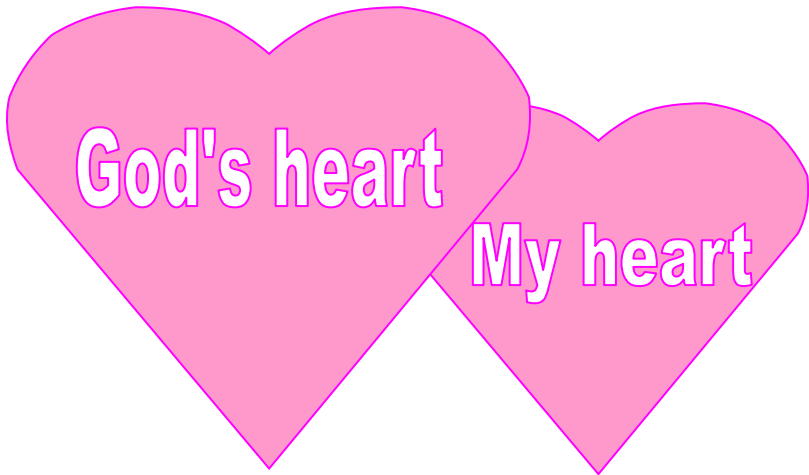


The Most Intimate Relationship



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FORWARD

One of the most profound mysteries, according to the Apostle Paul, is Christ's relationship to the church. (Ephesians 5:32)

- Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. (5:25)
- He is the Head of the church, His body, of which He is the Saviour. (5:23)

Christ-man-woman marriage then is an illustration of this relationship and what Christian marriage ought to be.

The qualities listed in Ephesians 5 are

- Submission/ Respect
- Giving
- Love (appreciating someone for who they are and how God has made them)
- Holiness
- Radiance
- Continuing to feed and care
- Unity

There is absolutely NO getting attitude whatever, but trust and expectancy. Why did God trust His highest creation to demonstrate how He loves? God is a Giver!

There are three big themes/ threads throughout the Bible that lead to this revelation, which comes after Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to indwell His born-again believers.

- God's original ideals thwarted by man's disobedience.

- God’s progressive revelation – “how”, “why” and “to whom”.
- The results of the being one of the “to whom”, and how to work within the original plan so that God’s ideal is realised.

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CHAPTER 1 From the beginning...

FROM THE BEGINNING (Genesis 2:18) God decided that it was not good for man to be alone. Elohim (God the Father, Jesus the first-born of all creation and the Holy Spirit) was a complete unity. They agreed absolutely in all things. Affirmation and agreement are powerful encouragements, but also unity has an invisible creative power. Jesus was stating this when he said “when any two agree on earth about anything it will be done,” and “where two or three come together in my name, there am I.” (Matthew 18:19) These thoughts were on God’s heart and He decided that the team of God/ Adam/ Eve would be an ideal team to rule the earth. (Ecclesiastes 4:12 – a cord of three strands is not easily broken). What an incredible privilege; man as co-ruler and, submitting to God as master with respect and honour, yet, on the earth equal, because God had given His authority and power. (Genesis 1:28)

God says there was no suitable helper/ partner for the man, so He made the woman, to be totally complementary to him. For this reason a man will...be united to his wife and they will become one flesh. (Genesis 2:25) God/ man/ woman – the trinity to work the earth, (Psalm 8:5-8) functioning in sync just as Elohim in heaven. This incredibly powerful alliance obviously upset Satan, because he moved in very quickly. From the following incidents in the Garden of Eden it is very obvious how much hate is in Satan’s heart, because he wanted to be number one.

Even after this failure, God still chose to continue His original plan. He would redeem mankind from the power of Satan eventually, because love always finds a way. The act of marriage – the joining of the man and the woman, was designed to “cement” the relationship. The act of giving and receiving in love would produce children who are a “clean slate”. God had already implanted a desire to worship; some have described it as an empty void in every heart that only God can fill, by the wooing of the Holy Spirit.

And so it was that Abel chose to please God. After he died Seth chose to please God and people of his time began to call on (to proclaim) the name of the Lord. Enoch walked with God and Noah chose to obey God. The Biblical records show that God continued to guide those who wanted a relationship with Him and choose His ways. God says that His eyes range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to Him. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

I love to imagine God’s delight when He first made Adam and Eve and walked with them in the cool of the day. He would have begun to reveal to them His secrets, one at a time, in the same way as parents share the things they have learned through the years. Being a grandparent, I love telling my grandchildren stories about my life. But the secrets that God would have shared would be what we now call the big issues of life. How the world was created. Satan has been propagating his theory to his “children” for centuries. What is out there in the universe? Men long to know so much that they put

loads of money into trying to find out and they let their imaginations run riot with “science fiction”. What about the intricacies of the human body? Some of God’s secrets have been revealed to those who seek in this area, while at the same time Satan has also put out his theories to deceive many.

Because God’s secrets are always **only** by revelation from His heart He can only reveal them to those He can trust – His Spirit to the human spirit. The real disaster of Adam’s and Eve’s betrayal of God by their disobedience to God’s sacred trust was that they wanted knowledge for knowledge’s sake. **God speaks to the heart** and **Satan speaks to the mind**. The danger was that Adam’s heart was desensitised to God’s revelatory knowledge (good) and vulnerable to Satan’s “logic-based” understanding, which might seem good but all “earthly knowledge” comes from the devil (evil).

(James 3:15)

There are, clearly, **two ways of thinking** – the secrets of God and the plans and purposes of the devil.

Cain and Seth demonstrate this proposition. From Cain’s line was the raising of livestock, invention of musical instruments and all kinds of tools and weapons – knowledge in worldly things (qualifications) and for warriors and hunters, but with these abilities, a go-getting spirit which manifested as a murderous spirit. Seth is recorded as proclaiming (calling on) the Name of the Lord. This manifests as believing God, seeking after God and receiving revelation from God.

