

Tribulation versus Triumph

Consider it all joyful, my brethren, whenever you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.(JAM1:2-4) The Greek word *peirasmos*, to describe “trials”, refers to that which examines, tests and proves the character or integrity of something. “Testing” is “*dokimion*” which has a similar idea prove by testing as with gold. *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.*(1PE1:6-7) Suffering is that which proves one’s character and integrity along with both the object and quality of one’s faith. The English word *tribulation* [severe trial] is derived from the Latin word *tribulum* which was a device used for threshing grain in which grain was furiously beaten and thrashed to separate it from the straw and chaff. Triumph stands for being victorious. We can turn our trials into positive experiences if we direct our faith and expectation on the Lord.

Why me? Why do people suffer? Everyone has troubles. We face problems, affliction, suffering and hardship. We all have stories of suffering and they come in many different types. It may be the illness, loss of someone close to you, disappointment in your job or work, financial disasters—sorrow, pain and suffering of all kinds. It can be anything that ranges from something as small and or having to face a lion in the lions’ den as with Daniel. We need strength, endurance and patience. Why does God allow trials, worries, anxieties, difficulties? Should we blame God and turn from Him? Are all trials the result of sin committed by the one who suffers? Can good come from suffering? Is it possible faithfully endure our difficulties? What solutions does the Bible offer to help us endure and overcome our problems, afflictions and hardships? Jesus says, *“I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have many trials. But be of good cheer; because I have overcome the world”*(JOH16:33)

There are several reasons, why people suffer. A) Divine discipline or correction - *“For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He punishes everyone he accepts as a son”*(HEB12:6;REV3:19;PSA119:67) As discipline for sin to bring us back to fellowship through genuine confession. We sometimes suffer because of our own foolishness. We reap what we sow(GAL6:7-9) B) Because of the sin of others - Suffering at the hands of people (persecution, violent treatments) is used of God to fill up the measure of their sins. It shows the evil character of those who persecute others and the justice of God’s judgment when it falls.(1PE2:19-23,1TH2:14-16) C)To resolve angelic conflict between Satan and God. -Job expressly states that Job's suffering was a temptation from Satan(JOB1:1-2:10)Satan hoped that, because he was suffering, Job would turn away from God. D) To learn obedience to the divine plan - God lovingly and faithfully uses suffering to develop personal righteousness, maturity and our walk with Him.(HEB12:5f;1PE1:6) The Lord uses trials to test our faith in the sense of purifying it, to bring it to the surface, so we are forced to put our faith to work. Suffering helps to remove impurities from our lives such as indifference, self trust, false motives, self-centeredness, wrong values and priorities and human defense and escape mechanisms by which we seek to handle our problems that need to be removed like dross in the gold refining process and make us perfect. As a pruning tool to increase fruitfulness.(JOH15:1-7) E) Humbling, to keep pride down, to understand the grace of God. -The Apostle Paul saw his thorn in the flesh as an instrument allowed by God to help him maintain a spirit of humility and dependence on the Lord because of the special revelations he had seen. Suffering is a tool God uses to cause us to exercise faith in the provisions of God’s grace. It is God’s grace in Christ that changes us, manifest the life and character of Christ.(2CO12:7,9;4:8-11;PHI1:19f) F)To develop perseverance and endurance. - Suffering or trials teach us the truth, the truth of learning to “wait on the Lord only”(PSA62:1-8) Suffering a tool that God uses to bring us to Himself so we will respond to Him and His Word. It forces us to turn from trust in our own resources to living by faith in God’s resources. We may suffer persecution because of our faith, i.e., suffering for righteousness sake. *In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted,*(2TI3:12) Suffering is not limited to those who are wicked. This was the theory of Job's friends (JOB4:7-9) G)To demonstrate the power and glory of God - *and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me”*(PSA50:15) God allowed evil because the temporary presence of evil in the universe would result in the greatest glory to His name. Suffering provides opportunity to manifest and magnify the power of God through His servants in order to verify and confirm the messenger and his message. God seeking our good and God seeking His praise are really one and the same pursuit, since our good/joy yields praise to His name. H) To witness for Christ - The divine purpose in trials which involves the gospel.(PHI1:12,21-24) To manifest the character of Christ in the midst of suffering as a testimony to win others to Christ, suffering often opens up doors for ministry. Look at the results of Paul’s response to the trials” *to live is Christ and to die is gain.* The Apostle was undoubtedly continuing to rejoice in the Lord. I) To develop our capacity and sympathy in comforting others who suffers - *For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows.*(2CO1:3-5) J) To teach us lessons in prayer. - *Lord, when they were in trouble and distress; they poured out a prayerful whisper when Your chastening was upon them.*(ISA26:16) So is this present trouble the hand of the Lord in direct rebuke or the promised testing of our faith or are we being had by Satan? We should know, so we can respond accordingly. *If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God!*

