

Garden of Gethsemane

A Place of Honor



Watch with me a While

Matthew 26:38



Dr. Dale A. Dan

Today I stand in complete awe as a new era of hope dawns. The day is finally here when each eye beholds the very glory of God through His love that remains never-changing in an ever-changing world.

What a journey!



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DEDICATION

To my Triune Leadership: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
To my Life's Mentor: You know who you are, thank you.
To the many whom He brought into my life to help me fulfill my purpose: You know who you are, thank you.



Our Lucaya, Bahamas

GREETINGS FROM THE AUTHOR

Dear Fellow Journeyer,

At age six, I recall my mother sharing the following words:

“There is no way to the end of a journey but to travel the road that leads to it. It may be a long and weary journey and strength and courage often fail but we must not give up. The way may have led over rocks and briars that hurt the feet, but it is that which is yet to come that should concern us now (Anonymous).”



As I grew, I thought of this as the journey of life – a single path with no second chances. It is indeed a tough walk and one that presents daily challenges for us. My life has been no different. Like yours, I experienced life-threatening illnesses, heartaches, disappointments, deep pain and grief. However, through and despite it all, I have found peace in His unconditional love while sitting with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane. Today, I live to serve Him and to be His pleasure (Revelation 4:11). In bringing Him pleasure, I find mine.

Today, it does not matter what challenge presents itself, I know that I am not facing it alone. I know that someone already faced these battles and conquered them all for me. I know that I can either reinvent the wheel or simply relax and watch Him take care of things. I know now, more than ever, that because of my relationship with Him, I can truly declare that the greatest gift of all is ... Love!

Precious one, you will never be in need of love once you find this in Him. It is the kind of love that surpasses all human love. It is pure, consistent and ever reaching. It is a love journey with God ... our First Love.

The journey to Gethsemane was a challenge by itself but the joy of watching and waiting with Him now in Gethsemane is so worthwhile. I have felt the pressing need to share my heart and my thoughts with you. These writings came straight from Gethsemane as I watched with our Father.

Especially in a world that is so chaotic and misunderstood – please reach inside and find that peace that will sustain you through the worst of times. May God open your ear to His Voice as you allow Him to personally reveal Himself to you in the Garden.

With much joy, I share the following messages with you. Each message is precious as each was revealed to me at a time when I needed to hear what the Father was saying. I pray that in some way, these writings will bless you too and, in some way, provide another step for you to climb to greater heights in Him – the height we read about: ‘He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; he causes me to stand on the heights’ (Psalm 18:33).

Watch for His footprints ... they are right there with yours.

*In Him,
Love, Dale*



REFLECTION ONE

Welcome to the Garden of Gethsemane: How it all started

And he came unto the disciples, and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour'? Matthew 26:40.



Introduction - The birth of this message:

One day, I was quietly reflecting on why Gethsemane influenced my life so greatly. What is it about this scripture that changed my life forever? Why is Gethsemane so important to me today?

Here is the outcome of this reflection while sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane.

While *searching* for Him from a very young age, I ran across the scripture in Matthew 26, which changed my relationship with Him forever!

Then Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and He said to them, ‘Sit here while I go over there and pray.’ He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee along with him, and He began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, ‘My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me.’

Going a little farther, He fell with His face to the ground and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.’

Then He returned to His disciples and found them sleeping. ‘Could you men not keep watch with me for one hour?’ He asked Peter. ‘Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak.’

He went away a second time and prayed, ‘My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done.’ When He came back, He again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. So, He left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Then He returned to the disciples and said to them, ‘Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer! (Matthew 26: 36-45).

Being a very caring person by nature, always wanting to be there for others, you can imagine what this scripture did to me. While dear friends of mine continued equating Gethsemane with mourning, suffering and grief (which it no doubt was a time of great pain and sorrow), what grasped my attention about Gethsemane was that Christ, for the first time, expressed a *need* for us. This was not about our needing Him but about His need for us to be there with and for Him – what an honor and privilege! Where would I have been at that time if He had asked me to watch with him during what must have been His worst moment? Would I have slept too like the disciples did?

I could not answer my many questions about what I would have done way back then. What I knew for sure after my first reading of this scripture was that He would never be alone again. I would effectively always find the time to watch with Him. I have done this and will continue doing so for as long as I breathe.

For me, the purpose of *Gethsemane* is for us to understand our worth, the privilege bestowed upon us to serve Him. Do you really think He *needed* the disciples to watch with Him? He is God and man, so He was and is all sufficient. But while in human form, He *chose* to give us the opportunity to reach out to Him. Today, we have the opportunity again, and I encourage us to quietly seek

our God, our Creator, in the quiet of the Garden. The significance of the Garden being that place where He *chooses* to express a need and a desire to have quiet communion with us and where we can draw from His very Fountain of Life. It is that place where He savors the sweetness of our prayer and praise!

Yes ... that one *place* in the entire scripture where our Beloved Jesus clearly and definitively reached out to us for *Himself* ... that place where He expressed a personal *need* for us to *watch with Him a while*. Once again, it was not a need that He was unable to fill, but one that He created so that we could unselfishly reach *into* ourselves and *outward* to Him – an opportunity to enjoy the beauty of giving to Him.

My friends, do you hear Him saying these words to you today:

Won't you please watch with me a while?



Please let us take a little journey through the moment when Jesus asked His disciples to watch with Him. Let us see why the *Garden of Gethsemane* is such a precious place:

Matthew 26: 37-38: Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane ... Then said he unto them, ‘my soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me’.

This is Jesus talking here – the Son of the Most-High God; the one whom the Father chose to sacrifice for *our* freedom, for *our* abundance, for *our* life everlasting. God completely metamorphosed a perfect Son into an incarnate being for our sake and for our redemption.

Like any human being, Jesus felt pain, He felt disappointment, He felt betrayal, and He felt alone. He experienced being at wits end. It was in this lowest state of human pain that He cried out to us for support, for companionship, for intercession. I cannot imagine the disappointment He felt upon seeing His disciples, His chosen ones, all asleep. Can you?

Matthew 26:40: And He came unto the disciples, and found them asleep, and said unto Peter, 'What, could ye not watch with me one hour?'

Matt 26:45: Then came he to his disciples, and said unto them, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand.'

Can we even begin to understand the pain He must have felt upon finding them asleep? We cannot change what happened then but, we can change this today. I truly believe that He will take even five minutes if we can give Him this much. We struggle to give Him this time. We finally decide to do it while we are washing the dishes, planting the garden, teaching, juggling workplace responsibilities and so forth.

No precious one. Let us find just five minutes of the 1,440 minutes per day to do nothing but to quietly watch with Him. As we can, let us give Him more. He knows that we are willing. He said Himself: 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak' (v.41). He *knows* us and He will help us with our desire to be there with Him.'

*What do we gain from Gethsemane as we Watch
with Him?*

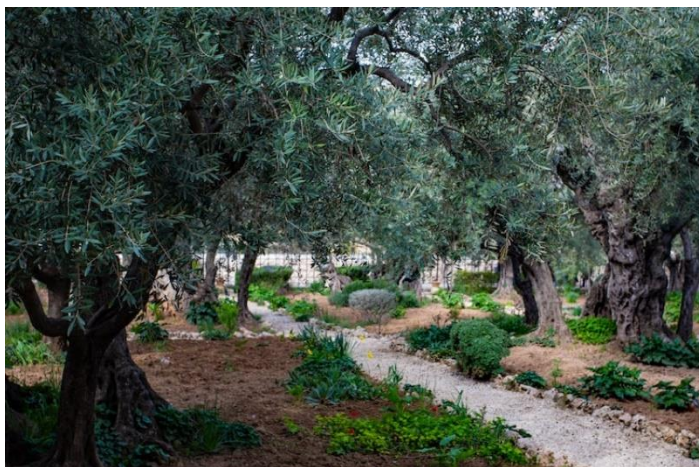
What exactly is the root or meaning of Gethsemane?

"Oil press – that very place where the oil is stored", 1068, "vat for holding wine" (1660) "liquid from the olive that is often perfumed", "richness from the anointing", "fruitful" 8081 (Strong's Concordance)¹.

This is the oil hidden in Gethsemane that the Lord longs to give to us – to pour into us from His sweet anointing. The precious scent of this oil, that bears fruit is there for the taking. When will we reach *in* and enjoy this?

¹ The Concordance is like a dictionary that explains the roots and meanings of words found in the Bible. *Strong's* is just one version of a concordance.

Where is Gethsemane today?

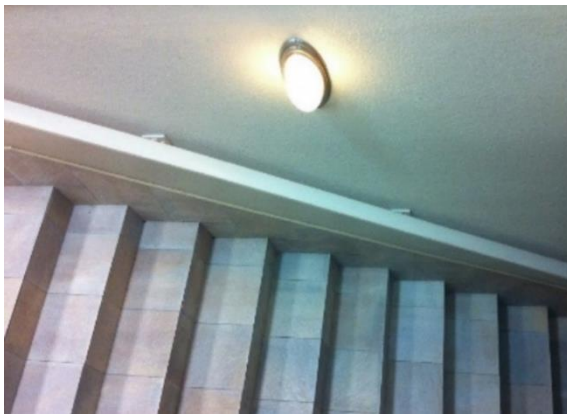


There is the physical Gethsemane that still exists today at the foot of ‘The Mount of Olives’ in Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives is a mountain ridge that is located on the eastside of Jerusalem. This is interesting as we recall the meaning of ‘Gethsemane’ - liquid from the *olive* that is often perfumed.

However, the natural garden is not what I am addressing here. I am talking about that *Garden* deep within us where we commune daily with the Father. We can decide to do this in a beautiful physical garden or wherever else we choose – once we do not limit ourselves to this external place - once we understand that the *actual* place of Gethsemane is deep *within* us – we carry it wherever we go.

The pondering and questioning in the Garden have proven to be beneficial. He not only teaches and guides me, but my Garden time has also taken me into His bedchamber in the Holy of Holies – a place I desired from age 7 when I first gave my life to Him. I live for Him. I enjoy serving Him and His people and experience the daily joy that comes when we live for His pleasure and not ours. In pleasing Him, I am pleased (Revelation 4:11).

I found my home that is priceless - I am humbly grateful. Each day is another step up!





**** Reflection Time ****

Could we please pause for a moment and indeed reflect on what it means to be a 'witness' for Him? It is interesting that *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* describes the word 'witness' as: One who has *personal* knowledge of something; something serving as *evidence* or proof ...

How easy it is for us to take these meanings for granted. But I challenge us today. Fellow believer, how do we answer the following questions?

1. Considering what was shared, what does the Garden of Gethsemane mean to you?
2. What does it mean to you to watch with Him a while?
3. Do you feel ready and able to listen to His needs and walk with Him in accomplishing what you heard from Him?
4. Where are you in relation to having a personal knowledge of and relationship with Him?
5. Where are you in relation to showing evidence of who He truly is through your daily life?

Reflection Time *continued*

6. From the moment you awake in the mornings, what does the world see of you?
7. How much does your life remind the world that Jesus is alive and well?
8. How much are you reminded of His presence within you?
9. What are you doing today to make that Garden of Gethsemane experience worthwhile for Him?

Feel free to do this reflection exercise individually or as a group. Do not rush answers to these questions. Take as much time as you need to reflect deeply on each one.



REFLECTION TWO

Listening to His Voice through a panting for Him

*As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants
for God. Psalm 42:1*



Introduction - The birth of this message:

*From a very young age, I wondered about prayer
... what, where, when, how and why. Who was
God anyhow and why should I even bother
speaking to a spirit who may never hear me?
Wow, was I in for a surprise!*

*Here is the outcome of this reflection while sitting
in the Garden of Gethsemane.*

There is no question that many of us diligently seek the scriptures daily and others faithfully attend church services to hear the words of the preacher. But my friends, reading and listening to others is not enough – we must *personally* desire the depth of the Word through a detailed teaching by the Master Teacher of all: The Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Being led to the scriptures is only the beginning. To learn, we must be quiet long enough to listen to the Father’s voice.

Sometimes we put aside that special time for Him then we babble through the entire time thanking Him, praising Him, telling Him about our situations – none of which is wrong but then we must balance this speaking time with the *listening* time. Yes? You see it is only from listening through prayer that we can receive the guidance we need for our lives.