Down through the ages, as Satan's opinions have been broadcast through "Scientifics", basing their ideas on earthly knowledge, God has revealed His own secrets to those who seek after Him to counteract Satan's lies. God only seeks good for His creation but Satan, who is deadly opposed to God, imitates where it suits him and then twists the truth ever so slightly so people will be deceived. This twist is what the word "wicked" really means – like a candlewick.

Outside of Eden (in the land of Nod – wandering) there were other "people" who were not in the image of God (Genesis 4:14). These were "wonderers", those who do not know the truth and whom Satan could easily use for his purposes. These were the environmental influences for Cain and his descendants. Genesis 6 mentions the sexual perversion which was rife. They were not filled with the Spirit of God but were Satan's puppets – the sons of "god" and the gene pool bred "mighty men". The "Scientifics" are right in their studies of anthropology but they are investigating for Satan's benefit and without revelation from God. Relationship with God has always been through faith – simple trust in what God says – He is right all the time. God had good reason for forbidding Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God's secrets are always by revelation – Spirit to spirit, but "Scientifics" rely on knowledge from experience and tradition and sometimes spurious presumptions, the product of guesswork and man-made theories. These originate from the mind of their master, Satan. The

spirit implanted by those sons of god predisposes us to believe him rather than God.

By God's grace there was a small but steady stream of those who wanted a relationship with God, responding to His wooing, and as they responded there was also a steady increase in God's revelation of Himself to these people.

CHAPTER 2 Progressive revelation – Abraham to Ruth

We have established that God in partnership with a man and a woman is the design to rule the earth and everything in it.

Abraham was next to call on the Name of the Lord. (Genesis 12:8) God began to teach Abraham "married teamwork". (Genesis 12:10-29 and Genesis 17:15&16) Abraham seemed to think that he was God's chosen patriarch without taking Sarah into consideration as the "helper". Thus he had a physical relationship with Hagar which resulted in a son, Ishmael. According to the traditions of the times (which have to a large extent been carried down to this present day) the man plants his "seed", but it doesn't matter in what "ground". This is not the way God planned before the "fall" of man. Jesus makes much of the seed falling on good ground (eg Matthew 13) to produce a crop, yielding 100, 60 or 30 times what was sown. Though this parable is talking about the word of God, it applies to the promises of God too. Those who have ears let them hear (and understand).

The Old Testament continues this partnership theme. There is a strange story about the Lord meeting Moses (Exodus 5:24-26) on the way back to Egypt. The Lord was about to kill him but his wife, Zipporah, circumcised their son very quickly and touched Moses' feet with the blood. Hebrews 9:22 says "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness." The Bible does not specify whether Moses had committed a sin, but Zipporah certainly was his helper on this occasion. As Moses obeyed God and took the responsibilities that God asked of him, Moses came to know God more and more intimately and is recorded as speaking to God personally on Sinai (Exodus 19) and face to face in the tent of meeting (Exodus 33:11) so that his own face shone with the glory of God. (2 Corinthians 3:13 and Exodus 34:29) This inspired Joshua to seek the Lord with the same intensity.

There are two aspects of this learning of partnership with God. As these people who sought God and took steps of faith, God revealed His secrets one at a time, gradually building precept upon precept. (Isaiah 28:10) "Do, do, rule, rule. Do, do, rule, rule" or hear, hear, obey, obey. It seems, in this passage of Scripture that there were two types of teaching, but the same method – that from those who were filled with wine instead of teaching the revelation of God, as true prophets (proclaimers) should. God teaches this way because His chosen people are so slow to learn the laws and principles of His plan.

These are some of the secrets recorded progressively throughout the Old Testament,

- to Adam and Eve, the shedding of blood for the covering of sin and shame (Genesis 3:21)
- to Seth, the power of proclamation (Genesis 4:26)
- to Enoch, the coming flood (he named his son Methuselah, which means “when he dies it will come”) (Genesis 5:21)
- to Noah, seedtime and harvest (Genesis 8:22)
- to Abraham, Jehovah Jireh, supernatural provider (Genesis 22:8 – proclaimed in trust and (Genesis 22:13, 14 – its fulfilment)
- to Jacob, overcoming (as he struggled with God) (Genesis 32:28-30) and the wonder that He saw God’s face and lived. He also remembered the power of proclamation as he prayed for his sons (Genesis 49:1-27), exercising his faith that these prophecies would come to pass.
- to Joseph, the power of the God-given dream and faithfulness and perseverance receive God’s reward.
- to Moses, I AM (God’s personal name) (Exodus 3:14) Healer (Exodus 15:26) and Banner (victory) (Exodus 17:15) God’s presence (glory). (Exodus 33:19)
- to Joshua, faith to see as God sees, to believe God even though others cannot see (Numbers 13:30) and a hunger for the Anointing (Exodus 33:11) . He understood God’s idea of teamwork and unity to achieve God’s purposes. (Exodus 17:10-14)
- to Gideon, Jehovah Shalom, our peace. (Judges 6:24)

This brief summary of accumulative revelation is from the advantage of the written word. It would have to have been passed down from generation to generation by word of mouth before the records were written, but as those who sought after God remembered God’s truth

and put the precepts into practice God's own plan became manifest, demonstrating His wisdom, love and goodness. God made the world and everything in it and when His plan is followed the world functions as it was meant to do. Yet still there is evil apparently triumphing. It is obvious that practising God's revelations reinforced His teaching but if these revelations were not practised, God's people forgot what God had taught and had to be reminded by repetition. (eg Psalms 105&106) These Laws of God gave them the truth but did not empower them to obey. God was always looking for those who desired a personal relationship.