The Lord tests the righteous

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By faith Abraham, when God tested him, offered up Isaac a sacrifice.(HEB11:17;PSA11:5) Abraham faced a terrifying test of faith. He responded to God's test by obediently offering up his son Isaac.(GEN22:2) Abraham was moved by the sole desire to please God because he trusted God. Abraham faced the heat with a holy desire to sanctify, or set apart his life for the glory of God. We know that God puts us through testing periods in our lives. In trusting God, Jews call this *kiddush HaShem*, meaning sanctifying God's name. At the binding of Isaac, Abraham surrendered his most prized possession, his son. In doing so his character was tested and made pure. Abraham learned that Isaac belonged solely to God. God will test us and remove our impurities. During times of testing, do not take your eyes off of Him! Remember that after each testing you will shine brighter! because you have been purified by the Refiner's fire. In order to handle suffering we must look ahead to God's purposes and reasons for suffering. This requires faith in God. Without faith God cannot work. Faith is the evidence of things not seen. There is peace in understanding that our faith must be tried and from those trials we are to learn our most precious lessons, so as to enhance our spiritual development. Have a look at the story of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego.(DAN3). They went through the worst trial anybody could go through; the fiery furnace. After heating up the furnace 7 times, the three were bound before thrown into the fire. We know the end of the story and what a "faith" lifter this has been over the ages. After the Lord rescued them they were honored and promoted by the same king who had ordered for them to be burned. The Name of the Lord was glorified amongst all that were present. Daniel had been serving the Lord for a long time, praying three times per day. Then the "law" demanded no prayers. They dragged him to the lions' den, by all means. Daniel in the Lions' den received deliverance at the right time. He was sustained by his faith in the Lord. The Lord rescued him. Daniel did have a definite purpose in that lions' den. In the deepest point of his life the Lord met Daniel. Here we have Joseph, his brothers threw him in the dried up waterhole, sold him. Joseph ended up in Egypt, while innocent in jail... later promoted to King under Pharaoh. Joseph kept the dreams of his youth in his heart. He knew they were of the Lord. Joseph stayed focused on his God. Joseph believed that the Lord was in control, He proved to possess faith by the manner in which he acted. Joseph said to his brethren, "*You thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good.*" Moses was troubled by the Egyptian army on one side and the Red Sea on the other side with no way out; the people were struck with fear. Moses had to think twice how they were going to survive this one. Then the Lord told him to strike the water, and the power of God cleaved the waters. All were delivered just in time when the Red Sea became dry to cross. Job and Old Testament prophets are our examples of suffering.(JER38:6) Within one day's time, Job lost all his wealth and possessions, then all ten of his children were killed. Next he lost even his health. Finally, his wife turned against him. Job 1:22 says that, even after his troubles began, "*in all this Job did not sin*" Yet he remained faithful. *You have heard of the endurance of Job, and have seen what the Lord finally brought about. The Lord is full of compassion and mercy.*(JAM5:11) Stephen, full of faith and power, spoke to the High Priest and all them in the council. They gnashed their teeth, cast Stephen out the city and stoned him. But before that, deliverance was there when Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit looked into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. This was a different kind of Victory, because Stephen suffered for Christ's sake and died as a martyr. Paul suffered great hardship for the Lord and we should share in those sufferings. He endured without falling away.(2TI1:8) *O Lord, remember David and all the hardships he endured.*(PSA132:5) David was a remarkable man. Obedient & patient, he persevered through hardships trusting in God. He relied entirely on God. When he did stumble, he was quick to repent and ask forgiveness and didn't repeat his sins. He took personal responsibility for his actions and didn't try to get out of the consequences. He took the time to learn God's voice and thank God in everything.

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God"(1PE3:18) Jesus endured suffering for our benefit: to help fulfill God's purpose for us. During His ministry Jesus Christ was ridiculed, despised and rejected by the religious leaders of His day. This was a large part of His personal afflictions before His crucifixion. *He is despised and rejected by men a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief"*(ISA53:3;JOH1:11) He endured the full range of human suffering. He took the penalty for our sins upon Himself. After He had triumphed over death through His resurrection.(LUK24:46) How severely did God test the faithfulness of Christ? *"And He was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted by Satan"*(MAR1:13;HEB5:7) Temptation itself is a form of suffering and trial. Jesus Christ resisted and overpowered the desires of the flesh, perfectly resisted all temptations to sin. The agony He suffered at Gethsemane is impossible for us to understand. There He prayed three times to the Father "*His sweat became like great drops of blood*" He was obediently bowing to what He knew was the Father's will. Indeed this is your calling. For Christ suffered for you and left you a personal example, so that you might follow in his footsteps. He was guilty of no sin... Yet when he was insulted he offered no insult in return. When he suffered he made no threats of revenge. He simply committed his cause to the One who judges fairly. The Bible tells us that even Jesus Christ learned through the things He suffered.(HEB5:8-9) All these examples of purpose for suffering show that God will keep His promises to help His people endure faithfully.(HEB12:1-4) *Bear one another's burdens and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ*(GAL6:2)

Trials Are Opportunities

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Man who is born of woman is of few days and full of trouble.(JOB14:1) We see these words when the suffering endured by the one who spoke them. Different people deal with different problems and afflictions and it seems that some suffer more hardships than others do. Troubles concern us, not just because hardship itself is a burden, but also because affliction can lead to spiritual temptations. We may be tempted to feel that our trials justify committing sin. We may become so discouraged that we blame God for our troubles, lose faith in Him or begin to doubt His goodness and mercy. As Job's wife said.(JOB2:9). The word trouble means to produce physical disorder, to put into confused motion or to become mentally agitated, terrify, disquiet, unsettle. The Greek word for troubled is *tarraso*, to describe something that is shaken or thrown into confusion. This same word was used to describe a violent body of water or the uproar of nations. *Do not let your hearts be troubled, trust in God, trust also in me.*(JOH14:1) Jesus saw that there would be situations and circumstances that could shake their trust in God. He is not saying that they would not go through difficulties. Instead, Jesus was telling the disciples to not allow the difficulties to shake their trust in Him or the Father.

