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Wow, I Want What They Have!

sanctified marriage: heavens above “for better or worse”

I am an Invincible Child of God

no one can hurt me

Prison to Life Abundant

incarcerated or not, we are born prisoners to sin

Pastor K. Bruce Brown

Dedicated to our Abba Father

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## S5M3: Words of Our Relationship

### Relationship

The starting point with our Abba Father should be building our relationship with him and doing our job in the Family business. Chapter 7 covers that in detail. But what kind of relationship is it? The words used reveal their nature, and we need to be clear in our understanding of those words. ELB strives to keep us focused in the rearview mirror when our life should point to the future. There is no point in a relationship focused on the past.

Another essential feature is the covenant nature of our relationship. ELB conflates and confuses salvation and blessings; the two are separate covenants. We cannot earn redemption, but we step into a quid pro quo once redeemed. Deuteronomy 28:1-2, "*And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of Yahweh thy God, to observe to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that Yahweh thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come upon thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of Yahweh thy God*."

That covenant has not changed. We earn blessings by doing our job in the Family business. If you doubt, Revelation 22:12, “*Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is*.”

Mathew 26:26-27, "*And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many unto remission of sins.*" We call Holy Communion the only ceremony prescribed in the New Testament. Our Abba Father promised eternal life in paradise. What did we promise in return? Jesus took it for granted that his entire teaching to the disciples, the four Gospels, was included in his blood covenant. The fact is your relationship with our Abba Father is YOUR side of the covenant. Only you can decide what that is. All I can do is shine a light to help you see.

Our relationship is up close and personal. Psalm 139:13-14, "*For thou didst form my inward parts: Thou didst cover me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks unto thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: Wonderful are thy works; And that my soul knoweth right well*." Psalm 139 is David pouring out his heart to our Abba Father; please read it. David is our model for our relationship with our Abba Father. I give David a lot of print because we want to copy his relationship, not be a spectator in ELB.

My incarcerated flock needs a lot of change, and their recidivism gives me a precise measure of their relationship. When I see the Holy Spirit working in a person, the relationship grows; when I don’t, it doesn't. That is why trying to "do God" in our brains does not work. Our relationship is not an intellectual exercise, it is an experience, and all I can teach is what it looks like and how to raise our antennae to receive it better. After that, it is the Holy Spirit's job.

John 17:24, "*Father, I desire that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world*."

Romans 8:16-17, "*The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified with him* (in relationship)."

### Love

This message is a start because we did not want to leave love out of this chapter. S7M5 brings “love” home for us. S2M3 mentioned the difficulty of understanding “love” in English in the Scripture. I have wrestled with the subject of our Abba Father’s love for a long time because of the way teachers present it as the be-all and end-all of him. He loves us; end of the story as if ELB does not want us to know more. Finally, what I was looking for came to me. The human perspective in understanding love in ELB was too shallow. And how do we, as humans, love him back?

Chapter 7 presents how we relate to our Abba Father with thirteen subjects; it is that complex. The New Testament is quite clear in Greek, if not in English. The Old Testament Hebrew for love is unprecise in either language, but the New Testament makes up for it. S7M5 presents the primary message of “love” in the Scripture, but the love words need a review first.

#### Old Testament

The key Hebrew word is “hesed.” Psalm 23 is the most famous. It starts with, “*Yahweh is my shepherd; I shall not want.*” It ends with what I learned growing up, v23:6, “*Surely goodness and loving kindness* (hesed) *shall follow me all the days of my life; And I shall dwell in the house of Yahweh for ever.*” The NIV says, “*Surely your goodness and love* (hesed) *will follow me all the days of my life.*”

Nehemiah 9:17 NKJV, “*But You are God, Ready to pardon, Gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, Abundant in kindness (hesed), And did not forsake them*.” ESV, “*But you are a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love* (hesed), *and did not forsake them*.” NASB, “*But You are a God of forgiveness, Gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger and abounding in mercy* (hesed); *And You did not abandon them.*”

Hosea 6:6 NKJV, “*For I desire mercy* (hesed) *and not sacrifice*.” ESV, “*For I desire steadfast love and not sacrifice*.” NASB, “*For I desire loyalty* (hesed) *rather than sacrifice*.”

Isaiah 54:10 NKJV, “*For the mountains shall depart And the hills be removed, But My kindness* (hesed) *shall not depart from you*.” ESV, “*For the mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but my steadfast love shall not depart from you*.” ESV, *“The mountains may be taken away and the hills may shake, but My loving-kindness will not be taken from you*.” NASB, “*For the mountains may be removed and the hills may shake, But My favor will not be removed from you*.”

Scholars translate Hesed as love, steadfast love, kindness, mercy, loyalty, and favor. When we put it all together, we get a picture of an Abba Father that cares as we want our God to care. Not as an emotional connection as we see human relation love, but a love we can count on, a love that gives, and a love that has our best interest at heart. That is what we want in our heart, his words, not ELB reactions.

The Scripture uses the same word for our “love.” Deuteronomy 6:5 NKJV, “*You shall love* (hesed) *the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*.” Leviticus 19:18 NKJV, “*you shall love* (hesed) *your neighbor as yourself.*” What is interesting here is that all translations used ‘love” for our love. But again, it is not emotional love.

#### New Testament

Agape love is an eternal attribute of our Abba Father. John 17:24, ". . . *for you* (our Abba Father) *loved* (agape) *me* (Jesus) *before the foundation of the world.*" Many believers have heard of "agape" as the Greek for "godly love," but the general understanding is that it must be a really amazing love. Look at two particular verses, John 3:16, "*God so loved the world,*" and John 15:12, "*This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.*" Love is the central theme of our relationship with our Abba Father and each other; all are "agape" love.

The Greek language uses seven words to present love's whole dimension; it is that complex. The Scripture uses three Greek words, but we use a fourth not in the Scripture, which requires significant clarification for our understanding of love. "Agape" is more straightforward as love than the Hebrew word "hesed." And “eros” is the Greek word believers know best – the feeling of love from sexual attraction or intimacy. Eros is never used in the Scripture but is usually our first thought for love. Hopefully, you can see the problem.

Eros is not our love of our Abba Father; it leads to great destruction in ELB. We are also confused about love by loving ice cream, so we must go to the Greek to truly know our Abba Father. What is essential about agape love is that, like the Hebrew hesed, it has no feelings associated with it. Agape is love because of what it does, not how it feels.

John 3:16, "*God so "loved the world (agape) that He gave His only son.”* It did not feel good for our Abba Father to do that, but it was the agape-loving thing to do. Christ was so agape loved that he gave his life. He did not want to die, but he agape loved, so he did what was required. A mother who loves a sick baby will stay up all night caring for it, which is not something she wants to do; it doesn't feel good. But it is an act of agape or "doing" love.

The point is that agape love is not simply an impulse generated from feelings. Rather, agape love is an exercise of the will, a deliberate choice, and behavior. That is how our Abba Father can command us to "love" our enemies (Matt. 5:44). He is not commanding us to "have a good feeling" for our enemies but to be kind and helpful if needed.

Agape love is related to obedience and commitment, not feeling and emotion. "Loving" someone is to obey our Abba Father on that someone's behalf, seeking their long-term blessing and profit. The way to know that we agape love our Abba Father is to obey him and "do love." John 14:21, Jesus said, "*He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him.*" That is not about earning love but about expressing our love with obedience. Please pray on that.

Many Christians say they love God, but their lifestyle is contrary to his will. Those people mistake their feeling of affection for agape love. John 14:24, Jesus clarified this, *"He who does not agape me will not obey my teaching.*" Agape, obedient love, should be the distinctive character of believers in relation to our Abba Father, other believers, and all humanity. John 13:35, "*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*"

Our Abba Father does not obey us; how does he agape us? By keeping his promises and making all things for the good. We can bask in the promises and know they are good. Where believers go so wrong with the promises in ELB is that they are part of a covenant, and we have our end of the agreement to uphold. Our Abba Father's promises start with, IF you . . ." Trust me when I tell you, our relationship with our Abba Father is worth trying to do every "if you" he presents. It is better than any drug, stimulant, alcohol, or thrill that ELB can come up with. And in sanctified marriage, the intimacy our Abba Father has created for us will keep us excited and together to the end.

### Believe

We start our life's journey with our Abba Father by "believing." Most believers know John 3:15-16, ". . . *that whosoever believeth may in him have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life*."

But few believers notice John 3:14 that comes right before, "*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man* (Jesus) *be lifted up.* . ." The serpent story referenced in John 3 is in Numbers 21; please stop and read it. The fiery serpents tormenting Israel in Numbers 21 are a metaphor for sin, and the bronze serpent held up by Moses was to be looked at, i.e., "to be seen," and is a metaphor for Jesus. "Seeing Jesus to be saved from sin," is not just believing in Jesus, but seeing him. We need to see the full glory of our Abba Father, whose Son is the radiance of his glory.

"Believe" appears in John 90 times and 40 times in Acts, so we must understand how it cements our relationship with our Abba Father. In English, "believe" generally means we think something is true. In other words, it is true that Jesus was here 2,000 years ago and did his work. That is a common understanding. But once again, English fails us.

The Greek word for believe is "pisteuo," a very loaded word. It means to be convinced that something is real or true, not just think about it or hope for it. (Even "hope" does not mean what we think in the Scripture.) We must accept the truth, of course, but we must also trust the object of our belief, obey it, and surrender to it. That is the whole ancient word meaning, and it is much closer to a king and his subjects of the time except we see the King’s Family.

Mathew 3:1-2, "*And in those days cometh John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, saying, Repent ye; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*" When we see the kingdom of our Abba Father referenced, we should see our relationship with him as his Family, not subjects or spectators of the Scripture. Non-believers are his subjects. Remember, the devil "believes" our Abba Father is real and is at war against him.

It is not enough to merely accept as true that Jesus died and arose; we must acknowledge that he did it for each of us to bring us into the Family as our Father. Jesus took the punishment we deserved; he suffered for us and redeemed us by dying for us. On the third day, he arose, proving that he conquered both sin and death for us.

The Old Testament verb for "believe" is "āman." It means "to be certain, sure" or "to be assured." We understand being sure of something. Look at Genesis 15:6, "*And he* (Abraham) *believed in Yahweh; and he reckoned it to him for righteousness.*"

Abraham picked up and left his homeland and started to sacrifice his son because he believed our Abba Father AND acted it out. Let's look at Jonah 3:5, "*And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them*. . . ." (they acted on their belief). Numbers 14:11, " *And Yahweh said unto Moses, How long will this people despise me? and how long will they not believe in me, for all the signs which I have wrought among them*?" (It took a new generation to enter the promised land.)