Ruth was probably the last before the kings and prophets who instinctively knew the power of God's presence. She gave up her own country and culture to pursue it and received her reward. This story also demonstrates God's original plan of man/ woman/ God to bring about God's rule on the earth because Ruth demonstrated true submission and Boaz, Godly manhood.

Nevertheless, there is not much evidence that anyone else realised God's original plan for marriage. The cultural suppression of women was too strong. Maybe it was because in the pagan cultures which surrounded God's people, women were cult figures and had too much power. Perhaps at first the leaders of the Jewish people were obliged to guard against this possible problem. Miriam was not a good example and was punished by God (Numbers 12:9-14), even though she had been given a leadership role in prophetic worship. (Exodus 15:1ff)

Deborah also had a leadership role, possibly because Barak would not lead without her support (Judges 4:4-8). She also prophesied that because he would not take the leadership role another woman (Jael) would receive the honours of victory. This story demonstrates that the man/ woman/ God team leads to victory, and their song (Judges 5) gives glory to God.

According to the “appetite” and God’s grace which meets this, God reveals more and more about Himself. All these seekers after God are mentioned in Hebrews 11:32-38 and commended for their faith.

CHAPTER 3 The Kings and their influence

The history of God’s people continues in the story of the kings. The attitudes of God’s people in these times grieved God’s heart, because, although God was their King, they wanted to be like the other nations who were not in covenant with God. Instead of being a “light to the Gentiles”, the pagan nations were their “inspiration”. God is recorded as saying to Samuel “they have rejected me as their king”. (1 Samuel 8:7) God called them “unfaithful Israel”, (Jeremiah 3:6-20) but in the Hebrews roll of honour (11:32) there are two more mentioned by name, Samuel, the first prophet, and David, the king after God’s own heart.

Samuel was dedicated to God by his mother (1 Samuel 1:11), and he listened for God’s voice from a young age, becoming a prophet of

the Lord (1 Samuel 3:20) and also judge (saviour, deliverer). (1 Samuel 7:15)

It is interesting to see that the mothers of many of the kings of Israel are mentioned by name. Jehoshaphat's mother was Azubah. She must have encouraged him to "do right in the eyes of the Lord". (1 Kings 22:43) Joram's mother was Athaliah and he did evil in the eyes of the Lord. (2 Kings 8:26,27) Joash did right. His mother's name was Zibiah. (2 Kings 12:1,2) Amaziah did right. His mother's name was Jehoaddin. (2 Kings 14:2) Azariah did right. His mother was Jecoliah. (2 Kings 15:2) Jotham did right and his mother's name was Jerusha. (2 Kings 15:33,34) Hezekiah did right and his mother's name was Abijah. (2 Kings 18:2,3) However the next two kings mentioned, Manasseh, son of Hephzibah, and Amon, son of Meshullemeth, both did evil in God's sight. No one in those times had revelation of the importance of the teamwork that God had designed from the beginning, although it is obvious that mothers and fathers together influenced their children according to their own values. The trouble was that too many did what was right in their own eyes without any reference to God's will.

David is referred to as a man after God's own heart. Although he committed many sins, including adultery and murder, he sought God's presence and forgiveness and God gave him wonderful revelations and mighty promises. However he, too, never understood God's original plan and David had many wives but also many problems with his children. Only Solomon is recorded as having sought and been granted God's wisdom, but multiple relationships were his downfall.

Hezekiah was a king who sought God during a time of great persecution from Sennacherib. He encouraged the priests and Levites to consecrate themselves and the temple (the representation of the presence of God), to repent and to turn back to God. After their prayer amazing blessings flowed from Heaven and there was great joy and great generosity in giving. (2 Chronicles 30) This is typical of what God will do when we seek His face. All the kings of Israel and Judah were rated good or evil depending on whether they pulled down the high places or worshipped at them to lead those they ruled astray. God described this as spiritual adultery and repenting of this sin is the thrust of the message of most of the Prophets.

CHAPTER 4 King David loved God

David was a man who sought God's presence because he had tasted it. (Psalm 34:8) His poetry and songs are full of revelation and the wisdom of God. As we read them we become aware of this.

Blessed is the man, who does not associate with those who do not want God, but instead delights in God's ways and meditates on them day and night. (Psalm 1)

David prophesies relationship with God through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. (Psalm 2)

David knows God as a shield, understanding the “garment of righteousness”—being clothed with God’s glory. (Psalm 3:3 and Psalm 5:12)

David wants to reflect God’s glory. (Psalm 4:6)

David writes one of his most glorious revelations – God has made man only a little lower than Himself, and crowned him with glory and honour, to rule the earth. (Psalm 8) Jesus demonstrated this again and again by His authority over earthly things such as sickness, demons, storms and a fig tree. Then Jesus authorised His disciples to do the same (John 14:12) in the same power that He did – the power of the Holy Spirit.

David feels frustration at the folly of those who do not seek after God or even believe in Him yet comforts himself that God is present in the company of the righteous. (Psalm 14:5)

David identifies God’s standard for the relationship between God and man to function properly. (Psalm 15) Our God is a consuming fire (Deuteronomy 4:24 and Hebrews 12:29) and His Holiness would burn up all our sin and us with it, if it had not been covered or removed. However His mercy is great to those who seek Him with heart and soul. (Deuteronomy 4:29)

David understands that, apart from God, he has and can do no good thing, but God counsels and instructs him. (Psalm 16:2 & 9)

David understands that he even prays “by the words of God’s lips” – in the power of the Holy Spirit. (Psalm 17:4) In this way the words of David’s mouth and the meditations of his heart would please God. (Psalm 19:14)

David again prophesies things concerning the Messiah, and openly proclaims to brothers, then the great assembly, the ends of the earth and then posterity. He understands the power of proclamation. (Psalm 22) This concept is echoed by Jesus to His disciples “and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)

