Does God's Intimate Friendship Bless Your House? (Part 1)

By Kim Butts

"Oh, for the days when I was in my prime, when God's intimate friendship blessed my house, when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me, when my path was drenched with cream and the rock poured out for me streams of olive oil" (Job 29:4-6).

If your family is like most, your lives are filled with busyness and activity. It may be almost impossible to sit down to a leisurely meal together and just catch up on how everyone is doing. Many of our homes are noisy and we are all in constant motion – going from school and work to soccer practice, piano lessons, church activities, etc. Our lives are often filled with noise, television or video games during the brief times we spend at home. If we do have family devotions, or quiet times, they are rushed and squeezed into our already packed schedule. Sometimes, our spiritual lives are dictated by how much time is left after everything else.

If any of this sounds familiar, it may be time to stop and re-evaluate individual and family priorities. Is our personal relationship with Jesus taking a back seat to our worldly pursuits? Are we dependent upon any person, thing or activity more than upon the Lord? Our Heavenly Father desires to bless our homes with His intimate friendship…and yet, we are missing His blessing by neglecting to nurture our relationship with Him. There are too many other things, even our own well-meaning Christian activities, that the Enemy himself uses to siphon off our time so that there is none left in which to commune with the Lord.

The world encourages works over relationship – accomplishments over staying attached to the Vine (John 15:1-5). Our works should only come from the overflow of our relationship with Christ. Only then can we be certain that what we keep busy doing is bearing fruit for His Kingdom. Sometimes what seems good to our fleshly minds may not be very spiritually minded.

Revelation 2:1-7 is the Lord's warning to the Ephesian church. Although they had been hard-working for the Lord, and had endured hardships – still, they had lost what was most important – their "first love". That first love is Jesus Christ! The Lord Himself! They had been so busy working ***for*** the Lord that they neglected to spend time ***with*** Him. In Revelation 3:14-16, the church in Laodicea was chastised by the Lord for being merely lukewarm because their deeds were neither hot nor cold. They were warned that because of their complacency, the Lord was about to spit them out of His mouth!

Does your family resemble one of these churches? Have you worked so hard for God that you have neglected your first love – Him? Or, have you just gone about your daily lives without really doing much of anything that has significance for the Kingdom? If so, a major adjustment is necessary! It is impossible to have intimate friendship with the Lord if you are in either of these states. He is under no obligation to bless when we do not obey.

Job's love for God, and his complete devotion to Him was more important than anything or

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anyone else. He yearned to see God and be His friend: "I know that my Redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God; I myself will see him with my own eyes—I, and not another. How my heart yearns within me" (Job 19:25-27)! This relationship was even more important than his family, his possessions or his work. "God's intimate friendship" blessed Job's home because Job's home was totally dedicated to the Lord. His life was one of constant devotion and worship.

Job's family life, his possessions and his household were blessed by the Lord because Job had his priorities in the correct order. First and foremost, he loved, feared (respected) and obeyed the Lord God: "Then the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil'" (Job 1:8). Every blessing came from the overflow of his relationship with his Father – his heavenly friend. This relationship was so strong that it withstood the devastation that the Accuser took out upon him in an attempt to get him to turn away from God. He struggled when it seemed he had lost everything, and when he was afflicted physically – but in the end, his intimate relationship with the living God resulted in abundant blessings and long life. God's intimate friendship once again blessed his house.

Moses and Abraham each experienced a special "intimate friendship" with the Lord: "The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend…" (Exodus 33:11a). "And the scripture was fulfilled that says, 'Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,' and he was called God's friend" (James 2:23). All three of these men – Abraham, Moses and Job – experienced God's intimate friendship. How can we have this experience in our own lives and in the lives of our families? Jesus Christ has given us the answer and a clear direction about what it means to be His friend: "You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. This is my command: Love each other" (John 15:14-17).

In this passage of Scripture, Jesus shows us what is needed to have an intimate friendship with God:

- We are to **do** what He commands. In other words – we must be obedient.
- We are to put into practice what Jesus has made known to us about the Father – in other words, we must be holy as He is holy.
- We are to go and bear lasting fruit for His Kingdom.
- We are to intercede in the name of Christ, believing that He will answer.
- We are to love each other – the most important of all of His commands.

As you consider these five areas, seek His face in prayer. These areas are embedded in the perfect will of God for our lives – yet, we need His divine help and guidance to succeed in accomplishing what He asks of us. All five areas are entwined together in the spiritual realm, so that our lives might become increasingly more like Christ. Study, pray and put into practice these Scriptures individually, and together as a family, with your desire being to develop intimate friendship with the Father.

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Obey The Lord's Commands

The first thing we need to realize in our families is that we must not just read the word of God, or listen to it – we must DO what it says: "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in the mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like" (James 1:22-24).

If we are obedient to His commands, the Lord promises that His intimate friendship will bless our home:

"He replied, 'Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it'" (Luke 11:28).

"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him" (John 14:21).

"Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'" (John 14:23).

As a family, take note of every command the Lord gives us as you study the Scriptures. Talk about them as you come across them to see how everyone is doing with each command and what changes might need to be made in your lives and lifestyles to be more obedient to those that are difficult. Be determined that you will hasten and not delay to obey His commands (Psalm 119:60). Know that you will joyfully obey because you know that His statutes are wonderful (Psalm 119:129).

For more help in this area, see the March 2002 issue – *Don't Forget What You Look Like – Teaching Children to Obey the Word of God.*

Be Holy As He Is Holy

Intimate friendship with God requires that we seek to be holy as He is holy: "Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: 'Be holy, because I am holy'" (1 Peter 1:13-16).

Individually, and then as a family, we must offer our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is our spiritual act of worship. We must not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. Then, and only then, will we be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will (Romans 12:1-2). In order to do this, we must prayerfully prepare to fight off the Enemy, who will try to hinder us and deceive us at every turn.

Remember, the first thing we must do is to obey His commands. One of His commands is that we be holy as He is holy. To be holy we must not conform to the world's patterns (as the Enemy will tempt us to do), but be transformed by the renewing of our minds. When we obey

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and live holy lives, the love of God can be made complete in us: "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God’s love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:3-6). Do you see how obedience, holiness and love (which we’ll examine soon) are intertwined? Watch how often the Lord will bring His precepts into focus clearly by relating them to one another as you study the Scripture.

"Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to an idol or swear by what is false. He will receive blessing from the LORD and vindication from God his Savior" (Psalm 24:3-5). What is this blessing as we seek to live holy lives? I believe that it is God’s intimate friendship blessing our homes!

Part Two of this article will be in the May issue of *Herald of His Coming*.

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