"Āman" is also where we get "amen." Amen is an affirmation of truth like 'so be it,' 'it is so,' or 'it is true.' Amen means we believe it is true that all those things we asked for in prayer, praised our Abba Father for, all the questions, all the pain, and the joy we express in prayer. Many Christians think "amen" means we can open our eyes now.

So when John 3:16 says that "*whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*," John is saying that whoever believes in him, trusts in him, relies on him, and obeys him, will be redeemed; not whoever believes he was here 2,000 years ago and did his thing. Please pray hard on that.

We "believe," and that is our redemption. I use the moniker "believer" and not "Christian" because "believer" is an action word. It is also ecumenical without denomination. As a believer, I affirm my relationship and covenant with our Abba Father every time I use it, purchased for me by believing in Jesus' work on the cross.

Christian is a respected name, I intend no offense, but I am not sure what it means, especially in others. As a "Christian," I feel like a person wearing a label in ELB, and I don't feel the Family connection. I see that all the time in my flock, shaping my reaction. Sometimes a change of view works wonders.

Acts 11:26, "*So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.*" The name "Christian" came from people, not our Abba father, and it does not say who called them Christians, themselves or non-believers. That may seem subtle, perhaps even silly, but I am here to share that what we call ourselves makes a huge difference.

### Righteousness

The previous message referenced righteousness with Abraham in Genesis 15:6. All the "faith" words seem familiar, and we are comfortable with them. But we need to be more than comfortable; we need to be energized by them. That means we put off Noah Webster in ELB and put on our Abba Father. It is his meaning we want to live in.

Isaiah 33:20-22, "*Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities (high level feasts): thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tent that shall not be removed, the stakes whereof shall never be plucked up, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there Yahweh will be with us in majesty, a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby. For Yahweh is our judge, Yahweh is our lawgiver, Yahweh is our king; he will save us*."

My main point is the last phrase, but it is prefaced with a beautiful vision of Mt. Zion and heavenly Jerusalem to complete the vision of our citizenship in Heaven. ELB likes to add only the last verse to this life when it is the entire package we need to see in our hearts. "Yahweh is our Judge, our Lawgiver, and our King." And our Father.

Our understanding of righteousness in our Abba Father's eyes is the laws given to us to live by. Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy are their presentations. Jesus transformed the law into godly love, which is often misunderstood but here is the point, we can never meet our Abba Father's standards of perfection. We live with common phrases like "close, but no cigar," or "close is only good in horse shoes or hand grenades" and accept that position.

I learned to play golf and tennis, ski, and eat sushi at different times. The more I took lessons and practiced, the more I enjoyed the experience. With our Abba Father, "getting closer" is his standard. Learning to be righteous in the eyes of our Abba Father is no different. We never gain perfection, but we keep trying to do better.

Righteousness applies to every aspect of our lives; who we are, how we behave, and how we relate to others, all controlled through our GCS connection. It is also how we glorify our Abba Father. And in that context, he partners with us. Jesus says his yoke is light, and an animal yoke is a partnership in which the leader side will never pull the load alone. The weaker side, us, must pull our share of the load. Please pray on that.

### Abide

"Abide" is a crucial word in Scripture that is the handlebar we are looking for in our relationship with our Abba Father. John uses the word “abide” ("meno") 53 times. The common meaning of "abide" is "to live in" or "to tolerate," but in the Scripture, it has a deeper meaning.

1 John 2:24, "*As for you, let that* (Jesus) *abide in you which ye heard from the beginning. If that which ye heard from the beginning abide in you, ye also shall abide in the Son, and in the Father.*"

Let that verse define "abide" for you. Is Jesus only in us and us in him part-time? Does he ever leave us? The answer is no. Does Jesus or our Abba Father ever die? No. Are the Holy Three connected in spirit? Yes. Do they ever change? No. Is the relationship intimate? Yes. That is "abide."

I live in California, but I may move to Florida and live there. We live with our spouses, but that may change for too many married people. The earthly word "to live in" isn't deep enough because it has no attachment or commitment. The Scripture says first abide in Jesus and then walk the way he walked righteously. 1 John 2:6 "*he that saith he abideth in him ought himself also to walk even as he walked." When we are redeemed, we are "in Christ,*" which means we abide in him permanently. That is the closest possible relationship with him.

1 John 2:25:27, "*And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal. These things have I written unto you concerning them that would lead you astray. And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you* . . ."

The "anointing" mentioned is in 1 John 2:20, "*But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.*" Now, we have a choice. We can walk around in ELB trying to "be more like Jesus" or permanently abide in a relationship with him, our Abba Father, his Word, and his promises, all anointed by the Holy Spirit, who will guide us in all things. Please pray on that.

Let's keep going, v2:27-29,". . . *and ye need not that any one teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him. And now, my little children, abide in him; that, if he shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. If ye know that he is righteous, we know that every one also that doeth righteousness is begotten of him*."

When we abide in Christ, we have confidence in our faith because we connect to our Abba Father. And when does this all begin for us? 1 John 4:15, "*Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*" Let's look at how much we are being held securely in our permanent relationship with our Abba Father, John 10:28–29,"*and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand.*" That is where we want to live, in our Abba Father's world, not in the ELB world.

In John 15:4–5, Jesus tells His disciples that drawing life from him is essential, using the image of branches on a vine, "*Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; so neither can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same beareth much fruit: for apart from me ye can do nothing. If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.*"

Also, If we do not abide in Christ, John 15:6, "*If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.*" Yikes!

### Faith

Faith is not a synonym for belief. Believers often use the word "faith," but we misunderstand it and misapply it in ELB. Our Abba Father gives us faith; we do not grow it ourselves. That is the disconnect. People often tell others, "have faith, and everything will be ok." That implies we can turn it on and off or let it come and go. Why would we ever do that? I can tell you why; it happens when we willfully step into sin. We have to disconnect our GCS from our Abba father to sin willfully. Understanding faith may help overcome willful sin and the damage it causes in our lives. Please pray on that.

The primary reason we don't understand faith is that the Scripture cannot fully develop it until the completion of the promise of the Messiah. As a result, the Old Testament skips much of what becomes the glorious faith or translates it as "belief." There actually is no Hebrew word for faith that compares to the New Testament Greek. ELB conflates faith and belief in usage to weaken our faith because faith is a connection to our Abba Father. To "believe" is an action made by us, and "faith" is about and from our Abba Father. Never conflate the two. Believe is something we do; faith is something our Abba Father does.

The New Testament Greek word "pistis" is faith and carries a deep meaning. In the secular world, "pistis" means a guarantee. The guarantee comes from the manufacturer, not the buyer. Faith is our guarantee from our Abba Father, our manufacturer, that he will fulfill all his promises. Galatians 3:24, "*So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.*" We saw justification in S5M1. "Justified by faith" means it is by our Abba Father. Justification is the start of our faith, performed by our Abba Father. Christ coming is just a sample; wait until he comes back! His promise of the Messiah is so mind-blowing it is not possible to reveal it in the Old Testament without giving it away. Now that we know it, we must fully embrace its glory. Please pray on that.

Romans 10:17 tells us the Scripture reveals our guarantee. KJV, "*So faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*" NIV, "*Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ*." ASV, "*So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.*" A few old translations use belief instead of faith, do not make that mistake.

The root of pistis is peithô which means persuasion or to be persuaded. That connotes there is a persuader. Our Abba Father persuades us to have faith, his guarantee. When our car needs gas, we pull into the gas station. The oil company delivers the gas. We do not make our gasoline, and we do not make our faith. We need it, and we go where it is to get it. In the Word, the Scripture.

Romans 12:2-3, "*And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. For I say, through the grace that was given me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but so to think as to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to each man a measure of faith."* Notice "God hath dealt."

Hebrews 10:36-38, "*For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised. But my righteous one shall live by faith: And if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him.*" Notice "live by faith." Live in the confidence of the guarantee. Also notice, "if he shrink back." Our Abba father is disappointed but still the prodigal Father.

John 16:13-14, "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall take of mine, and shall declare it unto you*."

Faith is the building block in our relationship with our Abba Father. It is not a test of the sincerity of our redemption. When we receive Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are a child in our faith because we do not have much Scripture. Faith is always the gift and work of our Abba Father, which comes from our being in the Word and learning.

Where believers fall short is reading the Holy Bible with our minds, intaking the facts and history, and being smart. If we do not embrace the Holy Spirit and his role in our relationship connecting us in the Family, it just falls flat because the faith has no way in. Unless our Abba Father has his purpose and forces it in, that is how he and I reunited.

Think about the people of Israel and how they repeatedly disobeyed our Abba Father and rebelled against him. He needs to intercede to help us, or heaven would only have a few hundred people on judgment day. Also, think about the Spirit of Yahweh, the Holy Spirit. The people in the Old Testament did not connect through him, and we could not connect until after Jesus' work on the cross. The concept of faith cannot mature until the New Testament.

Galatians 5:22, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, and faithfulness*." John 16:13, "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth: for he shall not speak from himself; but what things soever he shall hear, these shall he speak: and he shall declare unto you the things that are to come*." That is how faith is delivered.

Let's look at the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 32:20, "*And he said, I will hide my face from them, I will see what their end shall be: For they are a very perverse generation. Children in whom is no faithfulness.*" That is from the Song of Moses, where he unloads on the people of Israel for rejecting our Abba Father, calling them unfaithful because they turned away from him. That passage means the people had no belief because it refers to Israel's rejection. Belief comes before our Abba father can gift faith to us.

In Habakkuk 1:1-2 NKJV, the prophet whines to our Abba Father, "*The burden which the prophet Habakkuk saw, "How long, LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen*?" But he recovers in v2:4, "*See, the enemy is puffed up; his desires are not upright— but the righteous person will live by his faithfulness.*" Again, this is a reference to the people's beliefs. Paul converts Habakkuk to faith in Galatians 3:11, "Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.'" (In his promises.)

Deuteronomy 7:9, "*Know therefore that Yahweh thy God, he is God, the faithful God, who keepeth covenant and lovingkindness with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.*" That verse is our covenant with him. Believe it or not, that is about it for faith in the Old Testament. Without the work of Jesus on the cross and the Holy Spirit, our Abba Father has no way to deliver faith to his people.

Let's explore Hebrews 11, called "the faith Hall of Fame." It goes back and adds the faith omitted in the Old Testament. Once you realize how much the New Testament embellishes the Old, your relationship will grow even more.