Oh, today more than ever, I sense His need to speak if only we can pause long enough to listen quietly. We get so flustered by all that is happening around us. We groan and moan for His guidance. We long to know exactly what He wants of us. We desperately need to know how to move forward and wish He would just guide our steps. *Shhhhh!* He *is* talking Listen! Quiet the noise in and around you. Listen as you gain strength from His Word. His voice is steady, it is there for you – enjoy it.

As an *individual*, we want to meet Him in Gethsemane where we enjoy the very source, storehouse, and container of His oil, His sweet wine. Where, as sweet perfume, He

can enjoy our presence, our desire to *know* Him through His Word.

Where we would care and love Him enough to separate ourselves from all else and totally unto Him; where we care long enough to listen because of the deep longing within us to do His Will – to be where He wants us to be.

I just love what a dear sister shared about prayer - simple, real, profound and life changing:

Prayer - The Art of Being Still

I asked The Lord, just what is prayer.

He answered - Just be still.
Be still and see my life in thee
Aflow through heart and knee.
Be still and see my rest unfold
From hip bone through to thigh bone,
From bone to bone, sinew to flesh,
Of His life breathe afresh.

But what oh Lord about this pain?
I've problems to be solved.

But don't I know all to be known?
Have I not seen all things?
Do I not hold the ends of time
And all that lies between?
My handwork there at your command,
Resources yet untapped.
For quietness and confidence
Your strength they do unwrap.

But must I Lord, not stomp this thing,
Rebuke what's not of you?

What's not of me? I fill all things.
Time stops at my behest.
I've set the bound beyond which can't
O'erflow the wildest tempest.
You in Me and I in you,
Infusing every limb,
My will being done in earthen clay,
Your mind - my heaven – in sway.

Be still and know ...

*by Dr. Jennifer Hoyte
Hinds' Feet Ministry*

Yes, the richness, the anointing, the full fruitfulness all come from not only *knowing* and *understanding* the Word but from *watching with, waiting for, listening to* Him so that this Oil, this Word, could fully manifest all that He is, through us, in us and as us to creation! We represent Christ on this earth today. On any given day, we may well be the *only* Christ that others will ever know. Is this not a sobering realization?

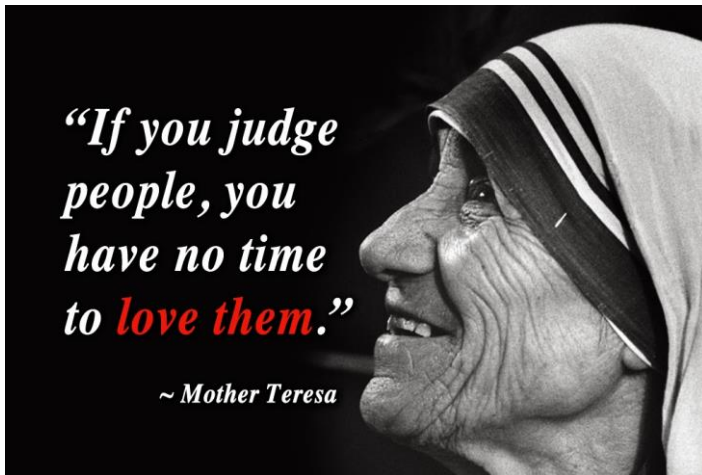
The reality is that it does not matter how much I know or think I am or how much I claim I love Him; if I cannot be a *witness* for Him – representing who He is on this earth then I am fruitless. I would be like an alabaster jar that houses the most beautiful scent inside, but no one enjoys the scent. Precious one, we cannot hide who we are for Him. We are His witnesses and the Lord clearly shares this with us through His Word.

‘You are my witnesses’, said the LORD, ‘and my servant whom I have chosen: that ye may know and believe me, and understand that I am he: before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me’ (Isaiah 43:10).

As we reflect on Jesus’ experience in the Garden, it would be easy for us to say or think: ‘Wow, how could the disciples do this to Him? How could they not be there for someone as important as Jesus? I would have found it an honor.’ Oh, how easy it is for us to look outside of us and pinpoint where others are going wrong? We quickly judge

those around us assuring ourselves that we are better and that we would do things differently.

I love what Mother Teresa said about judging others:



We are masters at judging others but my dear fellow believers, the harsh reality is that we do what these disciples do almost daily. Each time we see pain and walk the other way; each time we convince ourselves that it is not our job to help - another will carry the load; each time we decide that we do not have time for others since we have our own lives to be bothered with. If only we can start looking within ourselves, rather than outside toward others, we will advance so much more in Him as we find ultimate peace and joy with Him.

Let me interject here with a little story my dear mother once shared with me. Some of you may have heard some variation of it. It is one of the stories my mom told that stayed with me forever. Allow me to pause a moment here to share this with you as it bears much relevance to

what we are discussing here ... learning to listen and not judge:

One day, a family invited Jesus to dinner. They went all out buying new linen, curtains and other costly items. They prepared the table fit for a king. There was no doubt that their preparation showed how much they thought of Jesus based on their perception of Him. Their intention was good.



The dinner was scheduled to start at 7:00pm. At 6:30pm, a poor beggar came to the home and asked for just a morsel of food. They were scared he would discolor the fine furnishings, so they tossed him some bread and quickly got rid of him.



At about 7:00pm, an elderly woman visited them – very dirty in appearance and again begged for some money or food. They tossed her a coin quickly so that she would disappear before their special guest arrived.



At 7:30pm, a stray dog came, and they chased him away again afraid that he would spoil the preparation for Jesus.



Soon, the family became disappointed and could not understand why Jesus, their Savior, a perfect man, would not honor their invitation nor show up on time.

So finally, the family met in prayer asking: “Dear Lord, we laid out our best for you. We went to great expense to make this visit a perfect one, yet you did not show up. Why Lord?”

Jesus gently replied: ‘My children, I came thrice and you turned me away’. Alarmed, the Father of the family asked: ‘Lord, we did not sleep for a moment, we kept watch the whole time. There is no way we could have missed you’.

Jesus replied: ‘Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ (Matthew 25:40).



How often do we do the same? We keep beautiful, clean homes so that Jesus could visit with us. We are the best dressed at church and attend promptly so that we can please our Lord. We make sure that we read the Bible often and continue to fatten ourselves with the Word.

Now ... hear me please – nothing is wrong with these things. They become wrong when we continue to shut out God’s people. When at Christmas services, the poor feel excluded because of their appearance, yet ... He was laid in a humble manger.



The Word clearly says to us:

*‘... for he that love not his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?’
(I John 4:20)*

‘... do you love me? Feed my sheep’ (John 21:17).

It becomes unhealthy when we get so caught up with ourselves and our need to please Jesus and be recognized by Him that we fail to consider that others want and need the same. Dear one, our oneness with Him is just the beginning.

Loving Him and becoming impregnated with the Word is okay but at some point, we must deliver, we must give birth, we must yield fruit. Keeping this fruit within us can no doubt destroy us spiritually.

Have you ever felt so full of the Word that you almost bend over physically in pain? You just feel that you must share with someone before you burst? This happens when the time comes to deliver the Word – an outpouring to others of what He has poured into us.



Just pause again for a moment and think on what would happen if someone did everything perfectly throughout her pregnancy but did not deliver at the scheduled time. It does not matter how much she is enjoying this pregnancy – it cannot go on forever – yes? It must end and the child must come forth from the womb. It is just how the process works. It cannot stay in there forever ... it will die, the mother will die. Similarly, an impregnation of the Word is a process that must bring forth fruit before it dies within us.

So ... returning to our vignette about the family that invited Jesus - if we are saving up our blessings to shower upon some white-haired man from Galilee - let us not waste our time. Each day of our lives, Jesus is visiting with us through various ones and different situations. Let us be ever mindful for ...

He comes like a thief in the night (1 Thessalonians 5:2).

Now hear this please... some of us do open our doors; some of us do share with others; some of us do believe in showing forth Christ to those around us. But ... very sadly, *we* decide who all we touch; we decide who is good enough to enjoy our blessings; we decide who we will or will not let in and who we will or will not leave outside our door. We decide how, when, where and why we do these things.



No dear one. Let *Him* guide us – our resources are His, not ours, so we do not have the luxury of making these decisions. We can end up doing all this busy work and

still miss out on the blessing of sharing simply because we are selective in the process of reaching out to others. The scripture clearly guides us here. It reminds us that it makes no sense if we only care for and help those whom we love – the Pharisees do the same. You see when Jesus walked the earth – He reached out – period! He did not decide which ones He would help and which ones He would reject. He simply walked and did the Will of the Father – whatever this meant or whomever this brought His way. Jesus warns us about this selective choice in His Word:

'But I say unto you, love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;

That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he makes his sun to rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect' (Matthew 5:44-48).

Finally, in relation to our waiting on the Lord, even if we are unable to watch with Him, let us not discourage others from doing so. Let us not be like the disciples who condemned the woman with her box of alabaster as she anointed Jesus and desired to spend time with Him (*Matthew 26:7-13*).

How logical they thought they were being about the woman not using costly alabaster for such a purpose as to anoint Jesus. Does this sound familiar? We oftentimes look outside of ourselves to others and condemn what they do but how about our own actions?

So ... what you read here in these pages is *my* experience in Gethsemane as I take what I read in the Word into quiet communion with Him so that He can teach me what I need to know; so that He can show me how to bless others. There is the *Written Word*, the *Spoken Word* and then there is the *Living Word* that is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit who quickens us to move as the Word leads. Feel welcome to use my experience just as a guide, then confidently seek Him for *yourself*. The Garden is yours too – enjoy it! You will see as we spend more and more time together through these writings, that the pondering and questioning paid off for me.

I started questioning the activities that the world portrayed as Christ and God...our Heavenly Father and His righteousness. Please note though that I continue to respect every church, denomination and organization in my past for each was another beautiful steppingstone to where He has brought me.

I just could not stop questioning as a part of my relentless search for the truth, the authenticity of God. This searching moved me from one place to a higher one in Him so that I could *personally* understand and grow in my relationship with Him.



The reason I remain grateful to everyone in my past life is because I learned how to pray, quiet myself and acknowledge the presence of a Supreme Being during my early days as a child in the *Catholic* Church. I learned that Jesus was real and could be accessed personally and directly in the *Baptist* Church. I learned how to strip my mind of all that was worldly and meditate for hours through the *Yoga* gatherings. I learned how to reach up the mountain and evermore search for greater heights in God through the *Kingdom* Churches.

I am grateful for all of it. You also embrace your steps and while you too will have questions, relax in His Will. He knows what He is doing in your life.

Each experience is being placed in your life to take you to your zenith in Him. He makes no mistakes. He is flawless!

Like I did, enjoy all the precious sharing and opportunities that come your way, but please do not stop here. Continue to desire, to ponder, to question until He *fully* reveals all that He has for *you* in the Garden of Gethsemane as you watch with Him.

Have fun for it will indeed change your life and add daily joy as you quietly sit and watch with and grow in Him! For you will see that it is truly because He lives that you can face each of your tomorrows with a fresh hope and an inner feeling of total peace and assurance. This is *true joy guaranteed!*





**** Reflection Time ****

Could we please pause for a moment and indeed reflect on what it really means to listen to Him? It is interesting that *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* describes the word 'listen' as follows: *to hear something with thoughtful attention...*

Fellow believer, how do we answer the following questions?

1. Who is God to me?
2. What made Him become real in my journey?
3. What does it mean to listen to Him?
4. Am I at a place where I can quiet myself long enough to listen to His voice?
5. What are some of the hurdles that keep interrupting a clear sound of His voice?
6. How do I know that I am really hearing Him?
7. What about Dr. Hoyte's poem appealed to you?
8. Were you able to relate to the story told about the family who prepared a dinner for Jesus?

Reflection Time *continued*

9. Do we really understand that everything we have belongs to God and we are just privileged to be stewards of His wealth?
10. How do we use what we have been given to steward to bless the lives of others – no matter who they may be?

Feel free to do this reflection exercise individually or as a group. Do not rush answers to these questions. Take as much time as you can to deeply reflect on each one.