What is suffering? Suffering is a struggle. It's going to be a battle all the way. That's why they are called "trials" and "testings" Suffering is a tool God uses to get our attention and to accomplish His purposes in our lives. It is designed to build our trust in the Almighty God, but suffering requires the right response if it is to be successful in accomplishing God's purposes. *Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*(1PE4:19) Suffering forces us to turn from trust in our own resources to living by faith in God's resources. Simply stated, suffering is anything which hurts or irritates. In the design of God, it is also something to make us think in a way that would never occur without the trial. We have the great opportunity to both please and honor our God by our faith and to simultaneously grow in the likeness of Christ. Suffering is painful. It is never easy. Regardless of what we know and how hard we apply the principles, it is going to hurt.(1PE1:6) "distressed" is *lupeo* meaning "to cause pain, sorrow, grief" Pain is a bodily, physical discomfort. It is common to people and it is real and the desire to have it gone. They identify themselves as having pain. This identity affects how they approach the problem of pain. Pain is felt, interpreted and acted upon as the person always carries a plan; to remove it, feel better and the pursuit of the goal. All illness and misery of this life, including pain result from the curse of sin. (ROM 5:12-21, 2CO4:16-18, EZE18:4,20) The ultimate and primary blame for suffering rests on Satan who tempts people to sin and thereby brought sin into the world. The secondary blame rests upon people, ourselves included, who have given into temptation and committed sin that led to suffering. All people suffer as a result of Adam and Eve's sin. God originally placed Adam and Eve in a state of paradise with no problems of any kind. But He warned them of the consequences of sin. When they sinned anyway, He decreed they would endure pain, suffering, hardship, and eventual death as a punishment for sin.(GEN3:16-19) All people since that time have endured these same problems. In particular, because of Adam, all people die.(1CO15:22;HEB9:27) Remember, if you blame God and reject Him because you are suffering, then you are doing exactly what Satan wants you to do. He has defeated you! The only way to defeat Satan and really overcome hardship is to maintain your faithfulness to God in spite of it. Trials may become mirrors of reproof to reveal hidden areas of sin and weakness. The point is, obedience often costs us something and is hard. It can require sacrifice, courage, discipline and faith in the belief that God is good and has our best interests at heart regardless of how things might appear to us. Regardless of the reason God allows suffering into our lives, rarely does it not reveal areas of need, weaknesses, wrong attitudes. God should not be blamed for the existence of suffering. *When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me" For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone*(JAM1:13) Don't rebel against the intentions of the Lord. Don't fight the trials, which life brings. Take them as a challenge, allows the Lord to mold you into His image. He wants you to come through victoriously. Many take trials as bothersome, but they miss an opportunity to see God at work in their lives. Others believe that impossibilities are limiting God, while they forget that the Lord may be preparing them for something very special. Are you willing to allow the Lord to create something lasting in you? Melting you to pure gold! God will test you in order to prove your character. Some of these experiences may be scary, that does not mean you have to fear. Learn to float in Jesus. He has a purpose for your life, but if you don't co-operate you'll never know what His real purpose was, because you would have missed it. Be sure though, that you walk close to the Lord in obedience to His Word, as to recognize His moves and hear His voice. Apostle Paul had learned this after years of trials, God's purpose of His design Christlikeness on what God is doing and which is best.(EPH1:4) This is in part the lesson of the cross.

We suffer because we live in a fallen world where sin reigns in the hearts of men. If we believe that all suffering results from a person's own sin, and if we see good people suffering, we may be tempted or to think God is not keeping His promises. But we have learned that all people suffer, whether or not they are righteous. Faithful Christians of all ages have suffered. The command to endure suffering is just another part of a Christian's life, like the command to study the Bible, pray, worship, etc. We should expect suffering to come, so our faith will not be shaken when it does. *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him*(PHI1:29)

God helps us endure hardships

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Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all.(PS23:19) Read the scriptures have to say about overcoming life of faithful saints(ROM11) Could you divert those trials into triumph? The following questions are designed to help us consider in the day of adversity.(ECC7:14) (1) How am I responding to it? (2) How should I respond to it?(3) Am I learning from it?(4) Does my response demonstrate faith, love for God and for others, Christ-like character, values, commitment, priorities, etc.? (5) How can God use it in my life? Suffering has as its chief purpose the formation of Christ-like character. "We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, proven character;(ROM5:3-4) As a process, it takes time. The results God seeks to accomplish with the trials of life requires time and endurance. Suffering provides opportunity for God's glory, our transformation, testimony, ministry. We need to surrender completely to the Lord, allowing Him to have control in our lives; being obedient to scriptures; crucifying the flesh; and keeping our will to Him.(1JO2:15) Beloved, if you do not know the sweetness of bearing burdens and the joy of overcoming trials then perhaps you need to humble yourself before God. *Cast your burden on the Lord and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be moved (fall, or fail)*(PSA55:22) Choose not to focus on self, on what is around you or on the problem. Choose to look to the solution, the Lord Himself, then you will be able to endure it. Because of His love for His children, He is willing to deliver every circumstance of our lives, including the sins, to work together for our good in Him.(ROM8:28) *My grace is sufficient for you*(2CO12:9-10)

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; who will not allow you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it(1CO10:13) What can we do when trouble comes our way? What is the solution for a troubled heart? Jesus gives the prescription for troubled hearts in a simple and sure manner. The only solution for a troubled heart is trust in God. When you go through the trials and you claim the scriptures and stand on this: *because God has said; I will never leave you, nor forsake you.*(HEB13:5;PSA94:19-22) In moments like these God's Word becomes a Source of Strength, a Resting Place, a Refuge, a Shelter. *not think it strange when we face trials.*(1PE4:12) Take everything up in prayer.(PHI4:6-7) Examine our Christian walks and confess /repent of all known sin (1CO11:31-32) Consider Jesus, know that Christ sympathizes with us in our weakness.(HEB4:14-16) Come unto Jesus and learn from Him. *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*(MAT11:28) Rest our hope patiently in Christ as the anchor for our souls and for the promised justice, healing and understanding.(ROM8:18) Acknowledge the abiding Helper(the Holy Spirit) who is with us.(JOH14:15-18) Acknowledge that when our flesh is weak we can experience even more spiritual strength.(2CO12:7-9) Affirm that when the "outward" person is decaying, the "inward" Christian person is being "renewed" day by day. Remember that whatever afflictions are faced in this lifetime, they are both light and short compared to the Christian's future "eternal weight of glory"(2CO4:16-18) "Rejoice" looking forward to the future glory revealed.(1PE4:13) use the experience of our own sufferings to help comfort and alleviate the sufferings of others.