The favourite poem that David wrote is undoubtedly also the greatest revelation of God’s character and heart. (Psalm 23)

The Lord, the Shepherd (YHWH Rohi) (verse 1)

The Lord, Provider (YHWH Jireh) (verse 1)

The Lord, our Peace (YHWH Shalom) (verse 2)

I AM the WAY, the TRUTH and the LIFE (verse 2 &3)

The Lord, Healer (YHWH Rapha) (verse 3)

The Lord, Righteousness (YHWH Tsidkenu) (verse 3)

I AM the Light of the world (verse 4)

I AM the Resurrection and the Life (verse 4)

I AM the Bread of Life (verse 5)

The Lord, our victory (YHWH Nissi) (verse 5)

The Lord, ever present (YHWH Shammah) (verse 6)

Emanuel, God with us (verse 6)

The really interesting thing is that we can meditate on all these revelations of David’s intimacy with God. I have only looked at a few Psalms and my soul (my mind, will and emotions) has been stirred with the beauty of David’s relationship with God, but this has not created intimacy with God for me. This is because intimacy with God is my spirit to God’s Spirit. Jesus has told us that the time...has

now come when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the worshippers the Father seeks. God is Spirit and His worshippers must worship in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23,24) Jesus also warned that “you can diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you have eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to **Me** to have life.” (John 5:39,40) The written word and the Living Word cannot be separated, and the Bible and revelation by the Spirit of God must be one.

CHAPTER 5 Song of Songs, a love story

Among the poetry of the Bible are the Wisdom books – Proverbs, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs. Although we are not going into Solomon’s relationship with God, Solomon did, for a while, value his relationship with God, so that God also revealed many of His secrets to him. However, the book that really challenged me to begin this book was Song of Songs. This is a very uncomfortable book to read because it reveals the intimacy of the Lover and His Beloved. Yet, such is God’s mercy and grace, He used Solomon, whose experience extended to 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3), to describe God’s desire for intimacy with His own people. He has reintroduced His original plan through Solomon’s folly, because of His promises to David.

Love is expressed through kisses and they create a hunger for intimacy and privacy. Beauty is seen just because of the love, whether it is actual in the sight of others or not. Love also creates interest in the other's interests, even above one's own. Certainly, in Solomon's story, his wives drew him away from God's ways although this is not what God wanted Solomon to do.

Love also energises and refreshes the loved one, because of the desire to bless the other. It is beautiful to have a "mutual admiration society" because it builds confidence and acceptance that translates into acceptance of others outside of the relationship.

Love is very protective and "partnership" love is very exclusive, demanding loyalty to that "partner". Solomon warns several times in his poem not to awaken love until "it so desires". This is a very important revelation for marriage because love is not lust. Love is giving but lust is getting and he has already warned in Proverbs (30:15) that lust is never satisfied.

Love brings such joy and delight in the presence of the loved one. There is a beautiful song written by G. Robinson.

Some of the words are:

***Loved with everlasting love,
Led by grace that love to know,
Spirit, breathing from above
You have taught me it is so.
Oh, this full and perfect peace!
Oh, this rapture so Divine!
In a love which cannot cease,***

I am His and He is mine.

His forever, only His;

Who the Lord and me shall part?

Ah, with what a rest of bliss

Christ can fill the loving heart.

This is the love that relationship with God inspires and Solomon unashamedly wrote down. This love is definitely not what is broadcast in the media and, because young people have not heard the truth they mostly choose what Satan has pushed into “current vogue”.

The Song of Songs goes on into a more playful attitude after the intensity of the initial emotions – a sort of hide-and-seek. “I will search for the one my heart loves”. (Song of Songs 3:2)

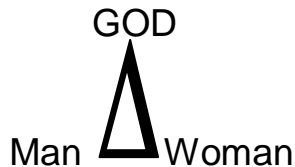
Each reunion is a renewal of the thrill of the first encounter, sometimes even more intense. The Lover conveys His love, bestowing blessing and honour on the Beloved, then the hide-and-seek begins again and the Beloved bestows blessing and honour to the Lover. This seems to build trust that endures even when the other is out of sight, to strengthen the relationship. Again reunion is sweet. This is a very good description of God’s relationship with us, and being filled with the Holy Spirit is akin to the consummation of a marriage, and gives the same joy.

Apart from this book of the Bible, there are not many clues to God’s original plan. God reveals Himself to those who seek Him. He says He will be found by those who seek Him with their whole hearts (Jeremiah 29:13).

The New Testament talks about God's love in a way to challenge us to aspire to God's standard. If God asks us to be like this His love must be like this too. It must be possible, in His strength to attain this standard.

Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy or boast and is not proud. Love is not rude and self-seeking and not easily angered. Love does not keep record of wrongs or delight in evil but does rejoice with the truth. Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, and always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

Love binds every gift of the Holy Spirit together in perfect unity. (Colossians 3:14) This unity is where the blessing of God abides. (Psalm 133) The closer the relationship is with God, the closer the relationship is to the other.



It is only by being born by the Spirit of God, which Jesus says is a must, which enables us to aspire to this love, this intimacy.

CHAPTER 6 The Prophets

After David and Solomon and a few good kings, God's people had gone so far from hearing God's voice any more that God began to give the Prophets the message that was so urgently on His heart.

Isaiah's message is the most positive, because he writes about the coming Saviour who would redeem mankind. It is interesting that this is the first of the Major Prophets, because the book is so full of God's love and longing for His chosen people. When we teach our own children we always seem to start with incentives but stubbornness has to be dealt with more strongly.