REFLECTION THREE

Slenderizing until we only see Him.

It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.

Mark 10:25



Fat being removed from lamb meat.

Introduction - The birth of this message:

This message came at a time when I was feeling a tremendous burden for God's people – as I reflected on the weight that we carry which seems to separate us from Him daily.

Here is the outcome of this reflection while seeking God for answers in the Garden of Gethsemane.

For years, I have pondered over Mark 10:25 and from a very early age, I thought that all we had to do was walk carefully and fear God if we planned on enjoying His everlasting life. While I understood the basic analogy mentioned in this scripture, I just did not read much more into it.

'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' Mark 10:25

It was toward the end of 2000 that this verse, in all its sweetness, blessed my life. Since then, I have truly never been the same. For me, each of these experiences changed my life forever. Before going any further, just pause for a moment and think on this verse please.

My reason for asking you to pause here is that so often, so much gets lost by our quickly glossing over what we read and hear. Especially with the Word, do we really take one verse at a time and try to carefully understand the depth of its meaning? We read chapters upon chapters; we sing song after song. However, are we living any of it? How much of it do we process internally so that we can enjoy the life of each word externally as we live each word daily?

This is something I have been dealing with for a few years now. I see myself and others going through scripture after scripture and song after song. Then, I pause and re-read some of the words of these same songs and scriptures and start questioning where we would have been today had we lived the words of *each* scripture, each

song. I ask us to please slow down. It is better to sing only one song and to read only one scripture and live them than to read infinitely and live by none of it. Now let us return to the scripture at hand. Okay, so back to Matthew 10:25.

We have an idea of the size of a camel – yes? We also know what the eye of a needle looks like. Can you imagine the camel passing through the hole of a needle eye? It is absolutely and definitively impossible – right? Well, impossible in relation to all human standards and capabilities. This is exactly what the scripture conveys ... the level of *impossibility* for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

Let us clarify here that God is not punishing those with wealth. In fact, He wants us to live comfortably. What is being addressed here are the ‘puffed up’ rich who think that their money can buy the world, their happiness and their salvation. No, they cannot. These are the rich ones addressed by this verse who would sell their souls for earthly things. Yet, remember that since God is a God of the impossible – He can still save them if they turn toward Him. On the other hand, there are wealthy people who do not even consider themselves wealthy - because they know that what they have are God’s resources and as such, they use it accordingly and wisely ... to whom much is given, much is required (Luke 12:48).

A caution here: You see at first when we read the scripture, we immediately think of just the wealthy people – those with money and other material things.

No, my friend, the verse is talking to all of us who are so fattened and burdened with things and people in our lives that we cannot see Him. We are blinded by wealth, goods, worldly love, lust, power, etc. This vision helped me to see the reality of it being easier for a camel to go through a needle eye than for a "fat or rich person", with all his flesh, to enter into the Holiest place of all. According to the analogy in the scripture of the camel and the needle eye – it is effectively impossible for us to try to enter His kingdom with our various baggage.

The more I thought of this verse and as I grew more in the Lord, I read and re-read this scripture. One day, as I was pondering over it, I saw a vision with a fire and in the middle of the fire was a vertical pole turning slowly with meat around it. Some of you have probably seen this when you went to buy a *gyro* from your favorite Greek Restaurant. As the pole turned, more fat fell off the meat as it kept getting more and more slender. The words came softly but clearly - *Perfectly Slender for Him*. The Lord shared that the meat is the human, the fire is His Royal teaching and the fat was ALL that was not of Him. Yes brethren, we are being *Slenderized!*



The other verse that comes to mind when I read this is: ‘For unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required’ (Luke 12:48). While there are rich people who give a lot, for the most part, money still seems to dominate the mind. The Word warns us that the love of it is the root of all evil: ‘For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows’ (I Timothy 6:10).

It is my guess that very few will give if giving means changing their level of comfort. They will give for as long as they are able to remain in control. For this reason, I believe that indeed it is difficult – so difficult for wealthy people to fully enjoy the fullness of God – note that it is difficult not impossible. There is a certain attachment that humans form with wealth that causes them to feel lost and empty without it. This has been happening for generations. We read in the scripture about the young ruler who asked the Lord what he lacked to enter the kingdom of heaven:

“The young man said unto him, ‘All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?’ Jesus said unto him, ‘If you will be perfect, go and sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me’. But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions” (Matthew 19: 20-22).

You see this young ruler felt sorry because all he could think of was that which he would *lose* not that which he would *gain*. Once we have been so spoilt by worldly wealth, it is difficult seeing how spiritual wealth could replace any possible joy enjoyed by earthly goods.

It still remains mind boggling to me that despite the definitive warning of the scripture about not storing up treasures here on earth (Matthew 6:19-20); despite the fact that man has seen that if he goes by the way of death, he cannot take anything material with him – the rich still put these things before their souls.

During each Christmas season, I cannot help but be amazed by the superfluous-ness of this season. Christmas has become so commercialized that the poor is left at the gate with not a chance of entering in to enjoy the festivities. Please tell me where I am missing it here. Was Jesus not born in a lowly manger? Why? He could have been born in the most exotic palace somewhere. But He *chose* a manger – so that the poorest of poor could feel at home with Him; so that the poorest of poor could feel as regal as Christ despite His place of birth; so that the poorest of poor could have full access to Him.

Please – how many of you, after, spending thousands decorating your home beautifully for the holiday will allow a dirty beggar to sit on your chair? Yet, He came for this beggar too. He came in a lowly manner so that He could remain accessible to all! Who then is worthier than Him to close the door on the ‘least of His brethren’? How many of us would quickly dismiss the beggar at our door

so that we can enjoy the precious time and season with our family? Who is our family? Did Jesus not set this example perfectly when He asked: ‘Who is my mother, or my brother?’ (Mark 3:33).

Dear Ones, our family is who He has placed within our radar. Oh my – this is probably one of our greatest challenges in life – embracing and serving God’s family members as our very own. Yes, we have a commitment to those in our homes that we refer to as our biological or natural family but our responsibility is also to God’s family that He has given to us – somehow, we must trust Him to find this balance daily lest we miss His Will for our lives.

We are called to feed His people – to serve them. If we are committed to Him and His Will then we will feed His *sheep* – as this is what He asks of us:

Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, ‘Do you love me?’ And he said unto him, ‘Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you’. Jesus said to him, ‘Feed my sheep’. John 21:17

He clearly and definitively drew synonymity between our love for Him with our feeding His sheep. Dear Reader, we are to feed His people – our family – biological or else – those whom He has placed in our hands. When will we understand that we cannot commit to His Will while we hold on to ours? The result of this is what is clearly stated

in the scriptures: “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways” (James 1:8).

Oh, I pray that we never become so consumed by creation that we forget the Creator. Creation is there to enjoy but you must have dominion over it all (Genesis 1:26) not have it dominate you. Let us continue to trust Him daily so that we can remain slender for Him as we see all that is not of Him melt away.

Through it all, let us praise God - He has been and is preparing a people who are *willing* to bear the intense fire to be slender ... just for Him! This is a people who do not desire their will but His. This is a people who will enjoy the fruits of their faith. This is a people whose seed will fall upon good ground (Mark 4:8).

It is important for us to understand that the melting process is not easy and especially in our walk with Him today, so much of what was once okay is no longer acceptable. To be fully slender for Him is to be fully stripped of all unwanted baggage - plain and simple.

We cannot hold on to *any* of it – it must go. But the process is, oh, so sweet and precious when we focus not on the journey but on the destination; when we see not the fire but the refined; when we view it all not as rebuke, condemnation, chastisement but simply as - a loving teaching, a Father’s guidance, a Beloved’s beckoning to restore us to our *full inheritance*!

Let us pause for a moment and reflect on the *baggage* mentioned here. Beloved, it does not matter how long it takes – give yourself the time you need until you fully understand what is weighing you down.



What is more important than just reading this book quickly - is your closer walk, your deep relationship with Him. So do not rush through this reading – instead, *listen* to what is being shared here with you. Understand that for some reason, He has brought this sharing your way.

I encourage you to find some time to quietly ask yourself:

What is the baggage that I am carrying today that will make it impossible for me to fully enter the Kingdom of God and enjoy all that He has in store for me?

During this quiet time, forget everyone and everything else – the faults, failures and the lives of others. Forget the things around you – feel as if you are a bird flying with no thought or responsibility whatsoever. Think only on *you* for now.

What is the extra fat you are carrying that needs to be slenderized for His glory? Do not look for the large things – focus on the little things that hinder your walk with Him, that cause Him not to be able to rest in His temple – that is – *you*- for we know that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19).

During this time of quiet, think on the times you cleaned your physical home so that you can enjoy a nice, clean place to rest. Likewise, we want to prepare our spiritual home or temple so that the Father can rest and feel comfortable. We see the low tolerance Jesus had when the people misused the temple for their own pleasures (Matt 21:13). Therefore, we know that for Him to rest in His temple, it must be void of all fleshly and selfish activities. The ultimate goal is for our temple to be as righteous as He is righteous.

So precious journeyer, what is the baggage you are carrying that is separating you from the greatest relationship you could possibly enjoy? A relationship with the Lord who is and should always be our *First Love*. Please let us address a few of the baggage that we need to release in order to be slender for Him:

- *Infidelity:*

This is not just about marriage; it is about any relationship to which you have committed and to which you cannot remain loyal. Your failure to maintain this loyalty is causing a level of guilt and discomfort to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him?

- *Smoking*

Are you unable to stop smoking that could potentially affect you physically? Is this habit such a part of your life that it nags and affects you to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him?

- *Drinking*

Has drinking reached such a high in your life that you are unable to keep your home in order, you cannot concentrate on your job, commit to your spouse, your kids and friends who simply cannot compete with your drink anymore? Do you feel that you are at a point of no return ... at the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him?

- *Swearing*

You want to love the Lord with all your heart but you simply cannot deal with your anger. You find yourself swearing all the time but simply do not know how to stop? This anger is to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply enjoy Him.

- *Untruth*

You finally told that one lie that is multiplying itself to a point where you cannot stop. One lie led to another until you simply did not know what the truth was anymore. You are at the point where because of the endless untruths, you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

- *Dishonesty*

You try to be honest but cannot because you have developed habits in your life that cause you to be untruthful to those whom you value so much ... to the point where because of this dishonesty, you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

- *Anger*

You cannot control your anger no matter how hard you try. The least thing shakes your equilibrium. This anger is to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

The list above included some of the blatant ones my friend but then there are the less obvious ones – the ones we can hide so nicely but oh, we cannot hide them from our Father and He is the one who truly matters in the end:

- *Jealousy*

You want to be happy for others but because of your own failures, you cannot enjoy the successes of others. This jealousy is to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

- *Discontentment*

You are constantly looking *outside* of you to what you do not have but are unable to appreciate what you do have. You live daily in discontentment wishing and wishing you could be someone else or have the things owned by others. This discontentment is to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

- *Inner anger*

You do not display anger but it eats you up inside. You smile but there is no joy. You awake each day looking normal but quietly wished that you had never been born. This inner anger is to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

- *Distrust*

You try trusting others but you cannot. You do not even trust yourself so you do not have a clue how to start trusting others. This lack of trust is to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

- *Low self-esteem*

You have no self-esteem. You feel like nothing and no one. You have been so abused, disowned and disrespected that you feel worthless. This lack of self-esteem is to the point where you cannot come away awhile and simply ... enjoy Him.

The list is almost endless. There are as many as there are people in the world since each person is so very different, so unique. The time has come when the *personal* decision must be made as to whether we will get the temple ready for Him – where He can feel at home within us as He rests awhile.

Please know that you do not have to feel that you must stop smoking and drinking and cursing or whatever your baggage is *before* you come to Him. It is in coming to Him as you are and it is in being willing to listen and to grow in Him that the baggage will disappear. Please hear this again ... you do not have to wait until you stop smoking to feel the love and presence of God.

In fact, if you wait and try quitting smoking on your own – you will probably never be able to do this. He is calling you. He is reaching out with loving, outstretched Hands to you – asking you to come ‘as you are’ so that He can

rebuild you, His precious pottery (Jeremiah 18). He wants to help you through the journey like His Father carried Him through His human walk on this earth.

