

FELLOWSHIP AS SONS AND DAUGHTERS

BIBLE STUDY BY JAMIE MCNAB

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We have been speaking the last couple of weeks about just who do we think we are ... who we really are in God's eyes. We often see ourselves through purely human eyes ... male/female ... young/old ... British/European/American ... optimist/pessimist ... success/failure ... superior/inferior. Maybe you see yourself as a sinner.

Most of our views are developed by accident ... the influence of parents ... family ... school ... friends ... Churches and congregations.

But we are more than just struggling human beings ... just sinners ... living lives of quiet desperation.

So ... we looked at what God's Word says about us ... we are Sons/Daughters of God ... Heirs ... Friends ... New Creation ... Redeemed ... Beloved of God ... Righteous. That's how He sees us.

I'd like to develop one of these areas a little bit more. Possibly the most important area ... one if we get this ... it should really help us in how we live our Christian lives.

The first area we looked at was that we are ... really ... truly are ... Sons and Daughters of God. Which means (of course) ... He's Our Father. Your Father. My Father.

You may remember I John 3:1?

So. Right here and now ... literally today ... you are a Son or Daughter. You have a Father in Heaven ... whom we can call "Abba".

But does it really seem like it? Is it "real"? Does that truth excite us? Make us feel warm and valued? Does that understanding help us face any situation with confidence?

Or ... is it just a technical doctrine? Just one of many pieces of Bible knowledge we've picked up? Ho hum. So what!

Do we really know God Our Father? Closely? Do we share intimate fellowship with Him? Or ... just a doctrine.

Most of us are very familiar with our spouses ... parents ... children ... maybe good neighbours ... know them very personally. Some people are very familiar with TV celebrities. But even after 10 or 20 or 50 years in Church ... when it comes to God The Father ... He seems a very distant or remote being?

Some may have a very close relationship ... enjoy and appreciate the Father/Son or Father/Daughter intimacy? But if not ... it is something we can work on. Start by reminding ourselves of some key scriptures. Again ... what the Word says.

John 17:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, (we are sons and daughters too)

2 as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

3 And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent. (to be acquainted personally)

The Greek text here is in the Present Active Tense: "should keep on knowing You". This should be one of our key objectives.

To know in the sense of personal acquaintance. Not merely to know there is a God ... but to really know Him as Father ... Friend.

1 John 3:1-3 (NKJV)

1 Behold (*Look! See!*) what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, ***that we should be called children of God!***

Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.

2 Beloved, ***now we are children of God***; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.

3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

We are children of God ... right here and now. The Father loves us.

We are not just robots. Not students cramming for a Religious Education exam. For 50 points ... name 7 churches of Revelation 2 and 3. For 100 points ... name all 12 Apostles.

This is an incredible relationship. It's family. We have a Father in Heaven. When we study The Word ... pray ... fast ... is that just "ticking a box" or ... does it bring us nearer to Him ... to The Father? Are these tools helping us to get better acquainted with The Father and His Son?

1 John 1:1-7 (NKJV)

1 ***That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life— (talking of the Lord Jesus)***

2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—

3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, **that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.** (Fellowship = Greek: Koinonia meaning ... intimacy/sharing/intercourse)

4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

This isn't "Book Knowledge". It's a personal sharing of time ... of interests ... hopes and dreams ... concerns. How's your fellowship with The Lord Jesus ... the Father ... your brethren?

Matthew 7:21-23 (NKJV)

21 "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven.

22 Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?'

23 And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'

"I never knew you". Jesus disowns them! Their lives made it evident ... they may have talked a good talk ... several ACTIONS AND WORKS ... but WHERE was the PERSONAL CONNECTION? Missing.

We may think it's difficult to come to know The Father? What is He like? What does He do? He does seem a bit distant. How am I supposed to know The Father? There is a shortcut to knowing The Father.

We have a shortcut ... THE LORD JESUS. If we can follow Jesus' story ... what He did ... what He said ... His miracles ... His instructions ... His warnings ... His compassion ... His love ... they show us EXACTLY WHAT THE FATHER IS LIKE.

John 14:5-9 (NKJV)

5 Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?"

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.

7 "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him."

8 Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us."

9 Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?"

Have you not KNOWN ME? If you have seen Me ... you have seen The Father. JESUS IS THE IMAGE OF THE FATHER. He didn't come to oppose His Father. Some people think that Jesus came ... to do away with the "hard, vindictive" God of The Old Testament ... to replace Him with a God of Grace and meekness. NO! They are the SAME GOD! Plus ... what we see recorded about Jesus ... reveals The Father!