At the beginning of Isaiah the prophet appeals to their situation because of their rebellion against God – no soundness, only wounds and bruises. (Isaiah 1:6) The people are honouring God with their lips while their hearts are far from Him. God pleads that they should reason together, so that they may be cleansed from their sins. They have practised the sacrifices as of old but without any faith. Isaiah warns them that they have polluted their worship by offerings to idols and this is spiritual adultery. He tells them of God's longing for them because He loves them. After Isaiah's own encounter with God and his dedication to be God's messenger, God gives him the beautiful message of the Messiah, the Redeemer, and outlines many of the circumstances of His coming and His ministry. It is truly amazing that to this day most of the Jewish people have still not seen the truth when it is so plainly written in the very Scriptures that they were the guardians of. It is only that Apostle Paul explains that Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in. (Romans 11:25)

Jeremiah's message is between 100 and 150 years later and is more urgently telling the Israelites to repent, to turn back to God

because they have broken the covenant, “though I was a husband to them”. (Jeremiah 31:32)

God always called His chosen people into covenant with Himself. This is why marriage is a covenant – a sacred agreement between people and ratified and guaranteed by God. With God in the “threefold cord”, he becomes the strong thread that holds it all together. Yet he regards Himself as the “husband”, the Progenitor and the Provider, the Leader and the “final decision maker”. The “wife” is the valued helper and often the “labourer” who carries out the “husband’s wishes because she is obliged to please her husband (Genesis 3:16) because of the curse. This was not able to be removed until Jesus came.

God sees the Israelites’ rebellion as adultery, but He also promises that, because they are helplessly disobedient He will put His law in their minds and write it on their hearts; that He will forgive their wickedness and remember their sins no more. Reconciliation and redemption is on His mind all the time because this is His beloved family. “I have loved you with an everlasting love...I will build you up again”. (Jeremiah 31:3) It only takes a very cursory reading of the Prophets to understand how great is God’s love for His own. Jeremiah’s message was rejected and he writes a lamentation on God’s behalf because of the hardness of the hearts of his hearers. “Because of the Lord’s great love we are not consumed, for His compassions never fail...they are new every morning.” (Lamentations 3:22) Every day is a new day for us, to God. As we come to Him fresh every day He looks forward to a new start for

us. Yesterday is gone with its troubles and trials and each new day brings hope and victory as we persevere, if we want to develop our relationship with Him. But apparently God's chosen people did not.

Ezekiel's message was at approximately the same time as Jeremiah's. While Jeremiah's was very practical, Ezekiel's was visual and apocalyptic. Many of his visions match the Revelations of the Apostle, John, which demonstrate the continuous work of the Holy Spirit. He presents the picture of the watchman (Ezekiel 33) and warns the false shepherds, while promising on God's behalf, the true Shepherd (Ezekiel 34) which Jesus affirmed as being Himself. (John 10) Ezekiel wrote about God's wonderful plan to remove from us our hearts of stone and give us new hearts which are soft to God, by putting His Holy Spirit **IN** us. (Ezekiel 36) We have been so polluted by sin that our hearts are too corrupted, damaged and broken to be repaired. We need a heart transplant – a pure heart so that we can begin again. This is the essence of being born again, which Jesus says is a “must”. (John 3:6)

Daniel's prophecy is testimony to God's faithfulness when people do desire the relationship with Him. In spite of the difficulties of living among the Godless, God's favour and a man's reverence and obedience brought extraordinary blessings as well as persecution. Revelations came in abundance and with them God's Kingdom was increased. Daniel was a powerful witness, a light to the Gentiles, and many people stood in awe of God because of this. Daniel's prayers were effective and God revealed very important secrets to him because He trusted him, including an apocalyptic vision for the

end times. Everything must be prophesied before it can come to pass because God had decreed that when He created the world in the first place. God says “let it be” and it is. Then He gave His authority to man so that they would do the same. “Surely the Sovereign Lord does nothing without revealing His plan to His servants the Prophets”. (Amos 3:7)

More prophets are called to speak out God’s word. Each has a unique message but the plea of God is “Repent, return to Me.”

Hosea’s message from God is acted out in his own life. Hosea’s wife is adulterous, and his grief is a true picture of God’s own grief at Israel’s adultery. Hosea is told to redeem her and live with her again. (Hosea 3:1,2) Then he preaches to Israel, explaining God’s desires, and beseeching them to return to the Lord for healing and salvation. (Hosea 6) He assures them that God loves them but their sins have resulted in their downfall. (Hosea 14:1)

Joel prophesies the coming of the Holy Spirit...”and everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” (Joel 2:32)

God says through Amos that there is a time coming when the reaper will be overtaken by the ploughman (because the soil is being prepared even as the harvest is coming in) and the planter by the one treading the grapes (because the harvest is processed as it is planted). (Amos 9:13) This is because the new wine will flow from the hills (the Holy Spirit will do a new thing).

Micah chose God’s way...”I am filled with power, with the Spirit of the Lord”. (Micah 3:8) and he prophesies the coming Saviour. (Micah 5:2)

He grasps the enormity of God's mercy and that He will pardon sin and forgive transgression. (Micah 7:18)

Each of the Prophets looks forward to the Day of the Lord with different visions but, although they speak as God gave them the words, they are exercising their faith only. It is Malachi who brings the Old Covenant revelation to God's original theme. "You have broken faith with your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. In flesh and spirit they are His ...because He was seeking Godly offspring...I hate divorce". (Malachi 2:14-16) The threefold unity brings Godly offspring and broken relationship removes the blessing of God. It is not a witness to God's power and love and allows Satan opportunities that he has no right to, often introducing a spirit of violence which takes over the person. An act of divorcement is primarily from God Himself and this leads to marital breakdown, whereas coming to God in repentance and trust, being filled with His Spirit every day, developing our relationship with God also becomes true in the natural.