Beloved journeyer, He is calling you – the one and only, unique, specially molded *you*. He wants you. He does not mind if you come as you are. He just wants you to make that initial decision to place Him above all these things and He will take it from there. He does not expect you to change overnight – it is a process – one that He is willing to go through with you. Just relax, let God in and see Him do His work.

But the time has come once again when He will not allow us to make His Father's temple a den of thieves, a den of lies, a den of misrepresentations (Luke 19:46). Where I do believe He gets serious with us is when we hold on to our ways but profess His name. I caution you here that the most dangerous thing is for us to profess Him, to tell the world that we are His; that we believe in Him, that we know who He is, that we have a personal relationship with Him, yet, our lives insult His very presence:

It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them (2 Peter 2:21).

While He will give us all the time that we need to enjoy His perfection, what we cannot do is to mock His name. At the end of the day, we are His *representatives*. Pause

and think for a moment that on any given day – you may be the only Christ others may ever see. Do understand that this is a serious responsibility.

The scripture clearly states:

Ye are my witnesses, saith the LORD, and my servant whom I have chosen (Isaiah 43:10).

The time has come - here and now when we must walk the talk. Years and years have gone by and despite the endless monies and buildings and other structures that all went up in His name - creation groans more than ever before. The world is tired of hearing about Him – they long to *see Him, feel Him and touch Him.*

Are they able to do this through our lives today? Precious one, only each one of us can answer this question. Whatever this answer is – let us go back to the basics until we learn to live the very simplest scriptures we have read or the shortest song we have sung. For we will not be measured by the *quantity* of scripture and songs we have read but by the *quality* of our lives for Him.

Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven (Matthew 7:21). Precious one, it is probably better if we do not even acknowledge that we know Him unless we are prepared to align who we are with who He is.

So ... yes, the calling is high and the responsibility is great, the commitment solid, the covenant secured and with an ear hitched to the doorpost (Exodus 21:6), we will have to be



watching and waiting with undivided attention, but He *will* guide every step of the way.

Yes, the same Hand that powerfully and majestically rolled back the waters of the Red Sea, the same Hand that lovingly healed hopeless diseases, the same Hand that performed miracles and, yes, the *same* voice that confidently, softly, yet in its full authority said to His frustrated disciples, ‘Cast the net here’ (John 21:16) is the same one who is guiding us. Wow – it is the same one right here with us ... our very Beloved.

He sees and He knows our efforts – we can just lean on Him for support. He knows it is not easy as He too has walked the full human walk and wished at times that the cup would have passed by Him (Matthew 26:39). He *knows*. So, do not try to do the impossible – just be willing, yield yourself to Him and let Him do the rest. It is not our deeds that He measures but our hearts:

Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven (Matthew 7:21).

For so many years, we have been beaten into thinking that we are sinners who are doomed to hell. For years also, His people have been rebuked, spat upon and made to feel unworthy. We are not worthy. There is no hope for us. This big, powerful God will punish and rebuke us.

No precious one - No! Our sweet Beloved, Jesus Christ, is patiently and gently waiting at the garden door for His flower to arise and stir only from a deep desire to answer His call.

But, once we answer, then, through His love He will guide us to our ultimate place in Him. He will do it firmly but gently. I say to you - Be not afraid, Be not condemned, Be not hesitant, Be not rushed. Just Be! For we are made in the very image and likeness of God, the Father (Genesis 1:26). *We are* His offspring. We are His heirs. We are His delight! *We are ...* for *He is!* We cannot be anything that He is not. *All* of creation is returning to its original identity for God made a sound investment. The Father just wants to enjoy *you* whom He has made in His image. He carefully designed each one of us for a purpose and for His pleasure. Therefore, you do not want to be like anyone else – you just want to be *you* – this is all He asks.

A sister wrote the following poem that just makes you want to *let your hair down* and just relax and breathe in all that *He* is in ‘you’:

~ **Just be Yourself** ~

What we picture a saint to be, is pious and stern,
 Humble and poor, having no fun at all,
 Beating himself down, destroying his will,
 Cut off from this world in which God made him dwell.

But as an example, let's take Christ our Lord -
 He used every day all God's love to unfold.
 His disciples were many, his friends even more,
 And no matter the hour, He was there at the door.
 A simple word here, over there a kind touch,
 Dinner here, a party there, or maybe just lunch.

He talked fish with Peter, with others about taxes,
 And when things got rough, He said "James, let's relax it".
 And now He has given us, His Spirit within,
 That we can have vict'ry and be freed from sin.

A new nature we have now since to Jesus we surrendered,
 We're chosen of God, engraved in His hand.
 God sees us as righteous, God sees us as whole,
 And now He desires to rule o'er our soul.

He made us to have wills, our own, yes indeed!
 That of our own free will, we'll follow His lead;
 Using each moment, at work or at play
 To show forth His glory while it is Today.

So be not encumbered by dogmas and rites,
By stereotypes and what man thinks is right;
You have there within you all that you need.
So see your new nature, God makes no mistake,
Relax, be yourself, for you are a Saint.

(Source: Dr. Jennifer Hoyte, Hinds' Feet Ministry)

Trust Him for His credentials are flawless. His reputation unmarred by the pain and persecution. His life remained pure despite all the condemnation. Let us relax in Him for He is surely qualified!

Let us continue to reach that higher walk as, together, we claim ... *Our Royal Inheritance* through the process of being slenderized!





**** Reflection Time ****

May we please pause for a moment and reflect on the following?

1. Have you taken dominion over things – a gift of authority given to us by our Father? (Genesis 1:26)
2. What or who still has power over you?
3. Are you ready to make a firm decision today that can help you rise and free yourself of all the things that are not of Him for the betterment of your life?
 - Beloved Reader, do it – it is time now for you to be released from it all – it is time for you to enjoy the freedom He desires for you.
4. What does it mean to you that you were made in the image of God? (Genesis 1:26)
5. Do you believe that God loves you so much that He empowered you with all that He is? Do you feel worthy of this love? Why? Why not?

Reflection Time continued

6. How much of Christ does the world see, feel and touch as they come into contact with *you* each day?
7. What appealed to you about Dr. Hoyte's poem?

Feel free to do this reflection exercise individually or as a group. Do not rush through these questions. Take as much time as you can to deeply reflect on each one.



REFLECTION FOUR

John's Cry in the Wilderness

*Prepare the way of the Lord. Make His paths straight.
Matthew 3:3*



Introduction - The birth of this message:

The desire to write this message came from a reflection on the current state of our world especially as I combed through the business arena through my days of consulting. Oh, the unethical practices birthed from the endless shades of gray that we have created to justify our actions.

Here is the outcome of this reflection while sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane.

You see as we stay within the Garden with Him, things will happen. We cannot remain the same – it is just not possible. Our current ways and the ways of others no longer sit with us as they did before. There is a spiritual intolerance for all that is not of Him. Within us is developed a *longing* to see us all transformed for His purpose and for His glory. While in the Garden with Him, we are completely metamorphosed by His love and driven by His Purpose!

As I pondered over the cry of John the Baptist in the wilderness, I felt such love as the Father showed me the deep desire in John to save us through his cry. Where would we have been today without John's plea? What it must have taken for him to do this knowing that he would have been judged, condemned and persecuted for it. Yet, he answered the Call and played his role in God's Master Plan to help set us free from *The Fall*. I believe that John was strategically placed in our lives for the purpose of helping us find and remain on the road that leads to the heart of God. As we move through scriptures – the Written Word and God's ongoing voice to us today, we will see what one dear friend of mine has said repeatedly ... God is indeed *The Master Strategist*.

How can I continue John's Cry today with Love?

John's cry also made me reflect on my own life. What is the role I am being asked to play in God's plan and how committed am I to walk in His Will and His Calling despite ...? How prepared are you? Or do we long more for the world's endorsement and in so doing, we shy away from our calling because it could make us less popular or

accepted? Yet we know we do not have to be concerned for we are covered with His blessings even during these times of persecution (Matthew 5:11).

Today, I encourage us to rise up and answer His Call. Dear ones, our lives are incomplete, unfinished, unfulfilled until we respond to God's Call. We may find lots of happiness like the drugs offered to many for them to enjoy temporary highs but it remains just that ... temporary.

The toughness of the Call to the straight and narrow way is that it could make people uncomfortable. For the most part, we do not like change, we do not like when others shake our comfortable foundations – it makes us nervous, it makes us rebel; it makes us close the door to any and everything that would challenge our lifestyle. Yes? However, we need to understand that love is sometimes about change ... it is not always saying the things we think others want to hear or just hearing what we want to hear.

Love is about speaking the truth even if it hurts. Love is about knowing how to guide and correct yet without condemnation for God does not desire this for us (Romans 8:1). Love is letting our children know when they are about to be burnt. Love is letting others know when they need to stop eating or smoking or drinking because it could destroy them. Love is saving each other from jumping off that cliff because of desperation. Love does not allow us to remain complacent. Love challenges us constantly into returning to the path of God.

The operative word here is *love* so we do not condemn or destroy. What we do is to gently nudge and encourage and edify. The constant beating up of people is ineffective as we may have proven ourselves through the beating that we ourselves may have experienced.

As a dear friend preached one day... if you walk into a room of darkness, you do not end the darkness by cursing or abusing it. Rather, you simply ... *turn on the light*. Likewise, when we enter the lives of others who seem to be living in darkness – for the most part, they know that they are - so it makes no sense telling them what a failure they are and how addicted they are to what they are doing – they know this!

Just gently step in and turn on the light of Christ in their lives. Let them see the difference until they themselves develop a deep desire to walk in His way. By turning on the light of Christ, this may take different forms. We seek God for guidance in these situations. Is it a situation where they need to hear about Christ, feel Christ or touch Christ? We need to trust Him to help us meet them where they are. Unfortunately, and very sadly so, they may already have been beaten up by others who used the name of Christ to condemn them. Let us talk about this a little please ... the journey of leading others to the straight and narrow way.

I suspect I am not alone in having observed the level of condemnation and damnation that have been used for years as we attempt to get others saved or forced into the straight and narrow way. We used all types of methods as

we justified what we did by our desire to bring others to Christ. For us it was all being done in the name of Jesus so this justified our methods. Have you lived this journey? Have you personally experienced this? Oh, the death that surrounds what is meant to be a life-saving effort is heart wrenching.

Many years ago, I had a dear friend who served the organization as an attorney. We were in our early twenties at that time. She somehow became fascinated by my walk with the Lord and longed to be there. So as often as we could, we met during our lunch breaks to talk about Him. She eventually allowed me to give her a bible as a gift. It turned out that when she took the bible home and attempted to pray and read at nights, she was badly abused by her grandmother verbally who mocked her use of the bible. Her grandmother referred to herself as a fundamentalist bible believer. How many of these have you run into! My friend was told how unworthy she was to read God's Word and how doomed she was for hell. Eventually my friend gave up her search for God. She was a serious diabetic and eventually passed away from what I was told ... probably never enjoying salvation and the opportunity to know Christ for herself.

This experience tore at my heart. I could not understand the great strides she made in the day and how the night undid all of this because of the words from her grandmother ... someone whom she respected and loved but did not understand. Who gave us the right to do this to God's precious people? It was for these lost ones that He came (Luke 19:10).

My friend concluded that if the behavior her grandmother portrayed is what it is all about; she was not interested in getting to know such a God. It totally scared her away from Him.

This situation, among others, deeply troubled me. I earnestly sought the Lord for answers. I needed His guidance as to how I could return His people to Him but with love. How could I, like John, guide His people to the straight and narrow way without abusing or losing them in the process? Eventually the Lord answered by taking me to the book of Songs of Solomon. Oh, what I learned from our Master Teacher during this process blessed my life in ways that I can barely explain. It was during a summer off from university – what a time to recall!

The Lord confirmed to me the deep love He feels toward His people and His desire to rebuild not destroy us. He took me through the journey with the Shulamite and her Beloved – how she walked the streets talking about her love for Him, His beauty and all the reasons why she loved Him. We saw that her profuse love for Him stirred the interest among the daughters of Jerusalem that resulted in a desire in them to seek Him out as well – they needed to know what was so different about this Beloved of hers!