John 14:30-31 (NKJV)

30 I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me.

31 But that the world may know that I love the Father, and **as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do**. Arise, let us go from here.

(AMPLIFIED) "... I do only what the Father has instructed Me to do".

Jesus wasn't out on a frolic of His own. All of Jesus' miracles ... all are 100% in keeping with the will of the Father. Jesus was doing what He was instructed to do. If The Father had come down instead of Jesus ---> He would have done the SAME!

John 12:44-50 (NKJV)

44 Then Jesus cried out and said, "**He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.**

45 **And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.**

46 I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

47 And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world.

48 He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day.

49 **For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.**

50 And I know that His command is everlasting life. **Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."**

John 12:49 (NASB)

49 For I did not speak on My own initiative, but *the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak.*

Jesus accurately represented The Father. If you see Jesus ... then in essence ... you see The Father. We can learn much about The Father by watching Jesus.

We've probably all got ideas as to what The Father is like. We've all heard the stories. Many are probably very suspect? Hard. Judgmental ... looking for opportunities to correct and punish? Very unlike THE MEEK, FRIENDLY, GENTLE JESUS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Wrong!! We look at Jesus ... to know what The Father is like.

Very patient with sinners. They were attracted to Jesus ... His message ... the "hope" that it gave them. Sinners didn't avoid Him ... scared or intimidated. Unlike some ministers do to their flocks.

Matthew 9:9-13 (NKJV)

9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

10 *Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples.*

11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, *Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.*

13 But go and learn what this means: **'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.'** ***For I did not come to call the self-righteous, but sinners, to repentance.***"

Verse 10 ... They knew they were sinners (everybody did). But Jesus didn't turn His nose up at sinners ... didn't revile them ... castigate. He wanted them to come along ... to hear the words ... and hopefully respond and escape their condition. Jesus isn't in the business of running off and berating sinners. Jesus and The Father are patient and longsuffering ... including with us.

To clarify here. In no way did Jesus (or The Father) condone sin. Sin is destructive ... harmful ... don't do it! But we're all flawed ... we all yield to the flesh too often. When we sin ... we should run to God ... not from Him.

We can see Jesus' attitude to sinner(s) in the story of the woman taken in adultery. Remember Jesus perfectly represents The Father.

John 8:1-11 (NKJV)

1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

2 Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,

4 they said to Him, **"Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.**

5 Now **Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"**

6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, *"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."*

8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Lord."

And Jesus said to her, *"Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."*

Romans chapter 2 tells us that the goodness of God leads to repentance. There was a fair chance that this woman recognised the "close call" ... and responded to Jesus' mercy and kindness ... and made changes. Jesus' approach shows The Father's will ... The Father's method ... extend mercy ... be patient ... encourage ... yet no leeway to sin! Don't sin!

Another illustration.

John 5:1-15 (NKJV)

1 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.

3 In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralysed, waiting for the moving of the water.

4 For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

5 Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

7 The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

8 Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk."

9 And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

And that day was the Sabbath.

10 The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

11 He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.' "

12 Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"

13 But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.

14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. *Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.*"

15 The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

We can always approach God even in our weaknesses and occasional sins. Jesus didn't run away (or avoid ... as the Pharisees would ... Righteous people must avoid sinners!). God is not waiting with a big stick to "get us" when we sin.

Luke 7:36-50 (NKJV)

36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat.

37 *And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil,*

38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil.

39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."

40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."

So he said, "Teacher, say it."

41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more."

And He said to him, "You have rightly judged."

44 Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

45 You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.

46 You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

47 *Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much.* But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little."

48 Then He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

49 And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"

50 Then He said to the woman, **"Your faith has saved you. Go in peace."**

This lady was a notorious sinner ... well-known public sinner. She wasn't intimidated! Even though she knew her own heart. She came to Jesus ... the One that represents The Father. Note: her tears fell first. She was forgiven! And told to "go in peace!"

Approachable ... easy to entreat ... quick to forgive ... not turning away in disgust. Importantly ... He also displays the heart of The Father.

The Father sent Jesus to these people ... to help ... to deliver ... protect ... to save. And it is the same for you and me.