CHAPTER 7 Old Covenant to New Covenant

It took nearly four thousand years from the time that God first created man in His image so that enough revelation and prophetic speaking had been done for God's world to be ready for His solution to the sin problem which He had promised from the very first act of disobedience. (Genesis 3:15) This is the equivalent of nearly 4 days of

creation. "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years and a thousand years is like a day". (2 Peter 3:8) Everything has to be spoken into being and there was much revelatory knowledge that God wanted to impart. God's timing was perfect but man's cooperation was slow.

There were nearly 400 years when there is no record of God having given more revelation at all. We have a tremendous advantage in the Christian age that the people of God did not have because we have written records in the common language, but in the last 100 years, since the "Enlightenment", people have sought knowledge about God but not, except for a few, sought God's presence and His revelation by the Holy Spirit. People have been "espoused" to the church as an establishment but have not met God personally. This is an assumption that the church is in unity, and "espoused" to the Head of the church, Christ Himself, working in relationship with and obedience to Him, functioning as His body.

This is important because this is the safeguard for the less "presentable" parts of the body to be cared for and even given greater honour. (1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

Under the Old Covenant God did work in and through groups, family and nationally, but it had already been prophesied that each was to be responsible for his/ her own relationship with God. (Jeremiah 33:29) Although the Holy Spirit touched each person, individually, on the Day of Pentecost, and mostly through the New Testament, the church has practised the Old Covenant pattern of coming into the family of God. They seem to have formed this pattern because of

experiences like that of the Philippian Gaoler whose whole family was baptised. (Acts 16:34)

People are generally invited to “church” where they can learn about God but are not given to understand that God wants a personal connection with each seeker. When they indicate that they want to be baptised for church membership it is always in water, which is for repentance – the baptism of John (Acts 19:4) into the name of Jesus, but seldom receive the Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands (Acts 8:17 and Acts 19:6). Since Jesus says you must be born by water and the Spirit (John 3:5) in order to enter the Kingdom of God many new believers are sold short, having the belief but no power to continue, and no realisation of the intimacy that God intends.

Jesus told the woman at the well (John 4:23,24) that the time is coming and now is when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth. His worshippers must worship in Spirit and in truth. The relationship is spirit to Spirit, by the Holy Spirit, not by just the mind (soul) and the communication is the same way as Jesus showed us because He is the truth. (John 14:6) Jesus sent the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth (John 16:13). It is impossible to have a right relationship with God without being filled with the Holy Spirit, new every morning. (Lamentations 3:23)

Jesus began His teaching ministry with the Law of Moses. He wanted His hearers to know that He came to fulfil the Law (Matthew 5:17) The Law was given so that the people would know the “good” way in an evil world, but God knew that it would actually be impossible to keep by our own strength. Apostle Paul goes into

detail about the frustration of trying to keep the Law. (Romans 7) Jesus warns though, that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, we will certainly not enter the Kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20) Jesus goes on to talk about adultery – lust is regarded by God as adultery because the heart is already tuned in to that sin. James explains further. One is tempted when, by his own evil desire he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and sin, when full grown, gives birth to death. (James 1:14,15)

Jesus also talks about divorce because the Jews had a rule that if you did not want your wife any more you could give her a certificate of divorce, which, Jesus says, causes her to become an adulteress. Jesus had such a love for those who had been cast off like that and always ministered with compassion to these. (eg John 8:1-11 and John 4:1-26) He wanted to show that reconciliation and relationship with God was what it was always about. The men of the church have sometimes had this same attitude that the Pharisees had because they do not understand what marriage really represents and major on what the Law says. Apostle Paul says that the letter of the Law kills but the Spirit gives life. (2 Corinthians 3:6) We need to know God's heart in a matter because Jesus has already paid the price for the sin of the whole world. The only sin that is not forgiven is the sin against the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 12:31) This sin is attributing God's work to the devil. Jesus sums up the administration of the Law and the Prophets as "in everything do unto others what you would have them do to you." (Matthew 7:12)

All the gospels record Jesus' own relationship with His Father. From the beginning Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, full of the Holy Spirit and sought to be in the Father's presence. He was twelve years old when he is first recorded as being found "in my Father's house." (Luke 2:49) The Scripture goes on to say that Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men. (Luke 2:52) When He began His public ministry God affirmed Him, "this is my Son whom I love; with Him I am well pleased." (Matthew 3:17) When He was tested in the desert He thought only of His Father's words because He understood where His strength came from. In this He demonstrated what Adam and Eve should have done in the Garden so long ago. **Sin is primarily disloyalty to God, but Jesus was totally loyal to His Father so He was sinless.**

Because of His relationship with His Father He knew the Father's heart and the authority that the Son of the Father had. He could act on the Father's behalf as YHWH Healer or YHWH Righteousness, YHWH Shepherd or YHWH Peace. He said He can only do what He sees His Father doing. (John 5:19) When Jesus healed a paralysed man by telling him that his sins were forgiven the crowd were amazed that God had given such authority to men. (Matthew 9:2-7) They had never been taught because their teachers did not know God's original plan themselves. They did not have a personal relationship with God so they had no revelation, and had to rely instead on the traditions which had been passed down to them by others who were equally ignorant.

The Pharisees were mockers because they felt so threatened by such obvious power, but then they sinned against the Holy Spirit when they accused Jesus of driving out demons by the power of “the prince of demons” (Matthew 9:34). The Holy Spirit is easily quenched by such blasphemy and as He is the one who woos the heart of the sinner to turn to God, they put themselves into a place where they cannot have a relationship with God. A “religious” spirit always does this. Jesus put it this way. “You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see... hear... understand... and turn, and I would heal them.” (Matthew 13:14,15)

Jesus’ prayer life demonstrates that He actively sought the Father’s plan all the time. As Jesus was baptised He was praying and the Holy Spirit came down upon Him in bodily form like a dove. (Luke 3:21) He was led by the Spirit in the desert. (Luke 4:1) He went to a solitary place first thing in the morning. (Luke 4:32) Again He often withdrew to lonely places to pray. (Luke 5:16) Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray and spent the whole night praying to God. (Luke 6:12) This was when He was choosing His twelve Apostles. It is interesting that He consulted His Father about this yet one of the disciples turned out to be a betrayer. This is a great encouragement to us that doing the will of the Father does not always have the result we expect, but we step out in faith because God knows best.

