

## GOD'S FAMILY & OUR FAMILIES

One night away back in May 1988, not long after we ended our involvement in organised church, I lay awake and was asking the Lord what He is doing with us and others like us, who have left the structured church. As I waited on Him, seeking to listen with my heart, this is what I felt He spoke to me: "I desire to restore My family, to re-establish My family (household. Ephesians ch.2 v.19), and also it is my desire to heal and renew your families." So, there were two things, My family, and your families.

What was it that Jesus taught us to know above all? It was to be able to say, "Our Father." His whole life, His teaching, His Cross and resurrection, His exaltation to heaven and His pouring out of the Holy Spirit were all to bring us to God, to know Him as Father. "Abba", Dad.

God, our Father in heaven; Jesus "Not ashamed to call us brethren." (Hebrews ch.2 v.11) "Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Christ Jesus." (John ch. 1 v.3.) "Because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying 'Abba Father!'" (Galatians ch. 4 v.6) We could go on quoting Scriptures. It is all family, family relationships, family love.

I felt the Lord was saying to me, "Your humanly organised churches stand in my way. You have divided My family. If you would cooperate with Me, then all these humanly organised structures, programmes, services have to be laid aside and put away. You cannot retain them and fully know what I want for you as My Family. Structured church and organised religion have hindered people from knowing the simple wonder of a love relationship with Me."

Older fathers, with older children know a special joy when their children become truly their friends. The relationship then enters a new and more wonderful dimension. This was the special joy God had in Abraham, when He could say, "Abraham, My friend." This is what God wants for all of us. This is mature sonship in God, when Father and we are friends. "No longer have I called you servants, but I have called you friends." (John 15:15).

"What I am doing," I felt I heard Father say," is I am working in two dimensions, on two levels.: first to replace your churches and your denominations and your fellowships with My family. I am determined to remove these things which are obstacles to the experience of living in My family. For this purpose each individual must come to really know Me as Father, and for this reason I need to take you, one by one, away with Me alone. That is what I have been doing and am doing in many lives. This is the wilderness wooing described in Hosea ch.2 vs.14-20. I want you to know how to be able to cry, in helpless dependence and utter love and trust, "Abba. Dad!."

"And this is just the beginning of My work. for as you come to know Me as Father and Friend, then you will begin to love your brothers and sisters in a new way, a new dimension of loving one another "fervently from the heart" will be birthed."

"Then you will have a desire for family reunions, and I will bring you together, not for services or religious meetings as before, but for times of joyous open relationships and sharing. And I, Father will be amongst you, making My heart known to you as My friends."

"The second level is this: As I work to renew and restore My family, so I will renew and restore your families (Malachi ch.4 v.5.), 'Turning the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.'

Religious organisations and activities have not really been building strong family relationships. Many have found, and are finding, that their religious activities and ministries impose severe strains

on family life. I felt that the Lord was saying, "When you are willing to lay down these things and stop them, allowing Me to bring you into the reality of My family, then I will restore your families. Fathers will have time for their children and their wives and will see in a new way, the priority of their families in My family."

John the Baptist's Forerunner ministry, (Luke ch.1 v.17. Malachi ch.4 vs.5-6) had to do in part with family restoration. Satan's assault today is very much concentrated on family life and relationships, and this attack will intensify as he sees God's corporate John-the-Baptist ministry arising.

Pentecostal teaching has laid much emphasis on teaching about family, but this has largely failed of its purpose because leaders and people are so often swept up into a whirlwind of activities, meetings, seminars, groups etc. It has to be recognised that the restoration of our families can come only as God's family is restored and church divisions and denominations are put away, and people learn to know God as Father, He who is the Father "From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named." (Ephesians 3:14-15.)

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