V11:1, "*Now faith is assurance of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen.*" That sounds very circular; it is like saying faith is faith. And it never did much for me right up until it did. One day v11:3 lit me up, "*By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear.*" God made the world with his power and majesty. Seeing the world is proof he made it. There is no other way to get from nothing to the world except the Holy Three.

Hebrews 11:4, "*By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh.*" That is subtle, but our Abba Father reinforced Abel's belief, "God testifying of his gifts." Our belief becomes faith when reinforced by our Abba Father.

V11:5-6, "*By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for he hath had witness borne to him that before his translation he had been well-pleasing unto God: and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing unto him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him.*"

We start with our belief and seeking our Abba Father, "and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Now read the entire Hebrews 11 and notice that our Abba Father contributes to the hero referenced in each entry.

I speak of "our faith" and "building faith" throughout this book as we learn and grow. It includes our Abba Father's role in helping us learn, especially with the Holy Spirit. I never mean to grow our faith ourselves. Now let's test ourselves, Daniel 3:9-10, "*They answered and said to Nebuchadnezzar the king, O king, live for ever. Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image;* . . ."

Most believers will recognize that story as a spectator and watch Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah enter the furnace and come out. Most of you know the three as Shadrach, Meshach; and, Abed-Nego but given their faith, they are worthy of their Jewish names. Thank you, Jesus. Isn't he amazing?

My first question is, was their faith strengthened in the fire event? My second question is, have you ever thought about what you would do in a similar situation? Are you ready to do that? That story is there to get ready, not to tell you how great our Abba Father is. Please pray on that.

p.s. Is there a level of faith greater than being thrown into a furnace?

### Hope

1 Peter 3:15, "but sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: being ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you . . ." Faith, hope, and love are the Big Three of godly words, as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:13, "*But now abideth faith, hope, love, these three; and the greatest of these is love.*" Notice that faith and hope make the Big Three, which is why fully understanding our Abba Father's design with these words is essential. Knowing what abide means helps understand that verse.

In common usage, we interchange faith and hope with each other and often even interchange hope with wish. But in our Abba Father's eyes, faith and hope are different, not only from each other but mainly from our everyday usage. The difference between our Abba Father's use and our everyday use for hope and faith is a certainty. Our everyday use of hope carries uncertainty, often stifling our relationship with our Abba Father. I hope I get X for my birthday. If I get X, it will make me happy, but I know I might not get X, as in, I wish I were taller.

But hope abideth in us, and abide means permanent residence or indwelling. And what are we hoping for, or in other words, what are we sure of? The answer is our redemption! And what is redemption? Redemption is living in a relationship with our Abba Father spiritually now and then for eternity.

Jesus tells us in Rev 21:3-5, "*And I heard a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his peoples, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God: and he shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away. And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I make all things new*."

Our hope is the inheritance when we die in the flesh. 1 Peter 1:3-5, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to his great mercy begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who by the power of God are guarded through faith unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"

Our hope is "a living hope;" Christ lives, and those "in Christ" are being called to live, beyond resurrection, in glory with Him. Redemption is not just avoiding hell; it is living with our Abba Father on earth and in heaven! Jesus tells us to live now beyond resurrection. In other words, with Christ in us and us in him, live now with his Family and see the future paradise coming. Raise our game, my friends, and whenever the word hope is heard or said, may our first thought be our life in heaven with all our Abba Father's Family.

Now let us make sure we separate hope and faith. In its simplest form, faith is similar in many ways to hope in its certainty, but faith is the past and present plus our earthly future, while hope is a synonym for our future with our Abba Father in paradise. Romans 15:4-5, "*For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that through patience and through comfort of the scriptures we might have hope.* *Now the God of patience and of comfort grant you to be of the same mind one with another according to Christ Jesus:*"

Romans 15:4-5 talks about prophecy. ELB favors our Abba Father's promises and minimizes his assurances in prophecy and our part in the covenant his promises include. Faith is necessary to have hope, just as oxygen is necessary for fire. If there is fire, we know there is oxygen. But there can be oxygen without fire, and it is possible to have faith without hope. That happens all the time in our earthly life when we believe in our Abba Father but close our eyes to the afterlife because it is too surreal. It is easier to close our eyes and wish for it.

Why do we opt so quickly for earthly pleasure and are so slow to opt for the hope, the heaven which is our inheritance? It is because we do not believe in the heavenly realities. The people who believe in the heavenly hope and are fixed on it that can have a loose grip on earthly pleasure and are energized for heaven.

Hope is never just an escape from reality or earth's problems and does not leave us idle or drifting. Our hope is powerful and dynamic, brings us joy and peace, and has rewards and blessings. Romans 15:13, "*Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit.*"

Our Abba Father has planted hope in the heart of every believer so that we can build a strong relationship of love and trust with Him. Our hope in him reveals to us that he is in control and uses everything for our good. The hope is our call to action and our unbounded energy to answer that call until we inherit the Kingdom.

To summarize, our Abba Father starts with entering into a relationship with him. We then express our love for him by obeying him as he keeps his promises. He then helps us build our faith with the Word, which reveals our inheritance of life with him in heaven, also known as our hope and certainty from our Abba Father.

### Grace

Grace fills in all the blanks in our relationship. It is a great word and another "from Abba Father to us" word. In that respect, grace is closer to filling our desire for love than the word love itself carries. We cannot "grace" our Abba Father back, only bathe in it. I get my joy and comfort from his grace more than his love because of the obedient nature of the Greek word for love.

ELB likes to tell us the key element of his grace is that we do not deserve it. I strongly reject that position. I am not saying we deserve it; I am saying his grace is his true goodness, the one who tells us we are holy, and to add by man the "we don't deserve it," pollutes it. The sin lessons and verses more than deliver that message. The whole point of his grace is to lift us.

1 Corinthians 15:10, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not found vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.*" Titus 2:11-14, "*For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men, instructing us, to the intent that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly and righteously and godly in this present world; looking for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a people for his own possession, zealous of good works*."

Grace will deliver the feeling we are looking for in our relationship with our Abba Father, do not let ELB pollute it. 1 Peter 5:10, "*And the God of all grace, who called you unto his eternal glory in Christ, after that ye have suffered a little while, shall himself (a)perfect, establish, strengthen you.*"

Ephesians 2:4-10, "*but God, being rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace have ye been saved), and raised us up with him, and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus: for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them.*"

Apostle Paul pleaded to our Abba Father three times to remove a thorn he was experiencing. 2 Corinthians 12:8, "*Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me*." Many interpret our Abba Father's answer as "suck it up, Paul." 2 Corinthians 12:9, "*But He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness.*" His power and our weakness, the perfect team!

Our Abba Father refuses to remove the thorn that the devil causes and ordained by our Abba Father (like Job?), in this case, to keep Paul humble. But what is our Abba Father's grace that is enough? It is all the abilities, help, provision, and strength given to us by him. Too many people see grace as love and move on in ELB. That is weak faith.

Our relationship radar tells us that prayer should start with asking for revelation, wisdom, and strength in our relationship with him to get through a situation together. One might infer from 2 Corinthians 12:9 that Paul still has delusions of grandeur in ELB that need work, giving a reason to keep reminding Paul of the thorn. I see ELB as parallel to conceit in the eyes of our Abba Father, i.e., this world is more important than his. Please pray on that. The grace of an infinite God is not defined by any words that would only serve to limit him in our hearts.

# Chapter 8: Sanctified Marriage

Chapter 8 Messages

S8M1: Existing Marriages

S8M2: Our Abba Father’s Plan

S8M3: Jesus the Groom

S8M4: One Flesh and Sanctified Marriage

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S8M8: The Vow and Sanctified Marriage

S8M9: Sinful Flesh

## S8M1: Existing Marriages

"For better or worse" marriages must be converted into sanctified marriages. New marriages must start as sanctified marriages. We are here to build faith and a relationship with our Abba Father first. If heading into a new marriage, make it a sanctified marriage from the beginning, and it will be amazing. Everything in this book is an integral part of this chapter, especially the messages on Love, Humility, and Forgiveness.

### Teenagers

This message is not about teens getting married, DON'T DO IT! It probably seems strange to start a marriage-building exercise with teens, but it is an important message. I begin here because teenagers connote a family, a symbol of our relationship in our Abba Father's Family. Teenagers represent new life in blossom, as being born again is supposed to be. They represent the future. And it reminds us of our duty to teach them the ways of the LORD; to do that, we need to live the ways of the LORD. Putting this message anywhere else in the exercise just doesn't fit.

Given that believers have eternal life, no matter how old you are, you are a teenager on that timeline. Suppose you have teenagers or will. If you are beyond that stage in your earth family, find that feeling and bring it into your marriage again as you convert it to a sanctified marriage. Bring that family feeling into our Abba Father's Family.

### The Invitation

This message invites young people to put their relationship with our Abba Father front and center in their life as an integral part of their maturation into adulthood. When thoughts of partnering and marriage start appearing in young people, the very best marriage model should be their goal. Parents with teenagers should be a stated teaching target in our churches.

We are reaching out to our youth with confidence that it will help them navigate the teen years into a strong relationship with our Abba Father and a sanctified marriage when the time comes. Our relationship with our Abba Father is described as Jesus the Groom and the church as his bride. That is similar to our Abba Father's plan for husband and wife.

Unlike in ancient times, young people carry too much responsibility for their marriage plans without proper teaching. The "birds and bees" subject is not a stand-alone concept in our Abba Father's eyes; it is an integral part of marriage along with how to select a spouse. The idea of sanctified marriage gives parents and older youth groups in church a natural entry into guiding their children toward marriage. Because sanctified marriage exists above secular marriage as our Abba Father's plan, it comes with glorious features now lost in postmodern society.

The youth movement in our churches would be well advised to add sanctified marriage to the curriculum and bring our Abba Father into the adolescent dating process. It cannot hurt to get the young head and heart thinking about him and his plan and to practice his ways, especially when new hormones are raging. It is much easier to save oneself for marriage when our Abba Father is an integral part of dating.

Popularity in high school should come from "faith without works is dead," not self-declared in-crowds and "clicks" judging others. The concept of sanctified marriage can help teach our young people to be kind to everyone. There are eight recognized strategies for bringing youth to our Abba Father in churches but none focus on getting young people to each other in a godly way.