Then there was the occasion when Jesus took Peter, John and James with Him on the mountain where the glory of God

transfigured Him and God again affirmed Him “this is my Son, whom I have chosen, listen to Him.” (Luke 9:35)

Jesus was constantly equipping His disciples, reminding them of the authority and power that He would give them, firstly the twelve (Luke 9:1) and then seventy-two other disciples (Luke 10:1). The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few... apparently not many people were willing to pay the price of separation and holiness, connection to God by the Holy Spirit. But the seventy-two are reported to have returned full of joy. (Luke 10:17) This is the reward for desiring to work in cooperation with the Holy Spirit. Even Jesus is recorded as being full of joy. (Luke 10:23) This must have inspired the disciples because one day when Jesus was praying the disciples asked him to teach them to pray. (Luke 11:1) Perhaps they only knew the Jewish ritual prayers that would have been learned in the synagogue but they wanted to know the source of Jesus’ great power. Churches today teach ritual prayers which people can recite from their minds but not many people are inspired to attend the prayer meeting when people pray from their hearts. Talking to God when it is not a personal love affair is a very scary thing. For a start the Bible says that if sin is cherished in the heart the Lord will not hear. (Psalm 66:18) Unanswered prayer is really discouraging, but in Christ prayer is always answered...yes and amen. (2 Corinthians 1:20)

Jesus spent those three years demonstrating the power of the Holy Spirit to His disciples because He was aware of God’s mighty plan for His church, the “bride” of Christ, which was about to be empowered through the blood of Jesus which would pay the price of

sin, once and for all, so that man could enter freely the throne room of God. (Hebrews 4:16)

CHAPTER 8 The ministry of the church, the Bride of Christ

God has not changed His types and patterns from the first. Prophecy or proclamation precedes everything that God does. He requires “man” to introduce what needs to happen on the earth, because God decreed that man was to rule the earth and everything in it and God must honour His word. (Psalm 138:3) Jesus had taught everything to His disciples (John 17:8) according to His Father’s wishes.

There was final teaching on the coming Holy Spirit, the Counsellor. The Holy Spirit had been working in the world from the beginning, but by the time the disciples were living it is obvious that the teachers did not teach about Him because they did not know Him. Jesus needed to tell the disciples why it was essential that, when He goes, He would not leave them without guidance. Jesus also told them exactly what the Holy Spirit would do when He came. It is not the job of “man” to convict people of guilt and sin, of righteousness and judgment but this is the Holy Spirit’s work. (John 16:8-10) The responsibility of “man” is to love God first and then our neighbour (John 13:35) and to love each other, therefore, no matter what. This sort of love (because God IS love) and faith becomes the power of

God in us to do the works that Jesus did (John 14:12), for God has chosen and appointed us to bear fruit. (John 15:16)

Jesus came to His disciples straight after His resurrection to breathe on them, “receive the Holy Spirit.” (John 20:22) He had made them a promise that He would not leave them without a Counsellor and as soon as it was possible He came to them. He had taught earlier that when a “house” is unoccupied it is vulnerable to evil spirits (Matthew 12:44) and He had just completed His appointed task of “cancelling the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us...disarming the powers and authorities”. (Colossians 2:14,15) This “breathing” was a prophetic proclamation because they still had to wait for the day of Pentecost to receive the manifestation and the power. (Acts 2:1-4) It is interesting to see over and over that when God prophesies something He regards it as done, though faith must wait until fulfilment. In the valley of dry bones Ezekiel was told to prophesy to these bones so that they might live. Then he had to prophesy breath into the bodies so that they could be a mighty army. (Ezekiel 37) Jesus was repeating this act. He was expecting a mighty army, empowered by God’s Spirit to take the world back from Satan and into the Kingdom of God. Brides love to please their husbands!

And so the church was born on the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit gave the people such a hunger for God that the church grew rapidly, and God did wonderful acts through the Apostles and other disciples who wanted to have this intimate relationship with God through the Holy Spirit.

The history of the church is a somewhat sad story. It began so well. Jesus had warned that there would be persecutions and many were faithful even unto death. It has been said that God does not have grandchildren. We are not Christians because our parents are. We must come into a personal relationship with God for ourselves. God decreed this even before Jesus came to set us free. (See Jeremiah 29:30) So we come to the revelation that Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians – the profound mystery – how to have a relationship with Christ like to a marriage.

First there is something that attracts one to the other. Jesus loved us so much that He laid down His life to redeem us from Satan's power. He has taken our sin and imputed to us His righteousness. (2 Corinthians 5:21) We have been cleansed from the stain of sin and made holy in God's sight. The promises of God are written for us to believe – chosen to be holy and blameless, adopted as sons and daughters, redeemed and forgiven, and sealed with the Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 1:4-13) I certainly find this very attractive! But what could He find attractive in me? This is the mystery but so great is His love that He looks at me for my potential in Him. After all He made me with certain gifts, interests and characteristics and He decided that this was "very good", no matter what I might think. It is up to me to believe that He knows best and bend my will to His. Amazingly, this changes me into what He has made me to be, by submission to His power.

The next step is commitment to each other. A formal commitment is legally binding and is a safeguard, both physically and spiritually.

Modern law has weakened God's original plan because it is based on "earthly wisdom". In our ministry we always ask the person to pray aloud to give God the right to come into their lives through the Holy Spirit. It is important for the new believer to be "espoused" to Jesus before being attached to a church, so that they know their "first love". (Revelation 2:4) Churches may change but Jesus does not.