*What is thy beloved more than another beloved, O thou fairest among women? What is thy beloved more than another beloved that thou dost so charge us?
(Songs of Solomon 5:9)*

*Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women?
Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him
with you? (Songs of Solomon 6:1)*

Oh, the way she simply described her beloved caused them to want to see and to know Him. Just her love for Him not her abuse of them ... caused the desire in them to desire Him. How precious ... salvation through love.

A dear friend wrote a song based on the words of the Shulamite as she herself expressed her love for the Lord – what an experience listening to her minister this song!

My Beloved, My Friend

He's Fairer than ten thousand
Most beautiful to behold
His eyes are like the eyes of doves
His head like most fine gold.

His cheeks are like a bed of spice
His lips drop sweet-smelling myrrh
His hands like gold rings set with beryl
His belly o'er laid with sapphire.

His legs as marbled pillars
Are set in sockets of gold
But most of all His countenance
Is excellent as the cedars.

His mouth is sweet, yea most sweet
So much else can be said
He's altogether lovely
Such is my beloved and friend.

Words and Music by Dr Jennifer Hoyte, Hinds' Feet Ministry

From then to now, my single desire has been and is to simply share about the beauty of Jesus, my First Love – oh we can go on and on as we reflect on His nature, His life, His love, His very being. Many have desired to know more of Him through this sharing. I have seen so many lives changed in the process ... through this *love* ministry that leaves no scars on others as they seek God without condemnation. It is simply done through love for God and love for His people ... *love*.

Oh dears, creation is crying out but what a price we make them pay for redemption by judging them in the most merciless manner. Or, we offer them a solution to enjoy God but with the many caveats including their serving us or doing things that bring us pleasure as we promise to offer God to them in return. You know what I am talking about. We exploit the vulnerability of God's people who would do almost anything to enjoy some of what they see us enjoying from and with God. Oh, the price we make them pay.

I listened with pain as a precious lady once shared with me the desperate situation she was in and felt she could only trust her church counselor – he helped her find relief from her pains, gave her hope in God but the physical

demands he made on her! The outcome was devastating for her for a long time. Does this sound familiar? *But ...God.*

Dearest one, you do not have to pay any of these prices to reach your God who has rent the veil so that you can *personally* reach into Him without any form of exploitation (Matthew 27:51).

I know it helps having someone in the natural be there for you but until He leads such a person to you ... seek Him in the quiet of the sanctuary – He hears you. It is in the depth of this sanctuary experience with Him that helps you to make sense of so much (Psalm 73:17).

You will know when the right person has come your way when they desire nothing of you or from you but to see you enjoy God's eternal peace and joy. They desire *nothing* of or from you that you do not personally desire to give for mutual blessing and benefit. Do not sell your soul to enjoy God for in doing this, you defeat the very purpose of seeking Him (Mark 8:36). He does not want you to pay this kind of price.

This Gethsemane message was written around 2000. Now in this year of 2022, the Father is showing us that we must not only make the path straight but that we are indeed walking on a very thin line. We just have to glance around the world and we will see reality of this - the level of despair that is almost everywhere.

We know that for many years, millions of dollars have been invested in the most beautiful church buildings, seminars, conferences and so forth. Yet, it seems that today, the cry of creation continues to be magnified across the globe. Where did we miss it? During my travels, I have visited countries that have the highest level of churches per capita in the world yet they house some of the world's largest crime centers.

How do we synchronize these facts? We can each draw a series of healthy conclusions. For me, I have made two main observations.

First, I think our church attendance and other such gatherings continue to be equated with social events. What seems to be lacking is that *personal* relationship with Christ. When this happens, we are transformed in the process and can become transformational agents within our communities. You see if attending church on Sunday is just another event that makes us feel good, we have no problem doing so then heading into Monday with a life of crime or other activities that have nothing to do with what we learned or experienced on Sunday. On the other hand, when our relationship is a *personal* one with Christ, when all we long for is to emanate Him and His leadership on this earth, we will act differently on Monday. Yes?

Second, I believe that we are looking to the church for love and not finding it there. I am amazed as I visit various churches and chat with so many pastors and parishioners. Oh, how much they long to see love, trust, respect and transparency in the church.

One wonders – if they cannot find these things within the church – where else? Love is not just found in the church building ... it is found in God and this is the type of lasting love He desires for us.

Dear brethren ... while gathering together is a mandate (Hebrew 10:25) whether we do this in a church building or elsewhere is not the focus. You assemble yourselves where you feel most comfortable, where you feel God.

More importantly is that we also have the mandate of loving each other (John 13:34-35). If our assembly is stripped of this love then what is the point? However, even if we feel ultimate love in our gatherings, we still must find the time to come away and develop that *personal* relationship with Him.

Unfortunately, we cannot rely on others for our salvation, for our eternal peace and fulfillment – we can only find this in God. Some of us are fortunate to run into some good role models. I hope we can continue to enjoy many more of these, but even here, we must come away at some point to personally experience Him. This is how we achieve and enjoy longevity with Him ... our First Love as we crave Him and as we pant after Him:

‘Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it [we] may grow up in [our] salvation,³ now that [we] have tasted that the Lord is good’ (I Peter 2: 2-3).

Oh, it is this desire to personally taste of Him that so many of us seem to be lacking. The taste we develop is sadly hitched to the experiences of others. No, this is not sustainable. We must *personally* experience this. Do not look outside of you, even in the church, for love and salvation. Most of the church is also looking for the same. See God for *yourself* first then together, let us guide and encourage each other in our gatherings.

Please let me reiterate that what we need to understand is that almost every person sitting on the pew next to us in church is carrying their own life's baggage. Each is desperately seeking that straight and narrow way for his/her life. Do not add to their pain by overly expecting the impossible from them. We are dealing with human beings with similar challenges. Together, must find a way of seeking God so that He can heal and help us to heal each other but we cannot put the weight of our ultimate salvation on a person or persons.

We must be taught to seek God for ourselves - it must be an *internal* process not an external motivation. The latter will only lead to an emotional roller coaster as we see the best of people change daily before our eyes. They are human beings; they cannot save us (Psalm 146:3). Many leaders in and out of church can *guide* us to God but we must at some point seek Him *personally* once we become aware of His existence within and around us.

Okay – so back to walking a thin line today. As I wrote this message, I envisioned the slender rope walked on by the acrobats ...this is precisely where we are now if we

have any hope of saving ourselves or creation. My dears, we will not be forced to walk this thin line since He still is not a God who would want to pressure us in any way. However, the reality is that we can only enjoy His full calling and inheritance by ‘letting it be done on earth (us) as it is in heaven (Him)’ - as per the *Our Father* Prayer. From as a child, I uttered this prayer so many times yet each day it took on an even greater meaning as I visited yet another mansion (experience) in my Father’s House (John 14:2). Okay so this is a mouthful, let me explain what I mean.

In order to do this, let us pause and reflect on the most beautiful prayer presented in Matthew 6:9-13:

The Lord’s Prayer

Our Father which art in heaven

Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come.

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
forever. Amen

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

I saw earth as us and heaven as Him.
For earth or this entire body to be
heaven – all must be consumed in
Him where earth takes on His full
features. We are made in the image of
God but when we look into the mirror



– whom do we see? Do we see His righteousness, His peace, His compassion ... Him? Or are we still just seeing ourselves in that mirror? If so, then the refining must go on.

Let me pause here to share a little story with you:

In 1992, while studying in Toledo, Spain, I would walk around the little village in the afternoons as I did not have enough money to do any distant tours. I was satisfied though to enjoy the local people and felt purpose in this. One day I saw two men overseeing a souvenir corner where they made the most beautiful pieces. One such piece was a brass plate with the most stunning decorative edges. Once completed, one passed it to the other to shine in preparation for sale. I could not believe the care with which this process was handled – one of the men polished and polished until I saw his face clearly in the plate. It was at that point that the Lord quickened to me that this is exactly how it works as He refines us – the process continues until He perfectly sees Himself in us.

Through this refining process, we know that He must increase as we decrease (John 3:30). During the metamorphosing process, we will be doing things that are simply not *normal* or do not seem like us – this is good – we are changing nature and taking on His:

But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from

*glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord
(2 Corinthians 3:18):*

The entire metamorphosis begins to feel less foreign as our very mind becomes aligned with His - fusing the earthly with the heavenly to the point where one cannot be distinguished from the other. Oh alleluia. Herein lies our journey to and hope of perfection with Him (Matthew 5:48).

You see how different He is from the world? His love for us causes Him to *desire* to share this perfection with us! Take note of this please as you apply this to your life today. Those who genuinely love you *will* desire to share all they are and have with you. Do not settle for any less than what the Father Himself desires to give to you.

Too often, we justify the actions of others toward us. Dear One, we only have one chance at life ... one journey ... no repeats. Acknowledge who you are in Him and go after the best, the very best He has for you.

It dawned on me just last week that much of the stress, illnesses and pains are coming from the polarity that exists between earth and heaven. We are acting *out of* our nature - *heaven* and in so doing, the conflict continues within us, the battle continues to rage. Friends, let us release all flesh unto Him. Let us return to our original nature – the state for which we were designed – ‘in the image of God’. Let go and just *Be* as He *Is*. Make straight the path of the Lord – clear, distinct, irrefutable evidence

that He *Is*...so that all creation might see and give glory to our Father in Heaven.

Releasing this polarity, ending this battle within us is such an answer to enjoying all that He has for us. Our Father spoke to us about the marriage, the union, the offspring. As we merge fully with the Father and become one, we will enjoy the fruits (Matthew 6:33). How honored we are that He would embrace us as one with Him as He is one with the Father (John 14:20). My goodness – what a privilege! A privilege that we are probably not worthy of but nevertheless, one that He chose to give to us because of ... His love for us.

Have we merged and become one with Him? Are we seeing the fruits of this consummation? Are we still feeling separate from God? Are we still putting aside time per day to pray or are we naturally in prayer all day? When we go to sleep at nights, do we feel that while our bodies are resting, our spirits continue in communion with the Father? Are we diligently praying to do the right thing, make the right decision? Are we spending lots of time fighting to refrain from killing our brother or are we simply enjoying ... just being as He is - all that He is with little or no effort? Can we honestly declare that 'It is finished', that the battle and raging conflict within is over?

As Jesus yielded up Himself and completely became one with the finished work of His faith, He relaxed and breathed, 'It is finished' on the cross – His purpose on earth was fulfilled. He had walked every step desired by His father – it was over.



Let us ponder on this a while – we think of Jesus as supernatural but it was designed that He should walk this earth as full man with all the normal thinking and feelings of the human yet the desire to rise above it all for His Father. We clearly see this when He wished that 'the hour would pass'.

Therefore, how excruciating it must have been for Him to wish that this was just a dream. How many times we feel this when sorrow is upon us – when we are by the sick bed of a child, a parent, a friend. When we are starving or hurting because of deceit from those we love so dearly. We see this when He wept, when He was angry and when He was tempted. Do you weep today? Do you feel angry? Are you tempted?

Yes, we are human but what should we do with these feelings? Are we aligning each reaction to His will and nature so that we too can say, 'It is finished' and in complete accord with God? Dear friends, He came in full human form ... human form ... just like you and me. We can conquer as He has conquered with His love.

Just as God had a purpose for His Son, He also has a purpose for each of us – His precious Sons – for *you*! The *you* who was worth the pain His loving Son suffered and endured. *You*, the one who is worth the price of each nail being driven into the Hand of God’s very chosen one.

What are we doing with this privilege? How are we making this pain and suffering He bore worthwhile?

Oh dears, make straight the way. Watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41). He knows our strengths and our weaknesses as we try to walk that straight and narrow way. He is *with* us throughout the walk. Rest in His love!

Slenderizing ... the Father spoke to us about His increasing in us so that the flesh can decrease. Just a few weeks ago, a dear friend shared something so very special as she likened the dealing of the Lord in us to that of a gold refiner’s job. The refiner does not stop polishing the gold until he sees himself in it. Is the Lord seeing Himself in us yet? As the Lord refines us, is He seeing His love, care, compassion, life, healing and well-being in us? He made us in His image and likeness – do we bear this resemblance? Have we taken on His identity?