The Body of Christ is a divine connection to each other and our Abba Father, not just a link to him. Churches do a great job of growing our knowledge of our Abba Father, but we tend to focus on the knowledge instead of our living relationship with our Abba Father. By looking at our Abba Father's marriage plan, we can see our relationship with him come to life, and this will help teenagers navigate the challenges the enemy presents to them as they mature.

The high school years are a training program and a transitional period from the child classification into young adulthood. The high school experience should be about learning subjects and skills and practicing social interaction with our identity, morals, and values, which can only come from our Abba Father through parents, the Scripture and church. The goal is to build a foundation for life, not survive or conquer high school.

Churches might focus more on each teen's needs in youth group programs. Youth programs should be more than godly entertainment for teens and do everything possible to help teens continue church after leaving home for college or independence.

When graduating high school, most teens look forward to college, trade school, career, or job. When we graduate from Sunday school, most teens . . .? Unless some are going to seminary, there does not seem to be a good answer after Sunday school except continuing to attend church. But 70% of teens do not do that. We believe the sanctified marriage approach, which includes our relationship with our Abba Father, is an inspired solution to the youth dropout problem.

Becoming one flesh in sanctified marriage requires self-examination of who we are; our idols, temperament, personality, and gifts. The difference between secular and sanctified marriage is adding the element of who we are in our Abba Father and glorifying him in our life. It has to make sense that teens should come out of high school with some recognition of who they are and especially who they are in our Abba Father. Parents and the church carry the responsibility for this.

The starting point is the commitment for teens to save sexual purity for sanctified marriage. But not just because sexual impurity is a sin but because purity glorifies our Abba Father. There can be no more significant message for a young person to learn than why he made us in the first place, to glorify him (Isaiah 43:7). In glorifying him in marriage to our spouse or our Savior, we can realize the sense of peace and joy with him as nothing else can give. Deciding to glorify him with our life, the enormity of teen maturation issues becomes simplified.

Parents are an integral part of the teen years, and a parent's job is to teach their children our Abba Father. He chose Abraham for that very reason. "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him" (Genesis 18:19).

The way of the LORD (Abba Father) is obedient love for him and all his creations. In this day and age, it is imperative that parents re-take the teaching of their children about life and the way of the Lord (Jesus). Even if parents enroll their children in religious schools, it is still the parent's responsibility to stay engaged with them and demonstrate what their children should learn about the way of our Abba Father.

Our goal is confident young adults who are confident in our Abba Father. Not confident with all the answers, but confident in from where the answers come. Popularity, clicks, in-crowds, athletic stars, etc., are huge false idols teens too often seek to add helpful meaning to high school. Our Abba Father can be glorified on the athletic field, in activities, in class, and the halls. Do not let the idols influence the teen years; let our Abba Father be the influence.

## S8M2: Our Abba Father’s Plan

The true joy of undertaking this project is how it helps bring our relationship with our Abba Father to life. "*And Yahweh God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate for him*." (Genesis 2:18). I like the translation “helpmate” better than “helper.” But as we move toward joining life with a comparable helpmate and creating a new life as believers, we must turn to our Abba Father for his specific directions in that endeavor. Turning to Him for the answers we know are there should become the foundation of our earth-life phase with our Abba Father, married or single. Please pray on that.

This book sets the stage for our sanctified marriage by pointing to both the union of Christ and the church and our union with Christ as believers that our Abba Father presents as a marriage. Ephesians 5:30-32, “*because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church.* *That is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church*."

That image is our bedrock for sanctified marriage with our Abba Father. S7M5 pointed us to the obedient nature of agape love as Jesus walked into death in obedient love for both our Abba Father and us. Agape love is the heart of our relationship with our Abba Father and sanctified marriage.

If we say that Jesus "submitted" to our Abba Father, does that make you slightly uncomfortable? It did to me for a while. Jesus submitting? Ephesians 5:22, 1 Peter 3:1, and Colossians 3:18 all say, "*Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands*," and that command needs to be understood in the context of our relationship with our Abba Father. Not the reaction too many people first experience when hearing the verse, "the woman is a lesser being in a marriage."

Just as the difference between agape love and obedience is indistinguishable in agape love, so is the case with the word submit. Men do not "rule" the marriage; they have a vast love mountain to climb to be worthy. S8M6: The Proverbs 31 Woman reinforces that further.

If a famous philanthropist wanted to give a woman a million dollars with no strings, would she "submit" to that offer and accept it? Our Abba Father offers us redemption, and we submit to that offer gladly as believers. In sanctified marriage, we apply all of our Abba Father's will. The wife submits to her husband in the context of all our Abba Father's commands. Romans 8:28, "*And we know that to them that love God all things work together for good, even to them that are called according to his purpose*."

Ephesians 5:22, 1 Peter 3:1, and Colossians 3:18 are not the place to start our marriage counseling, but I like to address the harmful ELB thoughts before beginning a lesson, as we did with eros love. Our Abba Father's words on our being his children must come first for a couple to bring his words into sanctified marriage.

We must study Paul's letter to the Ephesians to mine its full wisdom. Ephesians opens with an incredible prayer seeking said wisdom. Here is a portion, Ephesians 1:17-21, “*that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your (f)understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*" Use the prayer often.

In Ephesians chapters 2-3, Paul talks about faith and Christ being for both Jews and non-Jews, a vital transition topic from the Old to the New Covenant at the time. We assume that the reader has some faith as we continue, but if not, perhaps continued reading will draw the Holy Spirit to you and start your faith journey with our Abba Father.

In Ephesians 4:1-6, Paul asks us fervently and urgently (beseech), "*I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*"

"*The unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" is loaded with our Abba Father. We are in Christ, and Christ is in us as one body. The "*The unity of the Spirit,*" is the structure of our relationship with our Abba Father. The verse also carries in it the theme of "*love others as I have loved you*" (John 13:34, 15:12), Jesus' one commandment ("the bond of peace").

That is the image of marriage for all believers. With Christ and spouses and with each other, it results from unity and peace with each other. Ephesians 5 continues with more beseeching to walk in love, light, and wisdom into marriage.

Verse 5:1-2 is titled "Walk in Love." “*Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.*"

Verse 5:8-9, titled "Walk in Light," "*For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth*,"

Verse 5:15-17, titled "Walk in Wisdom," "*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.*"

Verse 5:22-24, titled "Marriage—Christ and the Church." "*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.*"

We have arrived at the buzz kill "submit" verse and the beginning of sanctified marriage in the Scripture. But before we go further into that journey, I am moved first to take a side trip that will help us attain our goal. HOW you choose WHO you marry determines the starting point for a sanctified marriage. Any believing couple can do it from any starting point if they choose.

God’s children have disobeyed our Abba Father since creation, so we make no pretense that most readers will be very high on the righteousness scale. Sanctified marriage is for all believers to step into no matter how ungodly their earth lives may be in the beginning because the Prodigal Father is who our living, loving Abba Father is. Two people becoming one (marriage) is the perfect opportunity to jumpstart a weak faith if both spouses will be committed to our Abba Father in sanctified marriage.

I will repeat sanctification here to have the most impact. Sanctification means to be set apart for holy use, to make holy or to purify. When we are told to be more like Christ, sanctification is what is meant; our never-ending goal and first purpose in the earth phase of our lives. I have never understood how to be "more like Jesus," he is God! But striving to be more righteous, holy, and obedient comes with clear instructions.

Go back to the beginning of Ephesians 5 and see "*walk in love, light, and wisdom*." Both spouses must be committed to that walk into sanctified marriage, a lifelong journey. That is how we become sanctified and have a sanctified marriage that glorifies our Abba Father.

In theory, believers are supposed to be already living a life that seeks personal sanctification, but that is too often not the case as people stop at just the believing and worship parts and live mainly in ELB. Only about 11% of married couples meet each other in church, and I attribute that to the small candidate pool size. It would well serve our Abba Father would growing that percentage.

It would seem churches could and should do more to teach about being sanctified and sanctified marriage, especially with young people. Too many churches assume the congregation understands that sanctification, not knowledge, is the reason for the sermons.

Work and school are the traditional meeting grounds for couples, and online is also now a norm. The chances are that the readers of this program have already chosen each other following the usual ELB habits. Each person will have their position in the sanctification process.

The one flesh journey into sanctified marriage is an earth-life-long journey meant to glorify our Abba Father, and it can help sanctify a couple like nothing else. Couples must come into sanctified marriage willing to seek and walk in the godly love, light, and wisdom Paul describes.

Some verses in Scripture can stand alone when quoted, commandments being the apparent and tools such as the whole armor of God as well. But too many verses are used as exit ramps from Scripture, and "wives submit to your husbands" is at the top of the list, mainly because it has four more words usually ignored, "as to the Lord."

In sanctified marriage, the wife submits to our Abba Father in submitting to her husband; it is not just about the husband. And when the husband submits to our Abba Father in obedient agape AND "agapes" his wife as commanded, the result is an incredible marriage as our Abba Father promises. Please pray on that.

Ephesians 5 defines the husband's charge in 5:25-27, "*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.*"

We will also repeat 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, "*Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*"

Our Abba Father's calling to the husband is enormous in a sanctified marriage, and it is easier to understand once agape love is understood. But also remember that the "one flesh" is still two Spirit lives with our Abba Father. The amount of work put on the husband by our Abba Father to be worthy of a wife's submission is enormous; the husband does not get his "me" back in Eph 5:22.

Let's come back to "*as to the Lord*." At all times, both spouses are first obedient to our Abba Father; we can never separate that focus. The husband is living up to his duties to the wife. The wife is living up to her responsibilities to the husband. Both submit to our Abba Father. So let's continue the dive.

Ephesians 5:33 ends the letter's contribution to sanctified marriage with another important word, "respect," "*Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.*" This line reveals that wives seek love in marriage and husbands seek respect, two different things with profound results.

That is the only verse in the Scripture where the meaning of the Greek "phobētai" (respect) is used in reference to marriage. It means "to revere, venerate, to treat with deference or reverential obedience." It also is the only occurrence where the word is used as a verb in present tense, subjunctive mood, middle or passive voice.

The last line is just scholars showing off; the point is that there is more to sanctified marriage than agape; there are subtleties within the relationship as well. The subtleties are better served in their chapter, One Flesh and Sanctified Marriage, as our goal here is to establish our Abba Father's directions for sanctified marriage.

## S8M3: Jesus the Groom

The second familial relationship created for us by our Abba Father is our connection to him through Jesus. Our relationship with Jesus is presented as a marriage. I found amazingly few references to this fact in existing premarital counseling and yet marriage is the central them of a family, the basic governing system in life.