Then what has God promised? Does He offer anything to help us endure life's hardships? In fact, the strength to endure is the very thing He offers. In Phi 4:13 Paul said: *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."* We all have many opportunities to prove our faith in God's promises, for God often determines that we must suffer for a season that we might be made perfect. Oh, how the true measure of our faith is brought out as we struggle through dark nights of sorrows and pain! When we are tried "so as by fire", we learn to look to Him who has promised, *"When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.*(ISA43:2) The overcoming of temptations and trials builds great confidence in God. Then, should we not rejoice in them? *give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus*(1TH5:18) We should always be thankful for the guiding Hand that leads triumphantly in the confidence of right, even though that Hand at times may lead *"through the valley of the shadow of death"*. If we will only trust at all times, we will be able to say, as the Psalmist David said, *"I will fear no evil, for thou art with me"*. God will bring you through every battle victoriously and make you more than a conqueror. You need never be troubled nor fear defeat as long as you obey God, who directs and sustains all His tried people. Every trial, every problem, affords a glorious opportunity to learn of the high calling to which God calls His own. *"It is good for me that I have been afflicted"*(PSA119:71) The Bible shows that suffering actually accomplishes good in our lives and we can have eternal life when this life is over if we suffer faithfully.(JAM1:12) Let us learn from past experiences what God is like and how we can trust Him in any situation, that God is faithful and True. The Lord wants to hear from us the same as what the 3 Hebrew men said to Nebuchadnezzar when he was about to throw them into the fiery furnace. *But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.*(DAN13:18) Whatever comes your way be thankful with Praises the Lord. *Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial.* The road toward God is narrow, steep and lonely, but the reward is so unspeakably glorious, that you want to suffer anything to gain Him.

Jesus replied: *at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female, '.. and the two will become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate"* (MAT19:4-6) In the wisdom and plan of Almighty God had created the earth and prepared it in every way to be suitable to man. *And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. .. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*(GEN2:22-24) Adam was incomplete so that God could complete him with Eve. Eve was created to fill a unique and special role in creation. She was to be "a helper suitable for him," who could be his companion, receive his love and share his dominion over the earth. God brought her to him and they were placed them in the Garden of Eden. *So God created man in his own image, ..God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth* (GEN1:27,28) We see that God created mankind first of all to be like Him, to reflect His image in creation. The second purpose we see listed here is to rule over creation. Man is positioned as the pinnacle of creation, and is given authority over all the earth. In v.27 we see that it takes both male and female to fulfill God's purposes. Then in v.28 we see the third purpose: They are to reproduce—to be fruitful and multiply (raise children who will also reflect God's image) and "fill" the earth and they were to share in God's work. Some practical principles about relationships we find here are: 1) God created one, Adam, and provided him with one, Eve. that is, there is one woman for one man. 2) that God brought Eve to Adam (it wasn't his job to find a mate); 3) that their relationship necessitated him "leaving" father and mother 4) marriage requires "cleaving" (to be joined by commitment); to each other but also with Creator, striving to fulfill the God given purpose. 5) marriage should result in oneness ("*one flesh*" points to the physical body, but in principle would include all that a person is--mind, emotions, will, etc.) And so God meant for this to be a wonderful, pure, holy union. *And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet(suitable) for him.*(GEN2:18)

Eve was created to help Adam fulfill God's purpose for mankind. But all did not end well in the Garden of Eden. Through attacking Eve's contentment, Satan was able to incite rebellion in mankind and sin entered into the world. Eve led her husband into direct violation of God's revealed will to them, and as a result, mankind was banished from paradise. That sin of Adam had forever after changed (as it were) the "plan of God" The Scriptures explain us that *"Wherefore, as by one man[i.e., Adam] sin entered the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned"*(ROM5:12) So what has God planned for us instead? He gave us "the second Adam", which is Christ, that we might have life everlasting in Him.(JOH3:16) The Second Adam, which is Christ, has paid the price, bought with His own Blood, our freedom from the wages of sin which is death. *"And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam[which is Christ] was made a quickening spirit"*(1CO15:45-47) The first Adam brought death by his sin. The second Adam, which is Christ, brought life by His righteousness. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man is the Lord from Heaven. In Rom 8:1 We are to walk in the Spirit and not according to the flesh, we are certainly not to follow after the example of the first Adam (who was of the flesh), but after the second Adam (who is of the Spirit), which is Christ. We look to Christ as the example set for us in the true and current "plan of God for marriage" And the Marriage is to conform to the model of Christ and the Church. Eph 5:22-25 exhorts profound love with which a husband, following as after the model of Christ Himself, is to so love his wives, as selflessly and sacrificially as Christ Jesus loved for the benefit of His bride, the Church. And wives are therein spiritually called to be in their marriages as though they are the church being unto Christ, joyfully and willfully submissive to their husband, as their husband is supposed to be walking as though he is being as Christ Himself being married to wife. Apostle Paul explained, *"I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ"*(2CO11:2) Marriages are dissolved only when Satan gains control over the life of one or both marriage partners. As long as both partners are committed to the will of God, problems which arise can be resolved.

Marriage is ordained and established by God before sin entered into the world. God implanted the divine design for the home. The home is the basic and most important institution of society. If the home degenerates, the Church and nation will degenerate. The home must be protected and its high standard maintained. "As goes the home so goes the entire social order" The Church is not to be influenced by the world/society but to sacrifice in influencing the world. The family belongs to God who made them; He has designed its nature, determined its purposes and appointed its responsibilities. We are always accountable to God. Homes are to be dedicated to the raising of children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, instructs in righteousness and fear of the Lord and is responsible to serve Him.(EPH6:4)

Now there is an exception to this principle that, "it is not good that the man should be alone" The exception is with the man who has the gift of eunuchs, which is the state of remaining single or unmarried, especially in obedience to religious vows. Some are called by God to renounce marriage and family life, to a life of service in the mission, for the sake of the kingdom of heaven as responsible to God.(MAT19:12) Paul was an example, where this exception exists through the gift of God and of His grace, abstain from marriage cheerfully, consecrate themselves to Christ's work. (1CO7:6-8) And in eternity after the resurrection of the body men will "*neither marry, nor be given in marriage*(MAR12:25)

Planning for and raising children

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Homes should have children! The most intimate & wonderful experience of true love is associated with the conception of children. A primary purpose of marriage is to provide homes into which children can be born and nurtured. Parents share in their children's joys as well as in their disappointments. They sacrifice in providing for their children and thus demonstrate unselfish love. The arrival of the first child requires significant adjustments within the home.

Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. (COL3:20) Without obedience, the entire plan for the child's training is ineffective. A child learns obedience in the home and extends that attitude to relationships outside the home. Children should be taught that God holds the parents responsible for their obedience. If parents fail to teach their children to respect and obey them, the children will likely have little respect for God & His authority. Obedience must be taught. Instruction in obedience requires discipline. It refers to controlling, educating and correcting. Parents are responsible for directing the activities of children-not only telling them what to do but seeing to it that they carry the instructions. Failure to discipline children leads to misbehavior which starts with falsehood and disobedience and progress to petty stealing or other serious crimes. Parental discipline is necessary if the home is to be preserved & the nation is to be given stability. Every parent must face his child's stubborn determination to have his own way. Some parents become frustrated and give up trying to teach their children to obey. Eli, who was the priest of Israel, restrained not his sons and they were in turn a disgrace unto him and an abomination unto God. God's word warns: *He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.* (PRO13:24;23:13-14) Proverb implies that the failure to correct will result in the loss of the son to hell. Parents must set the boundaries of right conduct for their children. Every aspect of life must operate within limits. No one can do as he chooses. There must be rules and regulations. These give children knowledge of what is expected of them and a certain security. When they commit wrong, they expect punishment. They would prefer to be made to do right than to be punished. In setting up rules, children should understand why they are necessary. It should be pointed out to them that when people have no limits they do not always do what is right. (ISA53:6) Consistency is necessary in teaching obedience. Some parents only enforce the rules when they are emotionally disturbed and they may at that time become extreme in the punishment. The father and mother must work together in teaching children to obey and they must agree to rules given. Children must be guided and controlled by parents because children do not have the experience or maturity to know and do what is right. Parents should attempt to channel their determination in the right direction by challenging them rather than threatening them. Teaching a child to be thoughtful and considerate is not easy and requires persistence. Child has to learn responsibility should come with maturity. As the child grows older, he is expected to take task and do them well. He must learn to do things for himself and must experience a feeling of satisfaction and acceptance when he has done a job well. Children are taught to do right and avoid wrong through a systems of rewards & punishment. A child who is denied a privilege because of disobedience will learn that there are consequences for his misdeeds. A parent should look for positive ways of motivating by appreciate them when they do well. A certain amount of fear is necessary to motivate right actions. To avoid punishment, some parents become too permissive. This practice is as dangerous as the other extreme of being overly strict and unreasonable. Punishment that is unfair causes resentment and does not motivate a child to do right. Criticism does not have much value in motivating a child to act. On other hand, a child must understand when he has done wrong. Parents should be prepared to guide them in understanding how to confess their sins and to invite Christ to save them. A child who has come under the conviction of the Holy Spirit will show disturbance during visitation. Parents should pray for their children and be especially aware of opportunities to guide them. The greatest contribution of a parent to a child is to teach him fear, respect, love and submission to God who has revealed Himself in Christ. *"all your children shall be taught by the Lord and obedient to His will, and great shall be the peace of your children.* (ISA54:13-14a, DEUT4:10) When parents neglect their divine commission to teach their children about God and the hearts of many are broken when their children go astray.

Guidance of younger teens: Teens need a different type discipline from that of children. The authoritarian approach of parents over children must give way to reasonable guidance for what they are expected to do during teenage years in order for the young person to mature into an adult who can make his own decisions. Since teenagers must gain some independence, they rebel too strict parental authority. Parents must allow some degree of liberty while continuing to give guidance. Teenager is in the process of remarking his personality in order to fit into a larger society as he moves from the family circle into the larger world. In this transition, he must establish his own identity and autonomy. As the young teens begin to gain independence and develop greater self-reliance in other areas, he questions religious beliefs of childhood. When he begins to compare his beliefs with those of his friends, he may become confused when they differ. Next, he may begin to doubt, if the religious and moral structures of childhood are weak, they may break under the strain of peer influence. Values must be learned at home and are based on religion but information can be given by experts through textbooks. They should also be taught that to abuse or misuse the sexual nature will bring guilt, shame, fear and anxiety. One of the key principles of successful training in obedience is for fathers to avoid provoking their children to wrath. The parents must demonstrate their religious convictions by consistent Christian life.