We see where the Father is establishing His elect today. My friends, we are not going to get into the act through any backdoor. We are going to have to show the right credentials. In natural offices, whether it be those designed by the presidency or any organization, the most successful candidate is the one who has the right

credentials and who can best perform the duties. Now what is the difference between the natural and spiritual office?

In the natural, we sometimes overlook the job requirements and specifications, and hire by favoritism, nepotism and so forth. No, my friends, in this great spiritual calling and title, none of this exists. There is no back door. There is perfect equity in the hiring process. Guess what? The vacancies are endless for every corner of the earth, every profession, every path will be filled with His people – and they shall reign, but we will take these offices in the right way and through the front door. Oh alleluia!

Whatever job you are in now, whatever you may be going through, remember that He did not intend for you to be enslaved but to rule and reign. Why then are you accepting less? Seek Him daily, hear Him, know what He is instructing you to do. No, it is not easy. I know this. Just BE and quietly continue to seek Him when you are not sure which direction to take. Let Him know that you are ready and willing to take the test of faith, that you desire nothing and only Him and all He has for you.

Let us hold fast to the calling ... ‘Let us press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus’ (Phil 3:14). Let us encourage each other along the way. Let us avoid the detours as we listen keenly.

Are we ready for this? Have we made the way so straight that we can proudly present our credentials and enjoy this awesome opportunity – to serve in His Royal Cabinet?

He gave us all we would need to be able to make this path straight. He thirsted on that cross so that we might be filled with all that we need. The result of the cross was, ‘Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world’ (Matthew 28:20). How then can we possibly fail if He is always with us? Because, simply put – we have lost sight of who we are and who He is within us. Oh my, we can go all the way back to Genesis and trace the power of God and all He bestowed on and in His Son – is this the power that is working within us today?

We easily see that God and Jesus have this power but our sight ends right there. No beloved, this power is in us for greater things we are to do than we have seen even in the Son (John 5:19-20).

Mankind is and will do even more than what our brother, Jesus, accomplished here on earth. Yes? We clearly see this as God’s intention in John 5:19-20, ‘Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. For the Father loveth the Son, and sheweth him all things that himself doeth: and he will shew him greater works than these, that ye may marvel.’

Yes friends, there is even greater to come – can we even withstand the awesomeness of this? And more so, it is and will come through you and me! Let us be grounded – let us be stubborn in doing His will as much as His love for us is stubborn. Let us plant our feet solidly and be determined to keep His way straight and clear. Let us do it

for Him. As we pave the way, creation will cry, ‘Holy is the Lord’.

We are given all the confidence we need to enjoy the greatest self-esteem. How many times we start a job and most of the groundwork is in gaining the confidence of our superiors, hoping to feel worthy and priced? Well, in this high calling, He already showed us what He thinks of us by letting His most Beloved Son carry our weight of sin. He proved His love and faith in us when He paid that grave price at Calvary. *So dear ones, what more do we need to keep His path straight?* God bless us all.

So yes, we need to continue the cry of John the Baptist – to make the way straight and narrow but ... let us do it in love and with love. If the motive of our efforts is to bring others to Christ, then please let us learn the few important lessons of reaching out ... we must finally understand that the hearts we are trying to penetrate for Christ are longing for the greatest of them all ... *love*. If our methods destroy this need for love, we would have failed hopelessly in our efforts to touch these hearts.

Also, let us be cognizant of the fact that none of us is there as yet. Some may be closer than others, but we are all still on this journey of perfecting that straight and narrow way for Him so unless any of us is perfectly there, we cannot throw that stone at anyone – yes? "Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" John 8:7.





**** Reflection Time ****

How easy it is for us to take what we read for granted. However, I challenge us today. Fellow believer, how do we answer the following questions?

1. Can we please pause for a moment and indeed reflect on what it means *personally* to you to walk in the *straight and narrow way*?
2. What has this journey been like for you so far?
3. What do you see as the main things that caused you to struggle on this journey to perfection with Him?
4. Have you paused to examine the ‘roots’ of things that caused the struggle?
5. How have you dealt with others regarding the straight and narrow way?
6. What has been your effort and approach in helping them succeed?
7. What are a few things you can do to get started on this journey – so that little by little you feel you are walking this way for Him first then for you?

Feel free to do this reflection exercise individually or as a group. Do not rush through answers to these questions. Take as much time as you can to deeply reflect on each one.

REFLECTION FIVE

Living from the Roots

And they have no root in themselves, but endure for a while; then, when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately they fall away.

Mark 4:17



Introduction - The birth of this message:

For years I watched how we are tossed back and forth in the wind – trying to find our roots, a place where we can stand strong. I pondered over the distinct difference between happiness and joy with joy being lasting stripped of all the emotional roller coasters that add then take away happiness.

Here is the outcome of this reflection while sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane.

I share this with you as it was deeply impressed upon me to do so. I pray that it will be of some blessing to you as it has been to me in my walk with the Father.

Somewhere along the line, we started to believe that we simply exist. We float or are simply carried somewhere in midair. We live one day to the next, taking things as they come and going about our lives without much purpose or direction. Somewhere in our journey, we were sadly disconnected *mentally* from our *roots* – the very source of our life.

We are like a lifeless limb simply swaying as the wind blows and in whatever direction it takes us. Today, we believe this and tomorrow, that. We are easily talked into things and are quickly convinced otherwise as we listen from one to the other. We have no sense of who we are and where we came from or where we are heading so we accept whatever comes. We take whatever the world offers without feeling that we deserve only the best. We accept blessings as good luck and misfortune as our life's fate. If only we see that there is a purpose to *each* single, precious, unique life. Let us find out what *our* purpose is now. Let us reach *inward* for that eternal joy that awaits each of us.

As we live this way, we also find ourselves happy one day and sad the other; laughing endlessly then depressed the very next moment. In the process, we find whatever quick drug we can to help us experience a fast fix, even if it is just a temporary high. We feel elated for a while then we hit rock bottom again.

We need to understand that there is no drug out there that can create internal joy. We must find the permanent drug that keeps us on a high no matter what!

We enter our workplaces and fight daily for self-contentment and self-esteem. Our level of equilibrium is set by the extent of job security or how our supervisor treats us or how well the team accepts us. Some days everything seems positive, so we leave the workplace feeling encouraged and elated. Then the next day we go to work and personalities around us flip in a different direction so we lose faith and feel de-motivated wishing we can quit and find something better.

We fight for more monies only to be refused and then we feel we are worthless. If only we can come to realize dear brethren that it does not matter how much we change jobs, there is a deeper problem here that follows us wherever we go. When we feel like running, let us stand firm and face the battle until we experience victory then *freely* make a choice as to whether or not we will stay or move on. Let it be *our* choice as God guides. Do not let anyone or anything push and pull us in all directions.

Likewise, we enter our homes hoping to find peace and love and warmth there. Sometimes we do and at other times, the home seems as unbearable as the rest of life. Have we thought of the fact that those at home are also experiencing what we are? They are also fellow journeyers with their own trials and daily challenges – they too are trying to find out who they are? Does any of the above sound familiar to us?

Now, what do we look like when we lack a conscious connection to the very roots from where we came? There is simply nothing much to us – anything we do or say, or think is ephemeral ... nothing sound, nothing solid.



Precious one, we must search deeply to find back our roots, return to these roots and be sure that we are strongly grounded in these roots. It is time to do so. Please do not delay the process.

But first and foremost - what are these *roots* anyway? We see in the *Merriam-Webster* dictionary where the word *roots* is described as follows:

Something that is an origin or source. Usually, underground part of a seed plant body that originates usually from the hypocotyl, functions as an organ of absorption, aeration, and food storage or as a means of anchorage and support.

The roots are the *source* of life for the plant. Try transplanting without properly handling the roots ... the plant will die. It does not matter what a pretty plant pot

you have. It does not matter how beautiful the plant looks at the time you transplant it. It does not matter what type of fertilizer you use. If the roots are not there, all other efforts are fruitless. The roots hold all the ingredients that make the plant grow and blossom. When we cut off the roots – we cut off any hope of life.

As we peep into the Strong's concordance, we see that 'roots' is a Hebrew word, Sheresh, that means Firmness or Permanence (08328).

Firmness or permanence – that which is immovable, that which is set for life. Is this what we are after? A life that is free of short-term gains and happiness? A life that is not up one day and down the other? A life that is grounded in its roots ... the unfailing source of food that brings joy ... not just happiness?

If we are tired of a life where the sand is constantly shifting under our feet then it is time to stand firm, to find that ground where nothing outside of us can shake our balance, can upset our equilibrium. So much of what happens in our everyday life affects our stress level which in turn results in endless illnesses. It is time for us to free ourselves of all of this. Let us be determined to give ourselves the best today.

Now please pause for a moment and reflect on the following verses:

For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and [that] spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.	Jeremiah 17:8
Say thou, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Shall it prosper? Shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? It shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof.	Ezekiel 17:9
These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds [they are] without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots	Jude 1:12
And in the morning, as they passed by, they saw the fig tree dried up from the roots.	Mark 11:20
Thou preparedst [room] before it, and didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land.	Psalms 80:9
He shall cause them that come of Jacob to take root: Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.	Isaiah 27:6

Yea, they shall not be planted; yea, they shall not be sown: yea, their stock shall not take root in the earth: and he shall also blow upon them, and they shall wither, and the whirlwind shall take them away as stubble.	Isaiah 40:24
Thou hast planted them, yea, they have taken root: they grow, yea, they bring forth fruit: thou [art] near in their mouth, and far from their reins.	Jeremiah 12:2
Ephraim is smitten, their root is dried up, they shall bear no fruit: yea, though they bring forth, yet will I slay [even] the beloved [fruit] of their womb.	Hosea 9:16

All these verses link the word *roots* with fruits and the absence of roots with futility.

Please allow me to share with you that you do not have to feel that you are in midair any longer. You came from roots of Kingship, Pure Royalty, Wealth, Health, Job Security, Happiness, Joy, Love, Peace, Hope, Healing, and these are only a few of examples of your very DNA makeup! ☺ How do I know this? Because ... you are birthed from the very God Almighty Himself. You are made in His very image and His likeness:

*God created man in **His** own **image**, in the **image** of God (Genesis 1:27).*

If you are made of His every substance, can you be anything other than what He is? It does not stop here. Not only are you created in the image of God, but you are given full dominion over all that He has created. My, my – He certainly works in a measure of full abundance. He did not just give us His life – He provided for us in every manner possible.

And God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth' (Genesis 1:26).

Think of an earthly parent who gives birth to a child ... nothing is too good for that child. This parent will work hours and do almost anything to be sure that child is well taken care of. How much more would our Heavenly Father not do? If your child looks into your eyes and asks for a piece of bread, would you give him a stone? (Matthew 7:9). If she asks for clothing, will you turn your back on her? Oh, precious one, how much more will our Father who is perfect, who is our God and Lord of all will not do to answer the need of His precious, precious child who is a part of *all* that He is.

Let us go to Matthew 6: 26-33 for a little while and look at the wonders of His love and His promise of provision for each day:

Therefore, I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?

And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore, take no thought, saying, what shall we eat? or, what shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Please do not let this be just another precious passage from God's Word. Read it slowly and digest each piece of it. The next time you question God's love for you or feel that you do not have enough – take a walk and look at

even the wildest flowers that grow without much rhyme or reason. Carefully look at the beauty of these that are destroyed the next time the lawn gets mowed, or the swale gets cleaned.

Can even the greatest artist duplicate the true beauty of a rose? Can any of us feel as beautiful as such as a flower? Well in God's eyes, we are more precious than the most beautiful of all creation – therefore would He not take care of us? Wow ... how beautiful you stand in the sight of your God!

Again, when doubt slips in, return to the roots of who you are and from where you came. The same God in whose image you were born – the same Hand that rolled back the powerful Red Sea to set the Israelites free – is the same Hand that is working in your life today. I then dare ask you: How can anything be too difficult for Him? How can anything be impossible for you?