This chapter describes what I believe is a huge missing link in Christian life, an actual description of the intimate nature of our relationship with our Abba Father through Jesus and it applies to all believers, married and single. John the Baptist presents Jesus as a groom to explain the difference between Jesus and himself but the bigger point is the image presented of what our relationship with our Abba Father is supposed to look like.

John 3:22-29, “*After these things Jesus and His disciples came into the land of Judea, and there He remained with them and baptized. Now John also was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there was much water there. And they came and were baptized. For John had not yet been thrown into prison. Then there arose a dispute between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purification. And they came to John and said to him, “Rabbi, He who was with you beyond the Jordan, to whom you have testified—behold, He is baptizing, and all are coming to Him!” John answered and said, “A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him.’ He who has the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled.*”

This passage needs to be burned into the heart of every believer because it describes the nature of our relationship with our Abba Father through Jesus as a marriage, the most intimate relationship humans know. Since this is the very beginning of Jesus’ work, John the Baptist reveals himself as a listening friend but is not part of the church or bride, a truth soon assured by King Herod when he had John beheaded.

We are not meant to be just “friends” with the Bridegroom. Too many believers see God up there and us down here with a connection between us of some kind (Holy Spirit) but “believing” is really what matters in ELB thinking. Our Abba Father describes in this passage a close, intimate relationship between us and his Son and everything he says about husband and wife in the Scripture can be applied to each of us independently as the bride in the church. The wedding scenario brings our relationship with our Abba Father to life as we rejoice in his Son’s words and move from friend of God to a bride in our faith.

Now let’s go to the end, Revelation 19:6-9, “*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! 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.*” *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. 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*.”

Pray on these two passages and start to experience in your heart a relationship with our Abba Father that almost everyone on earth can imagine, the joy of a wedding and the celebration that follows. But in the Revelation, we know this wedding is forever with no more sorrow, no more tears, just being with our Groom in paradise for eternity. Start to envision that intimate image of our future in this life!

Mathew 25:1-13 also presents a marriage analogy, “*Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom . . . But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slep*t*. And at midnight a cry was heard: ‘Behold, the bridegroom (a)is coming; go out to meet him!’ Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out . . . And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.*”

This passage describes believers (those prepared for his coming) joining our Abba Father and Jesus in paradise and the non-believers (those not prepared when he comes) being left behind. Jesus tries very hard to make our relationship with him very personal. Jesus warned us directly and often of the consequences of not being prepared but this lesson is intimate.

We are the bride, waiting for our Groom. If we pray on this passage, you might also realize the betrothal element of the marriage analogy. Jesus is betrothed to us and us to him, our relationship is not random nor superficial, it is already promised to the bride (believers).

The groom gave his life for his bride, the ultimate sacrifice of love. As the bride, we are called to be loyal to the groom and keep ourselves pure for him. It is easy to see how the reduction of marriage to meaningless status in today’s society cannot help but diminish our relationship with our Abba Father along with it unless the church elevates marriage above the secular definition. It is imperative that the church get behind marriage as our Abba Father intended (sanctified) as a critical step in bringing the bride to the Groom.

We discuss Ephesians 5:25-27 in another chapter but I want to highlight here the groom/bride relationship in it, “*Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the (a)washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.*”

Hopefully by now you see the difference between Jesus washing away the sins of we earth dwellers as we go about this life and a groom creating a holy bride without blemish. I find great excitement in the “*holy bride without blemish*” presentation, a glorious vision of our Abba Father’s plan for us! The image of our relationship with our Abba Father as a marriage in paradise without blemish should be our focus.

Every aspect of our lives must be as intimate with our Abba Father as he describes, herein called sanctified marriage, and lifted up to him. Let’s cure the church and glorify our Abba Father with godly marriages that can only come from one man and one woman. People will see them and want them to glorify our Abba Father!

Hopefully, the point is made but there are more reminders in the review of marriage being an important concept in our Abba Father’s creation. Mathew 21:1-11 describes Jesus’ first miracle, turning water into wine. Where? At a wedding in Cana that appears connected to Mary’s (and Jesus’) family.

Tradition tells us running out of wine at a wedding ceremony is a cause for shame. This story is rich in symbolism, metaphor and allegory but I do not want to dilute the focus on the marriage as the setting we are highlighting. But it is fun to realize Jesus made about 180 gallons of wine after they ran out. It was quite a wedding celebration!

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 11, “*For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you as a pure virgin to Christ.*” Paul presents the fruit of his work, a healthy church in Corinth in the face of false profits.

Does he just present it as fact? No, he presents it as a loving father delivering a wonderful daughter to her betrothed husband. The intimacy of the relationship with our Abba Father that Paul has taught and communicated here is critical to understanding our relationship with our Abba Father.

There are also Old Testament references to the wedding metaphor portending the future. Isaiah 61:10, “*I will greatly rejoice in Yahweh, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with a garland, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*”

Jeremiah 2:2, “*Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith Yahweh, I remember for thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.*” Jeremiah 2:32, “*Can a virgin forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number*.”

The prophet Hosea also presents the decline of Israel as a horrific marriage and we know our Abba Father’s reaction to Israel as they turned away from him. But our focus here is on the positive in the New Covenant Jesus created for us, a glorious intimate relationship with him!

## S8M4: One Flesh and Sanctified Marriage

Genesis 2:24, “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*" Mathew 19:5-6, Mark 10:8, Ephesians 5:31, "*For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh*? *So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*"

Our sanctified marriage project acknowledges the realities of the flesh in this world and seeks to bolster a couple's ability to rise above it in sanctified marriage. Having never met a non-pastor person who has thought about the magnitude of what one flesh means, we must dive in.

Our sanctified marriage presentation aims to bridge the gap between our Abba Father's two worlds, earthly children and spirit, which is our context here. The word flesh is used in Scripture to describe a human being or a creature. It is also used to describe the source of sin in humans. The flesh is the opposite of our spirit, so we have to start from the top with our Abba Father-connected spirit and work our way down to the flesh, or we risk him being only an accessory to this life.

God created us to glorify him and gave us work to do in Eden and the entire earth. "And Yahweh God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helpmate for him." (Genesis 2:18). God created "marriage" in the very beginning as the ultimate in teamwork. Husband and wife are designed to complement each other (helpmates), but one flesh goes far beyond that.

Let's focus on "helper," a word that can mean a lesser or greater position in our ELB minds. How we see ourselves can skew how we view a helper wife, so we must see what our Abba Father means. The Hebrew word "ezer" is a military term that comes from a position of supply or strength and can mean rescue. Jesus called the Holy Spirit a "helper" for us; clearly, the Holy Spirit is not a lesser helper.

The old King James says a wife is "comparable" to the husband, and others say she is suitable or fit. The bottom line is that the wife is our Abba Father's "good design" for the husband, and we can glorify him by seeing what he created, neither greater nor lesser, in position as one flesh. In a sanctified marriage, it is easy to see that the skills can be divided to make a worthy one-flesh union that calls on our Abba Father to bring his good design to us. When we choose a spouse just to meet the desires of our flesh, expect trouble.

The old KJV version also says, "*and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*." The ancient word for cleave, join, etc., means to glue together. When we glue two pieces together, the result is all of both. We talked about turning the separate me or my desires of each spouse into we, us, and ours. In other words, we take on life together in expressed agreement. We accomplish that by glorifying our Abba Father, serving him, obeying him, and doing his work in the kingdom is first and integral to the marriage, i.e., a sanctified marriage.

Almost all churches have a published doctrine to unify the church because arguments about our Abba Father can be very destructive. Major disagreements require us to find a church with a compatible doctrine, not stay and argue. Doctrines help us identify significant differences in our beliefs. Each spouse can have their own doctrine and glorify God, but they cannot be one flesh with different doctrines. This concept applies not only to all godly doctrines but also to all the idols of the flesh. The idols of the flesh are the main problem for humans in marriage.

When I say doctrine or idol, I am talking about the things we hold dear or how we define ourselves. How many couples can you name with significant differences about life (doctrine or idols)? A spouse with an idol of achievement at work at the expense of the family? How many of their spouses sacrifice their life for the marriage? How many spouses suffer from substance abuse while the other enables it? How many spouses need alone time?

If contemplating marriage or seeking to transform a marriage into a sanctified marriage, a one-flesh review of life is a helpful process to walk through. Life is full of compromise for our earthly feelings, but only the settlement that takes the couple into one flesh will glorify our Abba Father and bring all his blessings, joy, and peace. One flesh is impossible in these circumstances, yet with awareness and application, it can lead to the solution.

Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:4, "*The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife.*" Everything in one flesh is giving, not receiving. A spouse can give in love to the other spouse free time to fish, golf, see friends, go to school, etc., and even be alone. But our "me" must never take them in selfishness.

One spouse can't "do their thing," and the other resents or tolerates it and glorify our Abba Father. Only giving in love will glorify him in one flesh. Hopefully, you can see how his concept of one flesh with love and unity provides the pattern to identify and resolve any issue a couple faces by repositioning different doctrines and idols into love and gifts of love. If a marriage cannot do this, the marriage is in trouble.

Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate. Got it? Great! When a marriage is brought to our Abba Father, all the tools needed to make it last are provided by him. Obviously, a marriage based on sexual attraction and eros love is in trouble from the beginning, and the divorce rate confirms this. Our Abba Father's design of one flesh will reveal quickly what the future of any marriage holds.

But best of all, the process of going through the steps of glorifying our Abba Father for a sanctified marriage can lift anyone into the relationship he intended for us with him, married or not. This process is for everyone to use in all situations of life where we relate to others as friends or co-workers or in need.

We get caught up in the traditional marriage ceremony with where it is, and the focus, the church, the preacher, the bride, the music, the guests, etc., all focused on the bride. Marriage is so important that I want to make sure we understand how much marriage means to our Abba Father and emphasize that it is a covenant that he oversees. That is why our sanctified marriage vow is made to our Abba Father, not to each other.

My point is not to diminish the traditional ceremony. Still, I can only say how much the Holy Spirit is leading me to lift the marriage ceremony more upward to our Abba Father and include his presence more intimately. That feels so good in spirit.

Malachi 2:13-16, "*And this again ye do: ye cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with weeping, and with sighing, insomuch that he regardeth not the offering any more, neither receiveth it with good will at your hand. Yet ye say, Wherefore? Because Yahweh hath been witness between thee and the wife of thy youth, against whom thou hast dealt treacherously, though she is thy companion, and the wife of thy covenant. And did he not make one, although he had the residue of the Spirit? And wherefore one? He sought a godly seed. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously against the wife of his youth. For I hate putting away, saith Yahweh, the God of Israel, and him that covereth his garment with violence, saith Yahweh of hosts: therefore take heed to your spirit, that ye deal not treacherously*."

