

## **1. FATHER TO THE FAMILY**

### **Illustration. An ideal Father to a natural family.**

This is what God had in mind when He revealed Himself as Father. He knew it was an image we were familiar with and could relate to.

Considering God as "Father to the Family" is perhaps one of the aspects of God that we are most familiar with, and the Lord's Prayer reinforces that view. We shall look at the Lord's prayer as part of our study, but it is important to set this view of God in its wider context first.

### **GOD IS THE FATHER OF.....WHO?**

The Bible links God's creative act (He made the world and everyone and everything in it) with the concept of fatherhood. Just as a natural father is "responsible for the creation" of his children, so God has a father-like responsibility and care for everything he has made.

Consider Deuteronomy 32:6 Isaiah 64:8 Malachi 2:10.

- How do these verses illustrate the cares and duties of a father?
- How do these verses illustrate the responsibilities of a child?

### **....AND HE CARES FOR ....THE NEEDY**

One inescapable observation throughout the Bible is that God has a special concern for the vulnerable in society, and it clearly flows from Him being Father of all.

Consider Psalm 68:5 Psalm 10:12-14 Psalm 146:9

- What categories of people are described as being under God's special care?
- How do you think that concern should be reflected in our church, or neighbourhood, or society?
- There are some extremely complex issues involved in deciding a policy for international aid, distribution of wealth, immigration policy, fair trading etc. How should we move forward in determining our views and the acting on these issues?

### **...AND HE CARES FOR.....HIS "TWICE BORN CHILDREN"**

If God cares for His creation so much, how much more does He care for those who have been "twice born"!

See 1Peter 1:3-8 Romans 5:9-11 Romans 8:32

- We are children (sons) of God  
Romans 8:16, 21 Romans 9:26 1John 5:1 John 1:12 Galatians 3:26
- And our privilege is to be His Heirs  
Romans 8:17 Titus 3:7 Hebrews 6:17 Galatians 3:26-29
- How can you be sure that you are an heir of God? (John 1:12!)
- Do you think that this is true for all people who have put their trust in Jesus for salvation?
- How might you help another believer who is not sure of their salvation?

***"God says it in His Word. I believe it in my heart. That settles it!"***

### **ATTRIBUTES OF FATHERHOOD**

Read the following. Isaiah 64:8 Matthew 7:11 Hebrews 12:9

- What attributes of God's fatherhood can you identify?
- Can you recognise any of these in how God has dealt with you?

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Read Matthew 6:7-11 Think through this prayer in the light of the Fatherhood of God.

- His position  
The extent of His Fatherhood  
His authority  
His desires and objectives
- The way He deals with us  
choosing our path  
discipline  
care

## **2. HEAD TO THE BODY.**

### **Illustration. The human body. Read 1 Cor.12:14-26**

In the body, the heart pumps the blood which gives life, **but it's the head that meaning to that life.** All intelligence, emotion, insight, language, learning, creativity, appreciation and much more are only possible because of the head.

***Think those things through for a moment with your group, and then spend a few minutes translating them into the spiritual realm.***

According to this God-given illustration, this is Christ's great function. By His headship, through His Spirit, He brings that extra dimension to life that makes all the difference. Just as the head introduces the body to understanding and interaction with the real world, so the Lord brings us to understanding and interaction with His world, **the world that really matters.**

We will quote this again and again, but this illustration gives new meaning to Jesus' words "apart from me you can do nothing". John 15:5.

The natural body is designed for meaningful function....so is the Body of Christ. Three factors bring God's contribution to our roles as members of His Body, the Church.

### **HEAD TO THE BODY....a matter of choice, trust and assignment**

#### **1. He has gifted us all - we all have ability.**

Read Romans 12: 3-6a.

- Think of yourself with sober judgment. V.3. Gifts are not to generate pride.
- We don't all have the same function. V.4. The body needs and is provided with different members
- We have different gifts, according to His Grace, NB. These are gifts of Grace...not earned or deserved in any way. Your gifting is the choice of the Head...**its how God sees you!**

***We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. Eph.2:10***

#### **2. He has trusted us all - we all have responsibility**

Read John 15:16....I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit.

The Head has called us Fishers of men [Matt.4:19], salt of the earth, light of the world [Matt.5:13-16], ambassadors [2 Cor.5:20].

Add to the list. We are plan A...there is no plan B. He trusts us!! Therefore we have a responsibility.

***No un-gifted members! No ministers without portfolio! No spare parts or loose canons. Just members with ability to play their part, and trust from the head that they will do so!***

#### **3. He has commissioned us all - we all have an assignment.**

Our gifting **IS** our assignment. The Head has ordained it so, and He said "Go!"

He has a place for us in the Body, a function for us in the Body, and an expectation that we will fulfil His design, and make the Body work.

### **WHAT DOES JESUS CONTRIBUTE AS THE HEAD TO THE BODY?**

- By gifting us he gives direction and meaning to our spiritual existence.
- By trusting us he gives us the opportunity to make our own, unique contribution, in our own way, within the gifting parameters and so find fulfilment. **There is nothing like partnership, when the partner is Jesus!**
- By assigning us, He gives us authority in the role He has called us to. Paul was called by the Lord as an apostle. No-where does he allow anyone to question his apostolic role in the early church.

**If the King has sent you, His authority becomes yours.**

### **3. MASTER TO THE SERVANTS**

**Illustration.** The servant structure in a large household, with the authority of the head servant or housekeeper..

Jesus wants to call us friends, but friendship with Him does not preclude servant-hood. **Read John 15:14.** The Bible is full of the idea that God's people, old and new testament, are His servants. It is an image that has a lot to teach us.