The simple reality is that nothing, absolutely nothing is too difficult for Him. The only thing that stands between us and the power of the parting of the Red Sea in our lives today is 'us'. Let us rise up and claim all that He has for us. But please let us understand that we cannot do this on our own. We need God and all that He is *in* and *through* us. He is our Alpha and Omega, He is our Jehovah Jireh, He in His completeness is *all* that we will ever need.

Dear brethren, I leave you with the following words that Moses uttered to the Israelites, God's chosen people:

*'Do not be afraid. **Stand firm** and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today' (Exodus 14:13)*

God bless you richly until we meet again. May you experience the fruitfulness of living straight from the Roots!





**** Reflection Time ****

How easy it is for us to take what we read for granted. However, I challenge us today. Fellow believer, how do we answer the following questions?

1. What are your roots?
2. From where do you draw your life?
3. What is the source of your daily strength?
4. How are you fed daily?
5. When you awake in the mornings, is there a solid ground under your feet?
6. Do you face each day knowing that even if you fall, you will be picked up?
7. Are you assured that even if the day gets rough beyond control; you know that there is enough substance within you to pull you through?
8. Do you feel your feet standing on solid ground?

Feel free to do this reflection exercise individually or as a group. Do not rush through answers to these questions. Take as much time as you can to deeply reflect on each one.

REFLECTION SIX

He is in a Petal

And yet I say unto you, that even Solomon in all his glory.... was not arrayed like one of these lilies, or flowers of the field: for the glory and beauty of his garments were purely from art, but theirs by nature; which can never be equaled by art. Matthew 6:29



Introduction - The birth of this message:

The significance of the petal in this writing is to help us return to the simplicity of life that has somehow gotten lost amidst the flurries of living. This sharing gets into life, what it is, what our purpose is, who God is within us and so forth. We are brought back to the importance of slowing down long enough to appreciate ... the true beauty of life.

Here is the outcome of this reflection while sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane.

When last have you paused long enough to look at a *petal*? Not the whole plant, not the flowers ... just a *petal*? When last have you marveled at its beauty, its velvety feeling, its delicacy, its mystery? Who took time to color it so beautifully? Oh, and when the rain falls on that rose! Who thought us so worthy to bless us with this precious gift of creation?



Enslaved by the things of life ...



Life has become such a subway that rarely do we have time anymore to enjoy creation – God’s precious gift to us. From the moment we awake, we get caught up in the mad bedlam of life and all that it is and all that we think it should have been or should be to us.

From one thing to another, we go back and forth until our bodies give up and it is time to retire from the stress of the day. We reach for our beds barely able to move. We rest a little only to muster up enough energy to start all over again. It is endless. So much to do, so much we want, so much we wished had been, so much we hope will not happen. Our thoughts are so caught up in the wishing and the wanting and the hoping and the regretting that we simply cannot pause.

Please let us take a deep breath - whewww... and thank Him for the very fact that we are indeed able to breathe.

This is truly no different from what parents go through when they do the very best they can to provide their children with everything possible only to see the children gloss over all of their gifts while they keep wishing for things they cannot or should not have. It is a painful experience – is it not? You love them so much but simply do not know how else to please them? Yet, we do this to our Heavenly Father almost daily.

One morning, my mum hailed me with the words: “*Dalo*, good morning. What do we have to thank God for today?” I could not help but reply even without thinking too much: ‘Mama, how about the fact that you are able to breathe long enough to ask that question?’



Another day I replied to the same question of hers: ‘Mama, if your feet can touch the floor then that is your million-dollar gift for today – all else is a perk!’ I know that poor Mum was just looking for a reason to live, to face the new day, for something that gave her a reason to thank Him. But oh, we need not think too deeply. Just the fact that we are able to think is reason enough to thank Him. For once there is life, there is hope.

For those precious ones gone ahead of us, life is over – not even a moment again to wonder what to thank Him for or to reflect on their day.

How honored, how privileged we are to still enjoy the gift of life. Breathe in every moment ... make each day even better than the one before.

We thank Him for this life that He so lovingly gave to us then we thank Him for who He is within us and all that He has blessed us with in this world.

Who is this God within us?

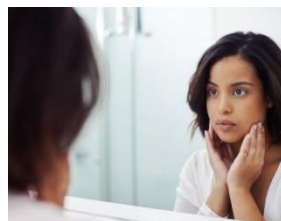
We are told that God made us in His image but what does this mean? It means exactly what it says – we are made in the image and the likeness of God (Genesis 1:26). In the natural when a father produces a child – that child shares his DNA at an indisputable level if the child really is his – yes? Why is this any different regarding our relationship with God? Oh my, this means that we share His DNA – the DNA of our Heavenly Father, our Master and King, God Jehovah, God El Shaddai, God El Elyon, God Jehovah Jireh – the list and attributes are endless. We share *all* of this.

If God has declared this likeness, how can we not believe? We speak down to ourselves. We allow others to degrade our existence.

We are doing all of this to **His** property for we are His, not our own. We could not have done anything to put us into being.

How can we lack confidence? How can we think badly of ourselves and others? But wait a minute, if I accept this then I will have to give up self-pity, acceptance of failure, blaming others and myself. Will I be able to lift myself out of this? Can we all ask this same question? We have stepped away so far from God's Word and His plan for us that we no longer know who we are or where we should head next.

Oh my, I shiver at the thought of this reality. I *am* all that my Father is. I *am* Royalty, I *am* well. I *am* abundant wealth. I *am* peace. I *am* joy. I *am* righteousness. I *am* hope. I *am* all that He is. According to Merriam-Webster, the word *likeness* means 'the quality or state of being like'. The word *image* means 'exact likeness'. It is like looking into a mirror – you see exactly what is there.



I encourage you to take a little time and quietly reflect on who God is and who you are as a result of who He is! Then I challenge us both to never use the word 'can't' again. 😊

What does He bless us with in this world?

I am truly convinced today that He blesses us with the desire of our hearts which is also His desire for us, His calling for us, His Master Plan for us – it just sometimes takes longer rather than sooner for us to see how these two desires eclipse. These two desires struggle until like two tired wrestlers, they give in and let go – finally our will is united with His.

Precious believer, do not look left or right or behind or ahead – just embrace the moment exactly where your feet are right now. The Word teaches us to look upon each day not taking any thought for tomorrow (Matthew 6:34). Yes, we plan to the extent that we remain organized but not to the extent where we lose sleep today over the worries of tomorrow.

So often I hear fellow saints reflect on the fact that God meant us to have life and have it more abundantly so why should they not enjoy a Lexus car or a huge mansion or



infinite riches. I ask you the question today – what is life? How do you define life? Life is Christ. Life is all that Christ embodies – peace, joy, truth, love, hope and so forth.

So, if He is going to give us life and give us it more abundantly, then you could enjoy these things and more but just be aware that God's wealth surpasses all of this. Material things alone do not define who God is within us. He is much more than this and what He desires for us is beyond what the human hands can touch or destroy. The greatest of His gifts is ... *love*.

The Word clearly and distinctly tells us not to store treasures on earth but in heavenly places. It talks about the demise of all principalities and powers. It clearly compares the entering of a rich man into the kingdom of

God to that of a camel passing through a needle eye
(Matthew 19:24).

These all refer to the riches of this world – the ‘things’ that people give their lives for - their souls! While they are willing to risk just about anything to align themselves with the wealth of this world – a sweet, quiet voice deep within them is softly whispering:

‘Oh, please see the riches that I give to you daily – for they cost you nothing!’



Am I saying that you live poor and do not drive a Lexus? That you should only use a humble buggy? No, this is not what I am saying. What I am sharing here is to put first the Kingdom of God, focus on the things of the heavenlies, rise up and live

your purpose and let God provide your earthly needs – for He knows your needs.

Let Him provide that Lexus if necessary – you do not have to steal, fight, or borrow. You do not have to worry, fret, lose your sleep. Because you see – when you are so full of His true wealth, His true abundance, you are so contented that you have little, if any desire, to focus on whether you are driving a buggy or a Lexus. This



becomes nothing but a means of transportation to get you where you want to go ... you rejoice for whatever car you may have, that He gives to you for His purpose.

Again, you will have what is necessary to be comfortable – He knows what you need. I can only explain this with an incident where a friend of mine once said that she feels so very comfortable in her Toyota Corolla, that she would be quite uncomfortable in anything else. Then I have other friends who would not settle for anything less than a Lexus.

You see what I mean? Each one is different – what we want, wish, need, ask for, desire can oftentimes be traced back to intellectual, perceptual, and contextual roots – who we are, how we think, how we see things, where we currently are in our life's journeys and so forth. Each one is very, very unique and precious.



The Father knows the fabric of our very being and He, only He knows, if a Lexus would help or hurt us. Just relax like a baby and put your trust in Him for He cares for you. Want the things He wants for you; bless the things He gives to you. He knows what is best. He knows us.

What I want you to take away from this is that since the Word is true and it meant what it stated regarding the fact

that at the end of it all, only that which is of Him will matter then it stands to reason that our riches cannot be ephemeral. So, anything that seems to be here today and gone tomorrow is not the abundance He promised us. What He wants for us is lasting, is solid, is priceless – effectively ... Himself.

This is what He desires for us – to give us Himself and to give us this blessing abundantly. Accept it ... settle for now less.

You see there is earthly evidence of what is being shared here. If what God meant by abundance was money, jewelry, cars, boats, and other such material things then it means that the wealthy people on this earth would be eternally happy.

Pause again and look around you – find me the greatest, wealthiest in the world and show me that this wealth results in the *life* we just described here. My guess is that you will find zero connectivity between these earthy riches and life as it is defined by and as God. In fact, many of these people feel empty within, many of them have no peace, many commit suicide. Why would they if earthly wealth meant total happiness, inner joy, and fulfillment?

Does this mean that I cannot enjoy all that the Father is and all that the world has?

You see, when you are so consumed with Him, you simply cannot focus on other things – for they all seem as

nothing – they all appear as mere shadows in the light of Him. Just put Him first and let the earthly needs take care of themselves. He is ever so faithful!

Oftentimes I think of a tiny life that is enclosed within the safety of our hand – we will not let anything in this world hurt that little life. This is how it is when we put our lives in His Hand – nothing at all can touch nor hurt us - only that which He permits.

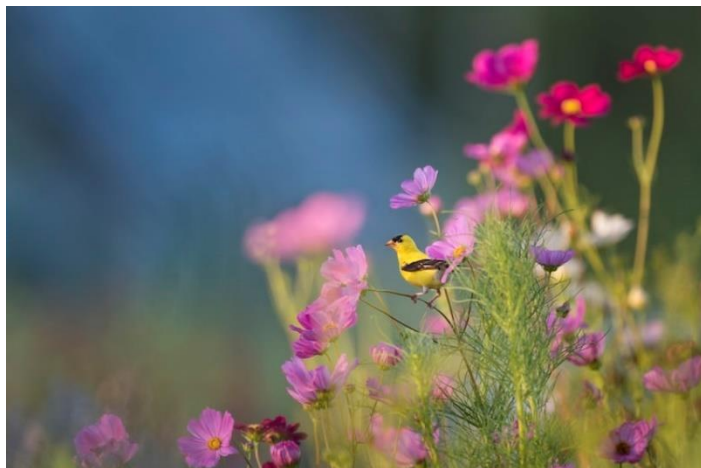


In this context then, once you have totally surrendered your life to God, leave it there. He knows what He is doing. The scripture says that if we ask the Father for bread, He will not give us stone – but His stone may not always be what we envision it to be. Effectively, He knows what we need – He knows what Bread for us is and what is stone.

Just rest in His Hand.

Let God deliver His Master Plan for us as He sees fit – it may not be all bright days but at the end of it all – it will be perfect as He is perfect.

Think of a scenery that is breathtaking to you. You could either pull out the dark colors – the brown, the black, the gray and focus on each of these colors or you can see how they balance the bright red, blue, green, and yellow and how, together, they make the most beautiful scenery you ever saw.



Do not focus only on the good things nor mourn daily over the bad things – enjoy it all for He has the master brush and with each stroke, He is creating the greatest masterpiece that is your life *with purpose* here on earth. Let it be – let Him do His thing. He is qualified and well credentialed.