We know our Abba Father hates divorce, but that soundbite is too simple for most people to consider, as evidenced by the divorce data. Malachi shows us our Abba Father in retreat from us when the marriage goes astray from him. Driving our Abba Father away, even though forgiven by Jesus, is not the relationship to strive for with our Abba Father. He wants better, and we miss out on his full glory when we drive him away. The answer is to enter marriage in a godly way and continue to live it in his design, glorifying him.

In ancient times, the marriage did not result from the meeting, dating, and falling-in-love cycle we see today. Dating did not exist as a leisure pastime. As God's children progressed from hunting/gathering to agriculture/corralled animals, and then to industrialization, the pathway to marriage changed and eliminated the parent's role except for their opinion and the budget.

It is not clear the church has adjusted enough to the structural changes of society to defeat the enemy's attack on faith and marriage. Sanctified marriage may well be the catalyst to change Christian behavior across the board because it applies to all believers living as the bride to our Groom, Jesus Christ, and the human union.

It seems ironic that the Apostle Paul, the expert on marriage, did not get married. Still, Peter and other Apostles did. 1 Cor 9:5, "*Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas*?" Paul's reason was that he was 100% dedicated to his work for our Abba Father as a leader. Paul recognized that is not everyone's call, 1 Corinthians 7:7, "*Yet I would that all men were even as I myself. Howbeit each man hath his own gift from God, one after this manner, and another after that.*"

I lifted v7:3-5 out of 1 Corinthians to highlight its glory and reveal the power of "one flesh" in practicing v7:3-5. Without the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, Paul's presentation of marriage may not look as sanctified as we expect. Still, his context in 1 Corinthians 7 is inventing the church and a great example of our Abba Father working through people. It is only in the context of doing our Abba Father's work on the frontline that Paul gives marriage a lower priority.

Society raises everyone today in the culture of secular marriage. The glory of our Abba Father is that it is never too late. The opportunity is available to re-tool all marriages into sanctified marriages that glorify our Abba Father with the concept of one flesh as the goal. Review all the doctrines and idols that define your life and convert them into love and gifts of love and godly partnership.

## S8M5: There is no “Me”

This message is One Flesh Part 2. It is time to separate the two types of marriage that exist in our Abba Father's world and American society. Our Abba Father created marriage for his purpose and design; his children created civil marriage for fee revenue and government protection of children, spouses, and assets. It is time to recognize the difference in glorifying God.

Our Abba Father does not reference "sanctified marriage" in the Scripture. He should not have to because the sanctification process is supposed to be the center point of our entire earth-life. Our Abba Father calls believers to dedicate their lives to the sanctification process leading to righteousness and carry that into marriage.

However, ELB gets in the way of many believers and seriously stunts their spiritual growth because they do not see the Groom/bride relationship with Christ that we all have, even if not married to a spouse.

The purpose of our sanctified marriage presentation is to re-energize the sanctification process and lift godly marriages out of the secular fray to make glorifying our Abba Father the foundation of our marriage. The sanctified marriage vows are made to our Abba Father as one flesh, not to each other. Obviously, that is just a recommendation; the intent is to drive the vow to prayer and start the sanctified marriage with a conversation with our Abba Father. S8M8 presents the vow in detail.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, John 3:3, "*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except one be born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*" 1 John 4:13 adds, "*hereby we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.*" John tells us that Christ is in the believer through the Holy Spirit, and the believer is in him. In other words, believers become one with our Abba Father.

We need to pause for the word "abide" because it is a divine power word, not just a synonym for "live in" or "dwell in." Abide is a permanent, forever indwelling, lifelong promise and condition of our life with Christ in us and us in him.

When we are born again, we become justified by our Abba Father into righteousness and are called to serve him and his purpose as a new creation with eternal life in relationship with him. Too many believers add Jesus to their earthly life and do not get excited about 2 Corinthians 5, which we must read in full. Verses 14-17, "*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they that live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again. Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh: even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more. Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become new.*" Sanctified marriage is a man and a woman who strive to live a 2 Corinthians 5 life with our Abba Father.

Let's look at how we do that. Mark 10:6-9 repeats Genesis 2:24 in describing sanctified marriage, "*But from the beginning of the creation, Male and female made he them. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh: so that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.*"

This passage is famous for wedding ceremonies, but we miss its meaning because we are drawn to the conclusion (let not man separate) and ignore the foundational premise of one flesh. What our Abba Father is saying is that we transform our individual "me" into one "us" or "we" or "our" in sanctified marriage. There is no "me" in sanctified marriage.

When we add Isaiah 43:7, as confirmed in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "*every one that is called by my name, and whom I have created for my glory, whom I have formed, yea, whom I have made*," we see the reality that our "me" should have ended when we received Christ as our Lord and Savior. We replace our "me" as believers with "thy will." But we are a stiff-necked people.

In a sanctified marriage, the bride and groom should vow to our Abba Father as one flesh to obey his plan for marriage and seek his help to glorify him in it. Our pre-marital counseling is focused entirely on growing a couple's faith in that vow, not negotiating territory in a marriage for each "me" to live separately in their ELB.

Our Abba Father is practical so let's continue. He created man and woman as equal in his image, Genesis 1:27, "*And God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*"

1 Corinthians 11:9-12 affirms Genesis, "*for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man: for this cause ought the woman to have a sign of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God.*"

We commonly refer to marriage as a "partnership," which is not a godly term, and it typically consists of two "mes" ("mes" is the plural of "me," not often seen). Our Abba Father deals in permanent covenants while partnerships are contracts that are easily broken and ended. Sanctified marriage is not a partnership; it is a one-flesh covenant.

In business, a hypothesis says, "partnerships don't work," which applies to too many marriage partnerships. The reason is that decision-making can be complex when two "me" people disagree, and our Abba Father knows that people even disagree about him. Ephesians 5:21-23 reveals the solution, "*subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ. Wives, be in subjection unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, being himself the saviour of the body*."

Men and women are made equal, but for different purposes. The woman chooses to obey her husband because our Abba Father asks her to. And in doing so she knows she is both equal and blessed by our Abba Father for her obedience to him. We have to look at this experience through our Abba Father's eyes, not our dead earthly eyes. Our Abba Father seeks harmony and designates man as the final decision maker, not because man is superior, but because our Abba Father wants harmony and made his plan in his infinite wisdom. Please pray on that.

Too many people will read the previous paragraph and see it as our Abba Father giving the man back his "me," and that is not the case. The "us" or oneness still defines the relationship. The point is that when the woman says to the man, "have some forbidden fruit," the man is confident in saying, "no, that is not our Abba Father's way," and that is all the woman needs to return the fruit to the ground.

The shoe can just as quickly be on the other foot. Men can serve up forbidden fruit as well. The woman then reminds the man of his duty to our Abba Father and her to make the godly decision, which must be enough in a sanctified marriage. Most differences in a sanctified marriage must be about our Abba Father, not a bruised "me" trying to get recognized.

Alternating peas, corn, and broccoli for the dinner vegetable is still an "us" decision, but our Abba Father's only interest is the harmony in the "us." Ephesians 5:24-33 affirms that man does not get his "me" back in sanctified marriage, "*But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his own wife loveth himself: for no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as Christ also the church; because we are members of his body. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is great: but I speak in regard of Christ and of the church. Nevertheless do ye also severally love each one his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she fear her husband.*"

The reality of a life that glorifies our Abba Father is that almost nothing we fret about in earthly life means anything to him and should not be allowed to infect a sanctified marriage nor any believer in the single life.

## S8M6: The Proverbs 31 Woman

We must start from scratch to glorify our Abba Father in sanctified marriage. He reveals what he thinks about a wife in Proverbs 31, “*But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised.*” The Proverbs 31 woman disavows any man from thinking he is the king of the household and the wife is his lesser servant in sanctified marriage.

### Proverbs 31

*Who can find a virtuous wife? For her worth is far above rubies. The heart of her husband safely trusts her; So he will have no lack of gain. She does him good and not evil All the days of her life. She seeks wool and flax, And willingly works with her hands. She is like the merchant ships, She brings her food from afar. She also rises while it is yet night,*

*And provides food for her household, And a portion for her maidservants. She considers a field and buys it; From her profits she plants a vineyard. She girds herself with strength, And strengthens her arms. She perceives that her merchandise is good, And her lamp does not go out by night. She stretches out her hands to the distaff, And her hand holds the spindle. She extends her hand to the poor,*

*Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of snow for her household, For all her household is clothed with scarlet. She makes tapestry for herself; Her clothing is fine linen and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, When he sits among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, And supplies sashes for the merchants. Strength and honor are her clothing; She shall rejoice in time to come. She opens her mouth with wisdom,*

*And on her tongue is the law of kindness. She watches over the ways of her household, And does not eat the bread of idleness. Her children rise up and call her blessed; Her husband also, and he praises her: “Many daughters have done well, But you excel them all.” Charm is deceitful and beauty is passing, But a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands, And let her own works praise her in the gates.*

## S8M7: Intimacy and Sanctified Marriage

"How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! This thy stature is like to a palm-tree, And thy breasts to its clusters. I said, I will climb up into the palm-tree, I will take hold of the branches thereof: Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine, And the smell of thy breath like apples, And thy mouth like the best wine, That goeth down smoothly for my beloved, Gliding through the lips of those that are asleep. I am my beloved’s; And his desire is toward me. Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field; Let us lodge in the villages. Let us get up early to the vineyards; Let us see whether the vine hath budded, And its blossom is open, And the pomegranates are in flower: There will I give thee my love."

So what do you think, the words of Daniel Steel, Nora Roberts, or our Abba Father? The answer is our Abba Father, and the above passage is from the Song of Songs 7:6-12. If this book were first discovered with the Dead Sea Scrolls, it would have been included with other ancient Egyptian love poetry written in its time. But it was not; it is part of the Old Testament Canon.

Something amazing about the Song of Songs is the number of Christian scholars that see it also as an allegory for the relationship of Christ, the groom with his church, and the bride as described in the Revelation of Jesus Christ, just as Hebrew scholars see it as an allegory for God and Israel. Our Abba Father created marriage to be a relationship that is so special that it brings us as close to our Abba Father on earth as possible. Please pray on that thought.