The Preparation for the Marriage

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The high divorce rate indicates that many young people do not make adequate preparation for marriage. The only claim some young people have to maturity at their marriage is physical maturity. What difficulties many married couples have suffered because they were unprepared for marriage! Since marriage is ordained by God, the Christian home and the church are responsible for preparing young people for marriage. Marriages are not automatically successful. People who achieve success in marriage must work for it as any other endeavor. A person will not be a skilled carpenter unless he is trained. Part of this training comes from the example of parents. In preparation for marriage, young people should have correct view of God's plan and purpose for the home. Young people should understand the realistic and enduring purposes of marriage. They should recognize that mutual benefits require giving on the part of both. First, marriage should provide an intimate and affectionate companionship. Companionship in marriage gives emotional security in addition to sympathetic understanding. Marriage enables each partner to be loved and appreciated. Second, marriage partners complement one another in meeting personal, physical & psychological needs. While the wife plans and prepares the right kind of meal(food), the husband contributes to the comfort of their home life by doing repairs about the house and making improvements(shelter). Consideration, sensitivity and co-operation is a key to developing strong emotional relationships. Third, marriage should provide for the needs of the physical impulses of both. Marriage provides the social, legal and moral sanctions for a wholesome physical relationship. It is holy and right when it is expressed in God's will and purpose. Attitudes of love and happiness between husband and wife promote successful physical relations. Fourth, marriage should add to the happiness fulfillment, and development of each as a result of overcoming hindrances to successful marriage. A successful marriage is a lifetime process and requires many choices and many adjustments before the partners develop a unity of personalities. Each one brings unique qualities which will enrich the life of the other. A successful marriage relationship involves three kinds of Love. Marital love includes physical attraction and affection, but it also involves a commitment to one's partner, daily consideration and service of the companion express agape love. Love that becomes the foundation stone of marriage must be enduring and stable. Persons who have emotional disturbances(inferior or self-centered) have difficulty developing healthy love. Inferiority is not caused by actual limitation of skills and knowledge but rather from an attitude that one allows to develop. Each person is a unique individual with a specific, divinely appointed purpose. Recognizing that one's abilities come from God excludes pride and an attitude of superiority. A mature person is able to analyze a situation objectively rather than responding on the basis of subjective emotional desires. A person who is ruled by his desires reveals immaturity and is not ready for marriage. One who is prepared for marriage should be able to evaluate himself and his partner with some aspect of objectivity. He has learned how to deal with his problems constructively. Otherwise the immature person will be able to see only his side of the issue when conflict arises. Confusion, discouragement, despair are indications of lack of maturity. Failing to face up to problems by running from them indicates immaturity. A good relationship in marriage depends on each partner's accepting himself as he is and accepting his companion for what he or she is. But efforts should be made to overcome weakness and personality and performance. Relationships deteriorate when attitudes are negative and each finds fault with the other because other fails to be like someone else or thinks he ought to be. Accepting one another requires adjustments. Personal preparation for marriage requires that a person be able to see and deal with the difficult experiences in life without blaming his partner. Developing the deepest relationships in marriage requires integrity and trust on the part of each partner. Religious training and a happy family environment are the primary influences in maintaining moral standards. The transgression of God's law brings destruction to the home, heartache to the companions, and wrongdoing to the children. One who heeds the commandment to love his neighbor will apply the same principles to home relationships. A daily devotional life and regular church attendance is essential for satisfactory spiritual growth and personality development. A young person who has found benefit in reading the Bible daily and spending time in prayer will likely continue these activities after marriage. A well-cliché states "that families who pray together stay together". Young people who have established the habit of prayer before marriage will likely bring their problems of adjustment before God. Since young people have not had experience in making marital adjustments and in solving conflicts, they often develop fantasies regarding marriage. Their fantasies leave them disillusioned when their marriages do not progress smoothly. When conflicts intensify, the only alternative they know is separation and divorce. Stubbornness(refusal to communicate & compromise) and selfishness are two of the most common causes for the breakdown of marriage relationship. Beware of marrying in haste. Marriage is for life! Choosing a partner: The father, who head of the house usually initiated the plans for marriage on behalf of his sons. (GEN24:4) When young people face the serious decision of choosing a lifetime mate, they recognize the possibility of human error. Christians should ever attempt marriage without prayer and a thorough search of the Scriptures. And should never, under any circumstances, marry an unsaved person.(2CO6:14) Young people need to know that God's plan for their lives includes the companion with whom they will serve. If God's guidance is requested, He will lead the person in this important matter of choosing a companion. Everyone needs the heavenly guidance that only God can give and doing His will brings a greater happiness than one is able to gain following his own personal desires

They asked Jesus this question: "Can a person divorce one's mate for any cause?" Jesus answered: "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" (MAT19:4) Jesus taught that divorce itself, is contrary to God's will. Further, whoever divorces his wife and marries again commits adultery (unless he does it because guilty of fornication) and whoever marries her who has been divorced also commits adultery. (MAR10:ROM7:2,3) Hence, the divorce and remarriage is wrong and should be avoided. (MAT18:6,7) The vows that take on wedding day, are first to the Lord and then to our mate that we will be with this person until death do we part & we become one in God's eyes. *For the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I hate divorce* (MAL2:14-16) Hebrew word shalach translated "putting away" (divorce) means: a separation or to separate. Marriage is a covenant between a man and his wife. God is a witness to that covenant. If a man violates the covenant, he is dealing unfaithfully with his wife and God will hold him accountable. (EZE16:8) In this marriage covenant, the woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives and the right and obligation to have the physical union only with the companion. (1CO7:39) *Marriage is honorable in all,* (HEB13:4) To have relations with anyone else is "fornication" or "adultery" While marriage was instituted by God, divorce was instituted by man. God only stepped in to regulate it. God doesn't promote divorce, but rather allows it because of man's hardness of heart (stubbornness and perversity) (MAT19:8)

Peter tells us that the husband and wife are "heirs together of the grace of life" (IPE3:7) The word grace suggests the idea of a gift. The term "heirs together" tells us that God has given the privilege of sharing together their precious gift. Each is God's gift to the other as the new partnership is formed. Marriage is to be the closest, most intimate of all human relationships (1CO6:16-17) This relationship results in mutual fellowship, whether in joy or in sorrow. In this God-planned partnership there must be mutual trust and respect between both partners. *A virtuous woman is a crown to her husband* (PR12:4) God considers children begotten in marriage to be a blessing. (PS127:3-5) The husband is called to be the spiritual leader /priest of his home, which requires that he take the initiative in family prayer and worship, leading, directing, helping families to glorify God & further the sanctification of his wife and children. Therefore, they must acknowledge God as Supreme in their lives, dedicated to living a life pleasing to God according to God's ways—living a life in Christ. Jesus always cares for His bride. *If anyone does not provide for his own family, .. is worse than an unbeliever.* (1TI5:8) The wife must be satisfied with what her husband can provide. *"Be content with such things as ye have"* (HEB13:5) The purpose of Christian marriage is to make men & women sanctify/holy; if they achieve that they will certainly be happy. Any interference, any trouble within the marriage is caused by satan and no human has the right to break that bond.