Precious creation, I encourage you to slow down and pause long enough to simply enjoy being alive. No amount of material things in the world can give you this life. It is priceless, it is unattainable, it is beyond human understanding. Each of us then is in effect worthier than millions of dollars – because we are worth what money itself cannot buy. Yet, how much time is spent thanking Him for this life – for this opportunity to breathe, smell, touch, taste, hear, see?

Then the next question is: ‘Why this life Lord?’ Have you thought of this? Why has He seen us worthy to deserve this gift of life that no human hand can create?

Now ... how do we live our life's purpose?

One day at a time, precious saints – one day at a time. Just reflect for a moment what it was like when Jesus walked the earth. Did you see any big planning happening? Or did you notice that He simply set out on His journey and touched the world as His Father opened the way. He simply walked. He was not part of any grand church. He did not worry what would happen the next day. He did not fight for riches of the land for He *is* richness. He is what is Godly. He is yesterday, today and, tomorrow. He is all things, and this is the ‘all-ness’ that He deposited in us when He said ‘Lo, I am with you, always’ (Matthew 28:20). So, we do not have to fight for these things for we *are* richness. His richness.

He gave Himself to us – do you think He sat and decided what part of Himself He would give to us and what part He would withhold? No, precious one, He gave it all! While we recognize that there is God Supreme who is greater than all of us – He has given us His Son so that we can have life and have it more abundantly.

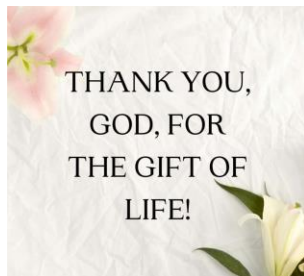
The scripture shares that even greater things will we see than the Son Himself (John 5:19-20). This is because upon His ascension He promised to return to us with the Father and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). He made us one with them in John 14:20. Can you imagine our inheritance and what we are capable of as a part of this *oneness* with the Trinity to which we have been invited to accept? Also, there is one thing we can do make a difference in this

world that Jesus never could – our testimony for being a sinner saved by grace. He was as perfect on earth as He is now.

Rise up and walk fellow journeyer for He stands **tall** within you. Be confident for while you are nothing of yourself – He is everything - so this must make you something. Let no man question your value – for the human cannot give value to you nor take it away. You are your Father’s very purpose here on earth. Take one day at a time and see how He will reveal Himself through you. Enjoy – for herein lies your abundance.

So, in closing then:

- We thank Him for life
- We thank Him for all that He is within us
- We thank Him for all He has given to us in this world
- We thank Him for a purposeful life
- We thank Him for helping us live our purpose
- We thank Him daily for as He is, so are we in this world.



Most importantly, pause long enough to admire His precious, precious creation for you ... therein ... you will find that the very unspeakable loveliness and mystery of who He is lies in the *simple beauty of a petal* that

surpasses even Solomon in all His beauty! (Matthew 6:29).





**** Reflection Time ****

Fellow believer, how do we answer the following questions?

1. When last did you pause from life's busy-ness just to touch the soft velvet feeling of a petal?
2. What comes to you as you watch the most beautiful flowers around you?
3. Do you believe that you are even more beautiful and valuable to your Heavenly Father than these flowers?
4. What do you see when you look into the mirror? Do you see why you are worth so much to Him?
5. Do you see the *uniqueness* of you that He meticulously created?
6. If you do not see this value, what do you think is causing this?
7. Do you feel safe in the palm of His Hand?
8. Have you accepted that 'oneness' invitation in John 14:20 – to be one with the Trinity? What does this mean to you?

Feel free to do this reflection exercise individually or as a group. Do not rush through answers to these questions. Take as much time as you can to deeply reflect on each one.

REFLECTION SEVEN

The Perfect Union

You will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. John 14:20



Introduction - The birth of this message:

This message is very special as I reflect on the oneness with the Trinity with which we have been gifted. Wow! It made me wonder how we would view life differently if we really felt this oneness. While we go after relationships, we will not feel incomplete if we did not find them.

Here is the outcome of this reflection while sitting in the Garden of Gethsemane.

*"Thus saith the LORD of hosts: Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, **that the temple might be built.** Zechariah 8:9*

As I reflected on *God ... in Human Form* in the Garden of Gethsemane ... Oh, what a precious moment this was! Alleluia! The wonderful truth that is being shared can only become resident *within* us as we *watch* with Him and allow the life of His Word to become a part of our nature.

What an unconditional love...what a sealed covenant...what an unmatched dowry the Beloved has prepared for us. Oh, please listen for and answer His call...

Arise my love one, my fair one and come away with me!
(*Song of Solomon: 2*)

For us to enjoy this *God...in Human* form there must be a *union* that causes a *birth* that results in an *offspring*. The *Union* being that intimate consummation that takes place between Human and Spirit; the *Birth* being the process of a physical revealing; the *Offspring* being the fruit or proof of the union we birth - that is, others we bring to Him because of our union with Him.

Dear One ... *The Perfect Union* results from a complete giving of ourselves, as an *individual*, to the Lord as we answer His call with no reservation.

We become so consumed with His love, so in awe at His presence, so overtaken by His beauty that, through a *personal* choice to love and adore Him, we totally surrender to His will and His way. Yes, there will be much *slenderizing* as shared earlier but we embrace it all for we come to desire only the things of the Lord! Glory be to God!

A caution – please do not force the process. Do not struggle with the decision. Do not waver in your mind. *Just Relax. Just let go. Just be.* When the time is right, you will *know* it.

As you grow in this astounding relationship with Him, as you receive His teaching, as you continue to Watch with Him, as you learn to closely Listen to His voice then you find yourself longing to clean and perfect His temple ... (I Cor. 3:16). You come to feel the need to get rid of anything and everything that is not of Him. In preparing your body as a temple, a sanctuary for your Beloved, you long to put the entire temple in order...the *Outer Court*, the *Inner Court*, and the *Most Holy Place*.

The Outer-Court

The Outer-Court being the physical body that needs to be cared for by taking into consideration what we eat and drink, how we perform our daily exercises and so forth. When we care our bodies as *His* temple, we find ourselves not doing so many things that we once did before.

We become diligent in our self-care. Correct dieting, routine exercise and so forth no longer seem a burden but a blessing! Do not relax your efforts in this area. Do not let us be careless and in so doing, destroy a precious body that was given to us for His purpose, His pleasure.

Remember dear friend, there is *one* thing we have that God does not...*a human body*. Not that He cannot zap a body into place if He so desires but His pleasure is that out of our pure love for Him, we will return this body to Him. That we would, out of love for Him, take dominion of all Creation so that we focus on the Creator...*offering our very utmost for His Highest*. Alleluia!



The Inner-Court

The Inner-Court being where we nourish our souls with the true bread of life, where we do not allow emotions and thoughts to destroy our communion with the Father.

Easier said than done... right? I agree. This is the area of the temple that is most attacked, that is most affected by the soulish activities of the worldly realm. This is where our heart and our head constantly clash. This is where we

feel the pains, the hurts, the tears, the anxiety, the torture, the hopelessness, the despair, and the fatigue.

Yes, dear one...I have gone through each of these avenues in my feeble effort to make everyone around me happy and to take on the martyrdom of the world...a responsibility that I saddled myself with...a responsibility I was not required to carry. Here is where we rise up and claim full authority within us as we enjoy His peace, His calm, His love, His assurance, and His victory!

The Most Holy Place

The Most Holy Place being that place where we actually enjoy perfect union, a high level of intimacy with the Father that is beyond words. Dear friend, we can have a perfect physical body and conquer all the warfare in our soul realm and live quite healthily, happily, and even peacefully.

But...we would not have reached that ultimate level of joy, ecstasy, and awesomeness, that full reality of our purpose here on this earth as human beings with the full capability to dwell in the heavenlies!

This is where we go beyond physical care of the body, where we go beyond taking control of our emotions, where we make that conscious, individual decision to be *one* with the Father...to answer the full calling of the Beloved! The invitation to enjoy this has been opened to all but each must rise up and individually claim His Royal Inheritance!

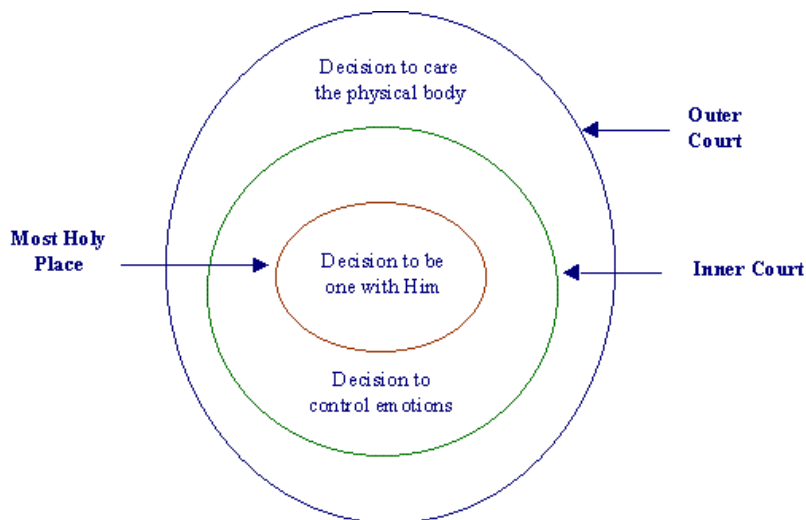
It is in the Most Holy Place that the seed is fully planted and there is no turning back. The decision has been made, the union has been blessed, and the consummation of our will with His has taken place...the anticipating of the birth of the offspring is at hand...

What can we envision the birth to be like?

The birth, which is the process of revealing the fruit or offspring, is a painless one. It happens simply when we just *be* because He *is*! We do not have to make any grand effort to draw attention to ourselves, to what is being done within us. We do not have to force anyone to be present just to prove that we have experienced the Lord in a special way. We do not have to do anything!

We can simply relax and watch the beauty of the fruit, the offspring, come forth. As it comes forth, all creation will marvel at what they see in our lives and call Him blessed.

'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' (Matthew 5:16)



What is the mystery of the offspring?

There is no mystery. Human union begets humans, animal union begets animals, orange trees beget oranges and... Spirit-Human union begets spirit-humans that bear the full genes, features, resemblance, inheritance of all Spirit and all Human. Jesus was as much God as if He were not human and as much human as if He were not God.

This spirit-human union then is fully spirit and fully human but the *outward* manifestation of this union that the natural eye beholds is a perfectly *balanced* package of both. What the world sees here is the reality of humans made in the perfect image of God (Genesis 1:27)

Therefore, we cannot be all invisible (Spirit) in our relationship with others nor all human. It will be a blend. Effectively the true fruit or offspring that the world sees will be one that they will be able to physically touch, speak with and listen to while beholding in us the mystery

of the heavenlies and the very workings of the very shekinah glory of God the Father in human form!

"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord". Ephesians 2:21

Precious one, the world is relentlessly searching, endlessly looking to see what will come forth from us. For so many years they have heard it all but now they want to see it and in so seeing, will have no choice but to desire it for He wrought a perfect thing in us.

God...in Human form is about showing forth a fruit that is not pious, invisible, untouchable but one that enjoys a full human existence as it breathes forth the things of the heavenlies! Praise God!





**** Reflection Time ****

Fellow believer, how do we answer the following questions?

1. What does it mean to you to be one with Him?
2. What is the reality of this oneness in your everyday life?
3. What changes in your life as you embrace this oneness that He mentioned in John 14:20?
4. What do you think prevents us from accepting and enjoying this oneness?
5. Do you feel the royalty of your existence since you are the child of a King? Why? Why not?
6. How does this oneness with Him manifest in how you relate to others?
7. What does it mean to be complete in Him?
8. What does it mean to be fully human and fully God on this earth?
9. How does Christ's life show us that we too can be both?

Feel free to do this reflection exercise individually or as a group. Do not rush through answers to these questions. Take as much time as you can to deeply reflect on each one.

PRAYER



Dear Father,

We thank you for your love. We thank you for your grace. We thank you for your never-ending mercy. Each day we experience such joy just knowing that we are covered by you. May we ever remain faithful to you as you take pleasure in our lives. Guide us daily so that we may live in a manner that brings glory and honor to you.

Amen.