Our Abba Father betrothed Christ to us. As we head into marriage, it should be evident that any approach to marriage other than a sanctified marriage created and directed by him for his children will fall short.

But the gloriously infinite grace of our Abba Father is such that existing marriages and engagements, which I call "for better or worse" marriages, can all be transformed into sanctified marriages and leave conventional psychology and counseling behind. The Song of Songs presented by our Abba Father reveals an intimacy superior to the selfish, impersonal, ephemeral "eros" coupling many believers engage. It is our prayer that all believers strive for a sanctified marriage.

We also pray that young people learn about sanctified marriage and understand how important it is to wait for it in glory to our Abba Father because it is so worthy. Too many people, especially young people, do not know what they are throwing away when engaging in casual sex.

Sexual sin is so prevalent in the Scripture that it is easy to miss that our Abba Father created a godly expression of physical intimacy that is so wonderful that it transcends the earthly eros coupling. The mutual delight in physical beauty and sexual expression is all part of the creation that our Abba Father declared was "very good."

The Song of Songs is a celebration of our Abba Father's creation that was sung for the harvest festivals, Hebrew weddings, and important family gatherings in ancient times and should be the foundation of intimacy in sanctified marriage today.

Rabbi Aqiba, an esteemed first-century Jewish scholar, gives us a perspective on the importance of the Song of Songs that goes far beyond the typical description of one of the five wisdom books in the Canon. To quote the Rabbi in the Jewish Mishnah (2nd Century writing included in the Talmud):

"The whole world is not worth the day on which the Song of Songs was given to Israel, for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is the Holy of Holies." This Hebrew construction means the Song of Songs is the best Song ever written. Please pray on that. A little more about the Song:

"In the first century, at the Council of Jamnia, Jewish sages gathered to consider what texts should be included in the sacred scriptures. Rabbi Aqiba, an esteemed Jewish scholar, persuasively argued that the Song of Songs was divine writ; indeed, that this great work was the apex of Jewish Scripture. For the Jews of this period the Song of Songs was a set of poems on the sanctity of love and of the love of God for Israel.

Christians saw in this text an allegory for the intimate relationship between Christ and the church. The eloquent lyricism of the Song's poetry and the lush descriptions of the physical and spirit union between the lover and the beloved express the profound passion of the lover of God's children, Jesus, for each human being. Our Abba Father, the lover of his children, woos and animates all loving relationships." (http://www.virtualmuseum.ca/sgc-cms)”

Our Abba Father's purpose of sex in marriage is to grow an intimacy that grows godliness. No other human relationship comes close. Our previous chapters highlight the enormity of godliness built into a sanctified marriage, providing a spirit and physical experience that glorifies our Abba Father and produces immediate reward and satisfaction.

Ecclesiastes 9:9, "*Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest all the days of thy life of vanity, which he hath given thee under the sun, all thy days of vanity: for that is thy portion in life, and in thy labor wherein thou laborest under the sun*."

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 10:31, "*Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God*." Picture your relationship with our Abba Father producing a similar experience to marital intimacy and realize how rewarding it is for a couple to work together in glorifying our Abba Father in all of their lives! That is an incredible realization.

It has to lead to mutual joy, and couples should seriously consider doing Holy Bible study and prayer together and segue into an intimate experience. (I almost wrote "at the end of the day" in the previous line, but there is no reason to limit it.)

We looked at Paul's letter to the Ephesians in the previous chapter. His first letter to the Corinthians can be a buzzkill if we do not realize he is addressing a church planted in the middle of a moral cesspool of pagan worshippers. In that context, I extract 7:3-5 which is titled "Principles of Marriage," as Paul was separating marriage from evil to protect marriage.

"*Let the husband render unto the wife her due: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power over her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power over his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be by consent for a season, that ye may give yourselves unto prayer, and may be together again, that Satan tempt you not because of your incontinency.*"

Paul is saying that intimacy in marriage is a giving experience, not a receiving experience, and it is mutual, equal, and godly. Hebrews 13:4, "*Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge*." An old joke asks, "Why don't Baptists make love standing up?" "Because they are afraid someone will accuse them of dancing." There are no taboos in the sanctified marriage bed when giving to each other as our Abba Father designed. When we look back on the Song, we see it is a shared experience.

Let's go back to Genesis and review the creation. Verse 2:24, "*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh*." The first meaning of "one flesh" is the physical intimacy of the sexual union established in creation. The next verse, 2:25 is essential, "*And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.*" That is still the goal! Please pray on that.

But Genesis 3:7-10 changed the world, "*And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig-leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of Yahweh God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh God amongst the trees of the garden. And Yahweh God called unto the man, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.*"

After the fall of Adam and Eve, a rock was thrown into the gears of intimacy. The enemy had his weapon and now does everything he can to promote more sex outside marriage and less sex inside. Sexual attraction untethered from our Abba Father became so out of control that it caused him to destroy his creation in the flood. And we are still born into a sinful world today and hear and read a Scripture that constantly reminds us of the immorality of our Abba Father's children.

Today we have the opportunity to be born again as a new creation and be naked and unashamed in the marriage union with our Abba Father! But Jesus fixed it, and we must separate our marriage from the "old life" and live it in our new creation in glory to our Abba Father. Even before Jesus' time, this is what our Abba Father prescribed, Proverbs 5:18-19, "*Let thy fountain be blessed; And rejoice in the wife of thy youth. As a loving hind and a pleasant doe, Let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; And be thou ravished always with her love*."

I often refer to my phrase ELB, and we are at the point in this chapter where questions about the "how" details of godly intimacy start to form. There is a well-known ELB reference to a partner's "needs" in intimacy that I wish to address because nothing drags us back to earth and away from living in our Abba Father's spirit world more than focusing on one's so-called "needs" in intimacy.

No solution to anything exists in focusing on a need. All answers are found in love, giving, trust, and communication that all together seek to glorify our Abba Father in the marriage. One spouse focusing on their needs is the opposite of what our Abba Father created in sanctified marriage. My point is that "need" is too strong a word as it tends to elevate itself above the love, giving, trust, and communication that actually lead to the solution. Focusing only on the so-called need is selfish and un-goldy, and it does not work. Stop doing that!

Before we close this chapter, I would like to dig a little deeper into the Song and encourage people to read it together until they embed it in their vision of marriage. First, the Song is not one narrative from beginning to end. It is six separate intimate engagements with a woman and her lover exploring their commitment, desire, fear, and passion while, in the process, presenting the affirmation of our Abba Father's blessing on such explicit sexuality in marriage.

The Song is all about the feelings between two lovers. The Song draws us into the experience with the lovers, and we walk with them as they move forward. The Song tells us nothing about the lovers, which makes walking with them easy for anyone.

Studying the Song is a different exercise from this writing. I believe it does the best job of presenting both the beauty and the explanation. I strongly recommend that couples buy a paper or electronic version of the commentary on the Song of Songs by Richard S. Hess. The electronic version allows notes to be captured and printed.

The reality is only God's created purpose can achieve the satisfaction we long for in the intimacy of marriage, and the same is true for our marriage to Christ. Only a couple committed to a sanctified marriage can get as close to Heaven on earth as can be imagined. Only by loving and obeying our Abba Father can we find the joy and peace he promises on earth. And after the earthly season of our eternal life with him is over, we move into Heaven in the final step of our relationship with him.

## S8M8: The Vow and Sanctified Marriage

There is no reference to any marriage vow in Scripture. In 1549, Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury, created the standard church wedding vow in the Book of Common Prayer. He wrote the book to bring Catholic Liturgy into the English language from Latin. He did not state the extent of the Holy Spirit's inspiration in his work, but given the marriage failure rate, it seems to be time to bring our vows directly to our Abba Father.

Marriage vows to each other can easily center the focus on this season of life with our Abba Father as an accessory, when the ceremony is only performed in his presence and not dedicated to him. My premise is that if we recognize eternal life with our Abba Father and bring our marriage to him, we stand a much better chance of not parting before death.

### Suggested Prayer and Vows

**Groom**: My love, our Abba Father has blessed me with you, the spouse of my life. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James 1:17). In the eyes of our Abba Father, I join with you today to become one flesh with you in glory and service to him. I offer you this ring as a symbol of our union, which we dedicate to our Abba Father and his design for husband and wife, which will be our guide for all our days.

**Bride**: My love, our Abba Father has blessed me with you, the love of my life. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." (James 1:17). I join with you today in the eyes of our Abba Father, to become one flesh with you in glory to him. I offer you this ring as a symbol of our union dedicated to our Abba Father and his design for husband and wife, which will be our guide for all our days.

Abba Father, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven. You are our first love, and tell us if we love one another, you live in us, we live in you, and your love is complete in us (1 John 4:12). What an incredible gift; thank you.

We come before you today Abba Father, with the promise of becoming one flesh, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, to lift our marriage covenant up to you. Your covenants with your people are forever, and we ask your help to glorify you with our marriage through all our days.

You have blessed us with each other, and we are forever grateful for your wonderful gift. “*You tell us Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh”* (Gen 2:24), and you tell us two cannot walk together except they are agreed (Amos 3:3). We ask you to help us truly be agreed in one flesh in our life together.

You tell us, “Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong doing but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things” (1 Cor 13:4-7). Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” (Eph 4:2). We ask you to give us the strength and wisdom to live in your love.

You tell us to render to each other the affection due and that we do not have authority over our own bodies but to each other's (1 Cor 7:3-4) so that we can give up ourselves and give to each other without restraint. We thank you for the beautiful relationship for us that you have designed and ask you to guide us down the path of life in glory to you.

You say to the wife to love her husband (Titus 2:3), and you say to the husband to love his wife, just as Christ loves the church. He gave up his life for her (Eph 5:25). You tell us that we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ (Eph 4:15) so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith—that we, being rooted and grounded in love, may have the strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that it may fill us with all the fullness of you (Eph 3:17-19)

We hear your words Abba Father, lift our marriage up to you, and ask that your continued blessing, guidance, growth, and strength always be with us as we worship and glorify you in all we do. Therefore, what you have joined together, let no one separate (Mark 10:9).

## S8M9: Sinful Flesh

Our vows in sanctified marriage are to our Abba Father. ELB is the enemy of marriage and the effect of an ELB marriage on children perpetuates itself. This chapter is toward the end because we want every possible growth in our relationship with our Abba Father to occur before stepping into sanctified marriage because it is set apart and holy. And incredible!

“The principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness, and spirit hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (Eph 6:12) require that we acknowledge them in the context of sanctified marriage. There is an enormity of study and data on marriage failure so we will take a look at the common problem areas and then bring them into the context of sanctified marriage, one flesh, and an enemy trying to infect everyone.