During the past several years, the number of divorces has been increasing. Crumbling marriages/broken homes should be signs of alarm to any nation. The mental, emotional and spiritual health of every society depends on the stability of the home for the future generation of each society gains its training and values primarily from the home. Divorce is the result not the cause of failure. It is caused by a breakdown in character and the failure of a couple to make necessary adjustment for experiencing a satisfactory degree of happiness in life. Divorce often involves couples who did not receive adequate pre-marriage counseling, who have failed to develop compatible interest & values for their marriage. Without common interests & values a couple tends to go in opposite directions. Pastors are often called upon to counsel couples who are experiencing conflict and are contemplating divorce. The church must take a proactive approach, offering counsel to couples in trouble, helping them understand the biblical teaching and the consequences for not following biblical principles. Church must find ways to minister to those with broken lives. To seek divorce is to withhold forgiveness. Christians are commanded to forgive; we are expected to reconcile relationships with those who will repent. Repentance is more than admitting guilt. It is turning from the wrong and taking steps to insure that it doesn't happen again. Reconciliation requires the rebuilding of trust. The goal of marriage counseling is to help the partners work out solution to their problems for the mutual benefit and happiness of each. The most effective solutions for the divorce problem are sufficient preparation for marriage, realism in facing the need for making adjustments in marriage and commitment to God's will in relationship and expresses Christian attitudes. Church must maintain a position which includes both Gods' demands for righteous living and His willingness to forgive.

Couples experiencing conflict often think only of being released from their unhappy marriage. Certain psychological effects begin working before divorce is completed, but the full impact of these effects is not evident until after divorce. Persons who divorce feel guilty for having failed and accuse themselves of things which they might have done. In addition to guilt, the divorcee experiences grief. In death, the surviving partner recognizes that the departure of the loved one is enduring experience, but the divorcee has lost a significant person who is still in existence and many live in the same community. The divorcee experiences loneliness and the loss of self-esteem. The couple probably began life together with plans for building a nice home, having and educating their children and experiencing social acceptance. Divorce completely alters their plans. Children of divorcees are usually caught in the middle, they may love both parents but must be separated from one. Divorce always brings painful consequences, set the stage for future pain for yourself, children feel abandoned and bring disgrace upon the name of Christ. *They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord* (JUD4)

Sanctification and Submission

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Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.(EPH5:25-27) Husbands are to be involved in their wives' sanctification. The example they are to follow is Christ and the church. *will we are sanctified through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*(HEB10:10) Sanctification is changing toward holiness. It is a course of events that produces a purer level of living. Sanctification is effected by the blood of Jesus (HEB13:12) by the Word of God.(JOH17:17) by the Holy Spirit.(ROM15:16) *It is God's will that you should be sanctified.* (1TH4:3) This is God's desire for us as His children, His purpose, that we be involved in this change that is sanctification, in our lives/inner man. Since this the desire of our Father in heaven, it is my desire, too. I must pursue sanctification.

The Lord has taken the responsibility of completing the work of sanctification wholly of body, soul and Spirit.(1TH5:23) In Rom 12.2, the verse that describes transformation toward holiness as "metamorphosis" caterpillar to butterfly. Sanctification is evidence of fruit of the Spirit in the believer's life. The root of the Greek word translated "sanctification" (hagiasmos) is the word translated "Holy" (hagios) 1Th 4:3-7, "sanctification" refers to the completion of the process overcoming a particular sin (sexual immorality). In Heb10:10 and 14, "sanctified" communicates the passing into the Christian life through faith in Christ. There, it means entering the process of changing toward holiness. All the forms of "sanctification" identify, part of the ongoing transformation toward Christlikeness while on earth. Sanctification is a process; it is a work in progress. For us as Christians it is our vocation, our purpose, and our calling. To be pursuing sanctification is to submit our will to the Lord's. Sanctification accurately gives Christians a practical understanding of how to put off sin and put on righteousness.(EPH4:31-32) Our union with Christ has three phases: At justification, sanctification, glorification. We were set apart to be God's through Christ. We stand by grace in our union with Christ. We put the Word into practice to become more like Christ. This, "progressive sanctification" is our occupation until the resurrection of Christ. *Through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,*(1PE1:2) Our union with Christ is complete at the resurrection and their body will be as glorious as that of Jesus. *...without holiness no one will see the Lord.*(HEB12:14)

Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything (EPH5:22-33) Submission is an act of love "speaking the truth in love" And begins with our submission to the Lordship of Christ. We are to be subject to God's authority above all else because He is the Lord. He has also created other authorities to be responsible for us and to rule over us. Each one presents us with an opportunity to honor our Lord by our submission. How are you doing in these aspects of your life? Scripture describe God's will for you in submitting to authority or in exercising it in a godly manner. *Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men:*1PE2:13- 3:7) Peter has instructed believers to submit themselves not only to the governing authorities of the day and to one another, but even to submit to all men. *Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.*(EPH5:21) Every Christian is to submit to others on a variety of levels in a broad range of circumstances and settings. Further, Peter speaks of submission to others should particularly be practiced in times of innocent suffering. Christ brought our submission through His own sacrifice on the cross; we should seek to bring others to submission by faithfully serving them, by God's power and grace. Submission is the key to unity and harmony in human relationships. In the Godhead, in the church, in marriage, and in any relationship, submission is the basis for unity.(PHI2:1-4) *"Obey your leaders and submit to them"*(HEB13:17) to teaching of the word preached by them, and hearkening to it; by receiving it with faith and love, And the guidance of the leader in holiness/truth. Satan's fall and his on-going rebellion is a manifestation of his refusal to submit to God; he likewise tempts men to follow in his footsteps. This same spirit of rebellion is evident in Satan's spokesmen, the false prophets, even to this day:(2PE2:9b-11) Satan abused his power and position, acting independently of God. When Satan tempted Adam & Eve, he sought to get them to act independently of God, seeking what appeared to be their own self-interest in disobedience to God's command(GEN3:1-7) Submission is at the core of man's relationship with God. Man's refusal to submit to God brought about the fall of man, so man's submission to God brings about salvation.(ROM10:9-10) Submission is also at the heart of discipleship. A disciple is a learner and a follower, a student who has submitted himself to his teacher. It is good which God requires of Christians to imitate and follow Christ and to silence some of the accusations of foolish men. (1PE2:15) Submission is the will and command of God. *You must submit for discipline; God is treating you as sons. ..but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness.*(HEB12:5-11) The highest authority is God. And so when political or religious authorities seek to compel us to act contrary to the Word of God, we like Peter must say, *"We must obey God, rather than men"*(ACT4:18-20) Submission is a fundamental ingredient of the believer's spiritual life. Submission is the attitude with which men and women turn to God in faith for eternal salvation. It is also the attitude which underlies servant hood.(PHI2:5-8) And may we, by God's grace, practice true submission from the heart to His glory. *Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.*(JAM4:7)