#### **SERVANTHOOD IS TO DO WITH THE IMMEDIATE RATHER THAN THE BIG PICTURE.**

The previous picture of The Body of Christ is an overall one, one of the Head's long-term actions for the members. A head servant in a great house was not primarily concerned with next year, but much more with the next moment. The immediate needs of the household predominated, much more a day-to-day or even hour by hour scenario, **and it introduces us to the input of God to our daily walk and experience.**

**God wants a well-run household, and that means a number of things that are fundamental to our daily living.**

#### **DAILY PRIORITIES** read Mark 1::21-39 "A day in the life of Jesus".

Priorities are vital. The urgent often replaces the important. Look at Jesus' day. Go through it and decide which things were planned and which were spontaneous. Which was which?

***Notice above all that real power was shown in the spontaneous.***

This leads us to the second issue

#### **DAILY GUIDANCE** Proverbs 3:5-6

In the great households, the day began with the instructions for the day. Do we give the Master opportunity to talk to us about the day ahead. A servant is nothing without instructions. ***Spontaneous moments are no different to the planned except in the timing of the instructions. Whether planned or spontaneous, secret is to be responding to His wishes.***

V.5 Trust Him more than yourself.

- Do I really believe in God's willingness and ability to guide ME? Ps.25:9
- Is my understanding my real resource? Ps.32:8

V6. Include Him and He will come through. John 16:13, Ps.37:1-7.

#### **DAILY OBEDIENCE** Acts 13:22

David saw himself primarily as God's servant. See his prayers. 1 Sam.23:10-11, 2 Sam.7:10-29. A quick run down the concordance, ref. "thy servant", really underlines this point.

He lived it out by doing All the Lord required. This obviously does not mean he was perfect in all his actions, because he clearly wasn't, but he had the servant-heart. **It was attitude rather than action!**

***No matter how good the Master of the servants, it comes down in the end to the obedience of the lowest scullery-maid.***

Servants of the Lord are called to "Go", "Do", "Be".

**The Master has the well-being of His Kingdom at heart. He looks for those who share it.....daily!**

**What I do today should serve the plans of "the Family" upstairs**

## 4. BRIDEGROOM TO THE BRIDE

**Illustration.** An eastern Royal wedding. Read Revelation 19:6-8

Weddings in Bible days were different. They reached the same goal as a modern wedding but by a different route, and the bridegrooms role, especially if the bridegroom was a prince or king was very different. The image is very instructive for us as the People of God.

### THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE.

- Jesus refers to Himself as the bridegroom when questioned about John the Baptist's disciples habit of fasting. Matt.9:15, He sees Himself as the bridegroom and His own disciples as guests.
- Paul opens the picture up a little more when he likens the church's relationship to Christ to that of a wife to a husband. He places the emphasis on Christ's preparation of His bride, that she might be without spot or blemish. Eph.5:25-27.
- Then, in Revelation 19:6-8 we read of the wedding of the Lamb, and a bride who has made herself ready. Then in Revelation 21:2 & 9-10. we see the bride as a city, the new Jerusalem. The apparent contradiction is resolved in Rev. 3:12-13. Here a person becomes a pillar in the temple, and is written on with name of the new Jerusalem. The city is not bricks and mortar, but God's people, and God's people are the city, an eternal edifice to God's honour and glory.
- The idea of God's people being a building or buildings, or even stones is echoed with regard to the people of Israel and Mount Zion, Isa 62:1-5, and in 1 Cor.3:9-17, Eph.2:19-22, 1 Pet.2:1-8.

### THE CUSTOM.

In a royal wedding, certain things pertained.

**Everything was at the king's expense and the bride made herself ready.**

In royal circles (read Esther 2 for insight on preparation) this could take 18 months, during which everything necessary to make the best of the bride's beauty was provided, and during which time she herself made every effort to please the king..

**There was a betrothal period.** The betrothal was a ceremony that was much more binding than an engagement, when the dowry would be given and promises of commitment made.

**There was the wedding ceremony.** The bridegroom would prepare his feast, and then come to the bride's home to take her to be with him in his own house.

### THE BIBLICAL IMAGE

Take the above points one at a time and see how graphically they portray the Lord's relationship with, and return for the Church, His Bride.

**At the King's expense.** The Lord has provided all we need in order to be prepared for His return, to be a bride that is ready.

*His divine power has given us everything we need for life and Godliness....* 2 Pet.1:3  
Eph.1:17-21, Phil.2:13

**The Bride makes herself ready.** We have an individual responsibility to make the most of what the Lord has supplied, and to be ready for His return.

*Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.*  
Matt 24:42, Col.1:22-23 1 Cor.9:24-27

#### **The Betrothal**

The betrothal has taken place. A price has been paid for each one of us, Christ has committed himself to us and we to Him.

*I have promised you to one husband, to Christ.* 2 Cor.11:2

#### **The Wedding**

The bridegroom prepares His feast. God the father has prepared the wedding feast.

Everything will be ready cf Matt 22:4. also Rev.19:9

Christ then comes for the bride. The Lord's return to take His people home is what the Church waits for.

*The Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a shout.....so shall we be with the Lord forever.* 1Thess.4:16-18 also Matt:24:31, 2 Thess.2;1-2.

## THE BRIDEGROOM IS COMING...THERE'S GOING TO BE A CELEBRATION.

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