There is no way that you and I could earn the right to approach God in an intimate way. If we dwell on our short-comings ... failures ... sins ... it would be easy to hang back. Be uncomfortable ... be embarrassed ... reluctant. "He'll be angry ... He's probably fed up by now of my failures ... He'll have run out of patience by now". But that's not what we see in the scriptures.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (NKJV)

14 **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.**

15 **For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.**

16 **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.**

Hebrews 4:15 (NLT)

15 This High Priest of ours understands our weaknesses, for he faced all of the same testings we do, yet he did not sin.

Jesus fully understands. He saw people close up. He was tempted Himself... in every way!

We don't need to hide our weaknesses. He's not waiting to reprimand us ... to beat us up. Rather ... there is a "Place of Grace" ... and there's an open invitation to get there ... to come to that.

Hebrews 4:16 (AMPLIFIED)

16 Let us then fearlessly and confidently and boldly draw near to the throne of grace ... that we may receive mercy ... and find grace to help in good time for every need [appropriate help and well-timed help, coming just when we need it].

But ... we do have to respond to the invitation ... we do have to draw near.

We've seen already that sinners had no problem coming to Jesus when He was on the earth. There is no problem today.

Jesus and The Father. "Abba". A real being with interests ... purposes ... desires. Likewise ... Jesus ... is our brother. The main objective in our lives isn't about acquiring technical knowledge of doctrine ... it's about a close relationship ... fellowship ... with the two greatest individuals in the Universe!

We really need to see ourselves as Sons/Daughters ... Family ... in a relationship ... not just people who are studying doctrines and following rules and regulations ... some sort of performance-based life-less religion.

2 Corinthians 11:2 (NKJV)

2 For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. (Fairly intimate!)

2 Corinthians 11:2 (Voice)

2 ... I have pledged your hand in marriage and promised to present you as a pure virgin to the One who would be your husband, the Anointed One.

I assume that The Father will conduct the ceremony? But He won't be marrying Jesus to a "statement of beliefs" ... or "list of doctrines". This is going to be an extremely close relationship of real people ... to a real God Being. (So ... not only are we Sons/Daughters ... Heirs ... Friends) ... but also The Betrothed ... to The Lord of The Universe!

The Father ... Our Father ... Abba ... is looking forward to this day ... a big event. So should we.

Revelation 19:5-9 (NKJV)

5 Then a voice came from the throne, saying, "Praise our God, all you His servants and those who fear Him, both small and great!"

6 And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns!

7 Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

8 And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.

9 Then he said to me, "**Write: 'Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!'**" And he said to me, "These are the true sayings of God."

Christ is not marrying a bunch of doctrines ... or an incorporated church body with tax-exempt status. He's coming to marry real people.

We are real people ... to marry a real Being ... an intimate relationship ... Eternal Fellowship.

Our study ... prayer ... meditation ... should be about enhancing our fellowship.

In practice ... in our world today ... it is common for fellowship to be based around a meal ...eating ... people go out to a restaurant together ... good food ... maybe a glass of wine ... helps people to bond ... to maintain their fellowship (word "companion" derives from Latin ... Con Panis ... "with bread").

A similar thought is brought out in:

Revelation 3:20-22 (NKJV)

20 **Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.** (It seems strange that Jesus is standing outside this church)

21 **To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.**

22 "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." ' "

Revelation 3:20 (MSG)

20 "... If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and *sit down to supper with you*.

A picture of the Lord Jesus sitting down ... enjoying a meal with His friends ... and in reality ... His brethren ... Co-Heirs ... they are His Betrothed. It pictures fellowship ... Koinonia ... sharing a meal together ... as friends do.

We can see in this verse Jesus wants/desires to get close to us. Share life together.

John 15:12-15 (NKJV)

12 **This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.**

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

14 ***You are My friends*** if you do whatever I command you.

15 No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but ***I have called you friends***, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.

Friends are special. Not everyone is Jesus' friend. Most aren't. And Jesus is a GOOD FRIEND ... one who "sticketh closer than a brother".

Finally.

John 17:3 (NKJV)

3 **And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.** (*Jesus talking to His Father ... His last few thoughts*)

This should be the core pursuit in all of our lives ... getting better acquainted ... spending better time in fellowship (better not to think:

"30 minutes prayer ... 30 minutes Bible Study") ... prayer ... study ... reflection ... quiet time ... these are a means to an end ... to know The Father and Jesus better ... not just ends in themselves.

If it's not helping us get better acquainted ... maybe be better to replace it?

So who are we? All things we've looked at already ... but being a Son/Daughter of The Living God ... and having intimate personal fellowship with Him and The Lord Jesus ... is something we need to make really real in our lives.

As we said several times last week ... it may require us to renew our minds. It takes time and effort! But ultimately ... should be worth it!