Put on therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and beloved, with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, patience. (COL3:12) *So be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.* (LUK6:36) Compassion, what is it and what does it mean in your life? What are the characteristics in us that true compassion do we see in our daily lives? Have you felt someone being compassionate towards you? Do you feel compassionate towards others? Finally did your Christian life have anything to do with your feelings of compassion towards others? The word compassion means: (1) a deep awareness and sympathy of the sufferings of another. It has a second definition: (2) the humane quality of understanding the suffering of others & wanting to do something about it. In addition to having the sorrow that is felt for the suffering of others, it is a willingness and an urge to assist them. The word actually means to do something about feeling sorry, to be affected by their situation. It is to enter into one's sorrow and pain. When we feel true compassion, we will be moved inwardly. Having empathy; to have one's heart reach out toward the needs of others. To be compassionate, to pity; to be tender mercy. It means to be tenderhearted; to be sensitive and affectionate, to be moved with tender feelings over the pain and sufferings of others. In Job 6:1-30 we are told how compassion can go beyond words. Job said that his friend Eliphaz's advice was like eating the tasteless white of an egg. This shows us how ill- advised counsel is distasteful when someone is going through a severe trial. Many times they often need compassion more than they need advice. In Mark 2:1-12 we read of the paralytic's need and how it moved his friends to action. The action they took was to bring their friend to Jesus. There are many people who have both physical and spiritual needs you can meet. This can be done by yourself or with others who also are concerned to an action that is compassionate. Pray to become a person of Compassionate love. Seek to be a Good Samaritan: Loving Father, thank you for the compassion which you have shown us. Help us to love others by showing them compassion. Let us not be blind to the needs of others. Move us for those who suffer. Move us to action. Set the captives free. In Jesus' name Amen.

Our Lord God is compassionate. A ray of hope was seen in all of the sin and sorrow surrounding him. *"Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not"* (LAM3:22) God's steadfast love and mercy are greater than any sin in your life, and the Lord Promises forgiveness. We sing a song that contains words that apply here. *"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, His mercies never come to an end.."* Our Lord Jesus Christ used it to help illustrate the attitude that should capture the life of every believer. In the parable of the unforgiving servant, the master had compassion and forgave the servant's debt. (MAT18:27) We see where the prodigal son's father had compassion on him (LUK15:20) The parable of the Good Samaritan who had compassion on the injured traveler (LUK10:33) The Lord had compassion on the crowd. (MAR6:34) There has been so much mercy that God has had upon us. The one thing we need do is to show mercy unto others. Compassion should overflow our hearts for the poor, aged, lost, lonely, hungry, empty, orphaned, diseased, hungry, unclothed and hurting. The clothing of compassion should always be worn by the believer. The believer should reach out and try to help others through their suffering. Compassion is the seat of man's affections. It is moved within the deepest part of a person's being. In Luke 7:13 we read of the widow whose son had died *"and when the Lord saw her, he had compassion and said unto her, Weep not!"* (1) It was "the Lord", the Sovereign Power of the universe. He saw this woman was truly heartbroken. (2) It was "the Lord" who had filled with concern and full of compassion on her who spoke and gave assurance. (3) We see that our Lord God is revealed clearly interested in our affairs. *And He went forward and touched the funeral bier,.. And Jesus gave him back to his mother.* This extends to the entire human race, which He effected eternal deliverance by giving up His own Son to the death of the cross. This was done in order to save us from sin, with its consequences. It is seen in that Jesus Christ died for the sins of all mankind, thereby gaining a new, wider people for Himself, more devoted and more filled with the expression of His own Spirit. The measure of compassionate love/Agape in your heart is the measure of the presence of God in your heart. We are commanded to have compassion. (2CO1:3-4) Your heart is like a dam that the compassionate love of God must pass through, behind you is a mighty river, the Holy Spirit of God. In front of you there is a dry riverbed, people thirsting for love and to know God. When you open one of your gates and let a river of compassion flow toward one of those people, the turbine in your heart generates life energy called Love. For each gate you open, a river flows towards another person. (JOH7:38) *But whosoever has material possessions, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?* (1JO 3:17) It is so easy to turn off the flow of compassion, a little pride, selfishness, envy, unforgiveness, fear; and the dam is closed, compassion is stopped. Compassion must flow. When you stop the river of compassion the whole dam shuts down. Don't let an offence stop the river of life from flowing through you. Therefore, all who are Christians must necessarily cultivate compassion and show mercy. True compassion will have a person deny himself so he can help others in their grim needs and sufferings. People being united can be done by compassion - when a person shows mercy - reaching out to help each other. Christians need to move into the realm of constant praying in compassion all of the time for the members of our Church. This will cause compassion to flow through the people, and God's presence will fill the people's hearts. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit will unite our hearts. When we experience compassionate, joy is a result. *Finally, be you all, live in harmony with one another; be compassionate and humble, love as brethren.* (1PE3:8)