We included the messages on our Abba Father’s Spirit Creation in Chapter 3 because embracing it is essential to our relationship with him. Believers with ELB tend to ignore the spirit world and many others who acknowledge it only do so at the minimum with Satan and angels.

Our question is, how do we engage the ELB that Paul presents to us with such great confidence? Sanctified marriage requires that we defeat ELB, be it in the context of our spouse, our neighbors or our Abba Father.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, “For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (of the flesh) but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ . . . “

Sixteen subjects are addressed below and every one of them is shaped by our thoughts. S3M2 includes a message on our GCS, how the soul and mind are controlled by our heart with our conscience, guided by our connection to Jesus. That is the context in which all thinking should take place as believers, “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ . . . “

The minute a thought comes into our head, we need to stop it and weigh it against the word of our Abba Father. If it is a sinful thought, in the name of Jesus, drive the enemy out of your head. Not just the thought, the entire enemy invasion. Mathew 4:10, “Then Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! For it is written, ‘You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.”

By conquering death, Jesus has already defeated the enemy and Jesus in us allows us to call on his name to send the enemy away from us. But the enemy is not in the pit of fire yet, he is still trying to take as many of us with him as he can, just as we are called to bring as many as we can to Heaven. The weaker are faith is, the fewer of those around join the family. That is the point of life on earth.

Many believers confuse our Abba Father’s teaching on resisting temptation with trials and tribulations. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 10:12-13, “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.” The solution to temptation is to escape it, not fight it. If it is a thought, purge it; if it is a human, remove one of you instantly and go to our Abba Father. To many just stay in our head’s willpower instead of looking to Abba Father in temptation for strength.

The answers to marriage problems are in the Scripture, not in secular psychology and marriage/family counseling founded on ELB and self. Biblical counseling has come into its own in the last fifty years and is the only answer for a sanctified marriage unless there is a physical ailment that requires medical attention.

Our Abba Father created psychologists just as he created doctors and their research is of value but their focus on the “self” in therapy without our Abba Father is a never ending chain of experiments. Where we take issue with psychology is when the focus is directed on oneself without any deference to the Holy Spirit and power of our Abba Father’s word.

In most states, licensed psychologists are required by law to obtain written permission to introduce the subject of God in a therapy session. That should tell you all you need to know. In sanctified marriage, we glorify our Abba Father in everything we do.

### Problem Areas

Please seek biblical counseling if there are love struggles in any of the following. Be especially on the lookout for idols in our lives and convert them to our Abba Father and love.

#### Financial Problems

The income available to a marriage is usually pretty obvious. Money problems mostly relate to spending or out of reach goals. If our Abba Father’s command to become one flesh is integral to the marriage, it is understood that goals, budgets and priorities must be brought into compromised agreement as we, us and ours. Never me or mine without agreement.

One flesh giving is how idols are abandoned or transformed into gifts of love. Dave Ramsey has a financial management program which contains excellent information about money discipline and debt management with a few Scripture verses thrown in for the church market.

A sanctified marriage will work together in financial planning. Life also contains financial tragedies but they should never dismantle a sanctified marriage that trusts and glorifies our Abba Father. Money typically defines what is possible in one flesh and allocating it can be a great one flesh booster that reveals the problems that need resolved.

#### Communication Problems

Sanctified marriage should never have communication problems because communication and faith are essential to becoming one flesh. Our Abba Father may well have commanded the one flesh concept to reveal and resolve communication differences. It is often the case that what needs communicated is the problem, not the ability to communicate itself.

One flesh means always being able to speak feelings in a safe harbor and conform words and thoughts to our Abba Father, not just each other and always in his plan for harmony and union. The husband has the final say but it must always glorify our Abba Father, not just be his own will. Men, Please pray on that until you get it. Strong women (Proverbs 31), please pray on that until you get it.

A thorough review of each person’s idols that need removed or converted for a successful marriage will go a long way toward developing open communication and a “safe place” to live in. We want to go back to “naked and not ashamed” in Genesis because that presentation of being open to each other with nothing hidden can be applied to everything in sanctified marriage. There can be no secrets before our Abba Father and there cannot be any with each other in sanctified marriage.

#### Family Problems

Our Abba Father says leave your mother and father and become one flesh. The point is to take on the world, all of it, as a team and deal with it in glory to our Abba Father and each other. There is also the command to love one another as Jesus loves us. The answer to family problems lies in both of our Abba Father’s commands with him and the marriage the first priorities. If family problems exist going into marriage, they need to be confronted and resolved, not ignored.

The marriage may have to live with family problems but with the focus on our Abba Father and glorifying him, a sanctified marriage that trusts in him will see the lessons he is delivering to them that are disguised as family problems and the couple will grow in their solutions.

#### Sex Problems

The first meaning of one flesh is sexual intimacy. It is our Abba Father’s magnificent gift to married people and the marriage bed is integral to marriage. Our Abba Father’s plan is that each spouse gives to the other in intimacy, not take for themselves. This will accommodate most differences in one’s own pleasure desires but our Abba Father created naked and not ashamed and if there are barriers to intimacy, they really need to be worked out in the direction of naked and not ashamed. It cannot be emphasized enough that our Abba Father wants joy, harmony and giving in the bedroom.

There are no taboos in the marriage bed in giving love but there are plenty when demanding for our me. We are called to tune in to our spouse and fit our giving to them.

#### Friend Problems

Our Abba Father and the marriage are the priorities. Any friend who has any negative impact on a marriage needs to be resolved in favor of the one flesh marriage. If the friend is in need and the one flesh marriage does not agree to provide, put the friend up in prayer and give them over to our Abba Father.

A friend can never be allowed to damage a marriage, ever. Too many believers are in the habit of turning away from troubled people they cannot help without really thinking of praying for them and putting them in the hands of our Abba Father. Glorify our Abba Father in all that you do.

#### Personality Problems

If there are personality problems before the marriage it might be a sign that you are not letting our Abba Father help you with your choice. Too many people enter into marriage hoping issues will be tolerable or go away. It will be better to wait until they go away and the point of this book is to create a process for coming to grips with personality problems. When we are glorifying our Abba Father in our marriage, we really need to glorify him with a blessed choice or none at all.

I have no data but my suspicion is that many husbands choose the wrong partner because the sex is good (eros) but over time that cannot work. And too many wives choose a man because of his ability to provide or they just want to be married and have children. Unless a godly spouse committed to a sanctified marriage is chosen, expect trouble ahead.

#### Expectation Problems

People often approach marriage with expectations of future visions and serious disappointment can set in when they do not happen. Our Abba Father says, “do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will take care of itself” (Mat 6:34) but the real problem here is the failure to understand our relationship with him. When we lift our marriage up to him and seek to glorify him, we our building our treasure in Heaven, not here on earth. We need to be very careful when building expectations here on earth that do not trust in him because it will always be us that fails, not him.

#### Time Problems

Ongoing time problems are not really time problems, they are one flesh problems. One flesh means a couple working in harmony in all aspects of the marriage and time allocations are part of one flesh. Whatever is out of kilter and causing excessive time consumption to accomplish, something needs adjusted to bring the marriage back to one flesh harmony.

#### Addiction Problems

Drugs, alcohol and gambling abuse are all threats to the one flesh. Some couples travel the addiction road in one flesh but our Abba Father is never glorified with addiction. Never enter a marriage with someone who over serves alcohol or uses any mood altering drug or gambles beyond the one flesh amount allocated in the budget to gambling for entertainment purposes only. A marriage cannot glorify our Abba Father when we bring sin into it from this world.

Temptations in life can be very strong and very real, that is the war we enlisted for when we received Christ as our Lord and Savior. We are going to draw fire from the enemy. Our Abba Father gave us the tools we need to push back the enemy in Ephesians 6, the full armor of God. A one flesh marriage is always on the lookout for the enemy and each spouse should always have the others “6” (back). Protect your 6 with Ephesians 6!

#### Physical Abuse

A one flesh couple with an abusive spouse is unthinkable in a sanctified marriage. A spouse can agree to take abuse and become one flesh but not in glory to our Abba Father. A sanctified marriage is both in one flesh harmony and in glory to our Abba Father. Abuse of any kind is never acceptable and Scripture based help is mandatory.

### Other Common Secular Marriage Issues

#### Investment in the Marriage

I see this often in conventional help resources but I can’t get my head around this concept in sanctified marriage and one flesh. Obeying and glorifying God is a 24/7/365 life and if a marriage needs “investment,” it is a sure sign of too much “me” in the union. The solution is get rid of the me and move into one flesh, not just build in a chapter of sanctified marriage.

#### Unforgiveness

Forgiveness has its own message because it is not one of the other fifteen types of problems in sanctified marriage and one flesh. It is fundamental to sanctified marriage.

#### Being There for Your Spouse

This is another one flesh issue. Life delivers curve balls that can affect each spouse differently and disrupt the unity plan of a sanctified marriage. The solution lies in adjusting the one flesh unity plan, not falling back on a “me” position. That may seem like a difference without a distinction but unless the concepts of sanctified marriage and one flesh unity are reinforced in difficult times, the godly solution is too likely to be missed and the me gains a stronghold.

#### The Friendship Between Spouses

Friendship between spouses is a secular concept that attempts to replace what our Abba Father created but it makes no sense in the context of sanctified marriage and one flesh unity. Friendship in secular marriage means “the not eros” part of the relationship. Instead of the one flesh unity in glorifying Abba Father of sanctified marriage, secular marriage is a triune of “eros, me and my friend,” and probably won’t survive with just eros and me. Is it any wonder such an earth-life bias concept does not work?

#### Inflexibility

This is a “me” issue that should be flushed out before marriage. For existing marriages moving toward sanctified marriage, the one flesh unity decisions will reveal the state of the marriage. The me cannot exist in sanctified marriage because all the me idols need converted to gifts of love or dropped and cannot be held onto.

#### Weak Self-Knowledge

This is another secular issue but believers live in the full range of the sanctification scale which means earth-life bias may still dominate their lives. I would venture that the vast majority of believers live at the low end of the sanctification scale (the top bar is very high) and why this book is written.

The one-flesh unity process could be the best outline for measuring self-knowledge and connecting ourself to our Abba Father there is. Just maybe our Abba Father knew what he was doing? One of the great benefits of sanctified marriage as we grow in sanctification is that the marriage automatically grows better with it. That is a real gift of our Abba Father.