A marriage is always consummated by the man coming in to the woman. This is truly a picture of the overwhelming of the Holy Spirit – the Spiritual marriage. Many people think that when they have received the Holy Spirit they have "got Him for life" and there is no reason to ask Him in again, but I do not know of many marriages where they consummate the marriage on their wedding night and never have the same delight again. If Apostle Paul's revelation is from God then we should want to be filled often with/ by the Holy Spirit to have the same joy or even greater. This joy and fulfilment gives us that radiance that newly married people usually have. King David expressed his joy "those who look to Him are radiant". (Psalm 34:5)

After the honeymoon there is an adjustment period when a couple develop trust in each other. At first God puts a "hedge" around us, but then He lets us loose to see if we choose to be loyal to Him. (Hosea 2:6) He feeds and cares for us as is the responsibility of the husband.

The wife's responsibility is to submit to her husband and to be his helper – to honour him and bring him honour. This is what God hopes for from us. Solomon wrote an eloquent poem about an ideal wife. It is good to think that we can meet this expectation because

of our love for Jesus. (Proverbs 31) Secondly the wife is the mother of the husband's children – the “clean slate” for God's continuing work. Evangelism, bringing new babies into the Kingdom of God, brings God such great joy that there is great rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner who repents. (Luke 15:7) There is a beautiful thought (Psalm 45:16) where the Psalmist sees the bride of the King whose sons will be princes throughout the land. It seems that it is God's will to increase the anointing in our offspring, physical or spiritual.

Apostle Paul has a few more things to say about marriage. (1 Corinthians 6:12-7:40) Even though he was probably not married himself he was asked questions which he had to seek the Lord about. He does understand the power in being “one flesh”, united with the Lord and one with Him in Spirit or choosing an adulterous liaison which dishonours “the Temple of the Holy Spirit.” He writes of the sacredness of a union which God has ordained, which should not be entered into lightly.

He also has great words of comfort for those for whom the union has become unworkable. If the unbelieving partner leaves, let him/her do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances for God has called us to live in peace. Even though Jesus has said that God hates divorce, divorce is NOT the unforgivable sin and God promises that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9) The price is paid. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our sins from us. (Psalm 103:12) This means a new start. This is what happened in the time of Ezra

when Israel was challenged to put away their “foreign” wives. (Ezra 10:11)

God has always been merciful to those backsliders who return to Him, and there is no sin which is “worse” than another. Reconciliation and relationship are always on God’s agenda, because “while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”. (Romans 5:8)

CHAPTER 9 The way forward until the day of Christ

These thoughts take us back to the Prophets, and God’s original longing for His precious chosen people, those under the Old Covenant and those who were chosen before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight. (Ephesians 1:4) According to Jesus’ prayer (John 17) we are all one.

Being holy and blameless in His sight can only happen through our agreement with the “Divine Exchange” program which is “our sin for His righteousness”. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21) This is really the terms of the Marriage Covenant with God which He has instituted. We take the name of our “husband”, the Christ. He has also decreed that children are a heritage from the Lord, a reward from Him. (Psalm 127:3) He promises to bless our children and that they will be a blessing. He does not distinguish between adopted children and natural, either those whom we regard as children because they have come into the family of God through us. Family is family!

Above all this a family represents unity, a completeness and strength. This is what God wants the world to see – Christ in us, the hope of glory. (Colossians 1:27)

I would like to recap on the list of blessings that is promised in the spiritual marriage of the church to Jesus, and to the individual within this “church”.

Submission/ respect. The extraordinary thing is that God respects us as much as we respect Him because He gave us the authority to rule, and He expects us to practise for the day is coming when we will rule with Him.

Giving. God is such a giver and yet He, like us, hopes for response. It has been said that we can never outgive God. For every gift we give Him, He promises 30, 60 or 100 times in return. Jesus tells the leper who came back to thank Him that He had been made “whole”. He was not just healed with a few scars remaining. The weakness in his body was gone forever!

Love. “We love because He first loved us”. (1 John 4:10) God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us. (Romans 5:8) In our ministry we ask Jesus to come into our hearts every time we meet because we say that if we come to God as if we are empty, He pours out the full measure so that we overflow with love for those we meet. God honours this prayer for us all the time.

Holiness. The Bible says that, without holiness no one will see the Lord. We are warned to put to death whatever belongs to our earthly nature and lists some examples. (Colossians 3:5-10) “Live by the

Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”
(Galatians 5:16) Until we are espoused to Christ by the Spirit of God we cannot hope to have the strength to carry out these ideals.

Radiance. We are ministers of the new covenant, living letters written...with the Spirit of God, read by everybody. (2 Corinthians 3:2,3&6) This ministry of the Spirit is even more glorious and we are being transformed with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18) It is interesting that the saints of old are portrayed in art as having haloes. In those times God must have given them such a radiance.

Continuing to feed and care. God has made a mighty promise. “He who has begun a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 1:6) Apostle Paul goes on to pray that “your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness...” (verse 9&10) We can “approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)

Unity. Jesus prayed “that they may be one even as we are one.” (John 17:11) Apostle Paul challenged the Philippians, “if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from His love, if any fellowship with His Spirit...be like-minded, having the same love, being one in Spirit and purpose.” (Philippians 2:1&2)

What are **the results** of being one of the “to whom God has given His Holy Spirit”? We are destined to be overcomers. Jesus has

disarmed the authorities and powers, triumphing over them by the cross (Colossians 2:15) and we are given the responsibility to “lay hold of it.” (Matthew 11:12) This is where the threefold cord is necessary. This is the “how” that God has designed.

There is a day coming very soon when the wedding of the Lamb has come and the bride is ready with beautiful clothes (the garments of righteous acts). We will be there if we have been espoused to the Lamb before the time. Hallelujah! (Revelation 19:6&7)