming at us real fast. Usually, we are beginning our careers- which take much of our attention and some of our energy. Then we have children- who demand all of our attention and take all of our energy☺. And these distractions of life never stop. So if we are not careful, the time we spent successfully communicating with our spouse either before we were married or soon after we got married, can begin to suffer. This is when we must learn to cultivate a lifestyle of communication with our spouse even when other things are vying for our attention. This is when we must learn to keep those lines of communication open throughout the day for all seven days of the week.

So how does this apply to our covenant relationship with Jesus- the Lover of our Soul? Well, God’s Word instructs us to pray without ceasing, does it not? So when you view this command from the perspective of everything revolving around a personal relationship with God, 1 Thessalonians 5:18 is saying that God desires for us to remain in a place of constant communication with Him! Therefore, we can see that just as constant communication is important in any natural relationship, God apparently thinks that it is just as important in our relationship with Him as well.

You see, so many Christians who actually are successful in practicing communicating with God on a regular basis just talk to God during the special times they set aside for Him like, for instance, first thing in the morning. This is a good practice; do not get me wrong. But the problem is that after that time they spent communicating with Him in the morning, they hang up the phone with Him and do not talk to Him the rest of the day. This is, of course, unless they have an emergency. But, you see, what “praying without ceasing” means is that we do not ever hang up the phone! We need to stay on the line with Him all day long and keep those lines of communication open continuously!

And this constant communication is needful in all relationships. It is not just limited to the marriage relationship, but should be practiced in all aspects of a family. As a matter of fact, all of these things that we have discussed this month that make up a good relationship between both a parent & child and a husband & wife are applicable to making any relationship prosper.

But while many of the things I have said in this edition of the Living Logos apply to the natural relationships of our family, I truly speak concerning a Husband and a Father who passionately loves us. So let’s become that bride that is passionately in love with Groom- Jesus Christ! Let’s become that child that ministers to our Heavenly Father!

What a grand opportunity we have, for how can it be that our God desires to have a relationship with you and I!?! I tell you the truth, He desires this from you more than anything else you could do for Him! He, first of all, desires a personal relationship with you and then He wants for you to introduce others to Him for the same purpose. This is Christianity in its simplest terms- relationship with God!

Selah!

 Victoriously,