

Union with God



Relationship with God (Part 5)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again.

This week I'm sharing on relationship with God. We've seen that the only enduring basis for such a relationship is a covenant and that when two parties enter into a covenant each lays down his life for the other. Each places himself and all that he has at the disposal of the other. In particular, we saw how God and Abraham entered into a covenant with each other and how, as a result, Abraham became a friend of God.

Today I'm going to speak about a further result of covenant: "Union with God." The pattern of union that the Bible uses in this context is the marriage union. There are various passages in the Bible where marriage is used to picture the kind of relationship that God desires with His believing people. Let's look at some examples.

First, I'll briefly mention some examples from God's dealings with Israel in the Old Testament. In the language used in Scripture, when God redeemed Israel out of Egypt and made a covenant with them, He became their husband. The covenant relationship He established was one in which He took the place of a husband to His people. As a result, the subsequent disobedience and particularly idolatry, of Israel was referred to by their prophets as adultery. It was tantamount to the breaking of a marriage relationship. It was like a wife being unfaithful to her husband.

Further on in prophecy, the Bible speaks of the restoration of Israel to God's favor again and it indicates that this restoration will climax in the making of a new covenant between God and Israel and the restoration of the marriage relationship. For example, in Hosea 2:20, speaking about the restoration of Israel, God says to them:

> "I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness." (NAS)

Of course, the word "betroth" is a word used in connection with the marriage relationship. And, again, speaking about the same restoration of Israel in Isaiah 62:5, the Lord says:

> "As the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, So your God will rejoice over you." (NAS)

Thus, God's covenant relationship to His people is analogous to a marriage covenant. This is something that I think it's hard for some people to appreciate that God wants a relationship with His people that is so very intimate and personal. I think there's something in people with a church background or a religious up-bringing that almost makes them shun away from the intimate and the personal. I know in my own background in Britain, essentially when I grew up as a boy, I grew up in a good home, a moral home, and I had good parents and grandparents but nobody ever talked about the really intimate things. You didn't talk about your relationship with God. A husband and wife really did not indicate any kind of real warmth or love in public. It was all something to be kept away in a corner somewhere but was not brought out in public. Consequently, when I came to know the Lord in a personal way, it was not easy for me at first to realize just how intimate God wanted His relationship to be with me. However, the New Testament uses just the same kind of language, in fact, it goes further than the Old Testament in this respect. For instance, in Ephesians 5:25 and 27, Paul says this:

> "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her... that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless." (NAS)

The analogy there is very clear. Just as a husband loves his wife, so Christ loves the church. The kind of relationship that a husband desires from his wife, the same kind of relationship Christ desires from the church. And, in fact, the whole culmination of the relationship between Christ and His church is the marriage supper of the Lamb. In Revelation 19:7, it says:

> "...the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready." (NAS)

From one aspect, the supreme responsibility of the church is to prepare herself for that marriage union with Christ. And very significantly and solemnly I believe only those who have made that preparation can be included in the bride, for it says very specifically "His bride has made herself ready." I wonder if that applies to you. Have you ever realized the intimacy of the relationship Christ desires with you? Have you ever seen yourself in that love relationship and if you have and if you realize that the marriage union with the Lamb is to be the climax of all history, are you making yourself ready?

I've been saying that God desires a relationship with His people analogous to the marriage relationship between a husband and a wife but up till this point, I've been talking about God's people collectively. Now I want to go one step further. I want to say that the New Testament clearly reveals that God wants a relationship with each individual believer which is analogous to the marriage relationship. I want to read to you from 1 Corinthians 6:16–18:

> "Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, 'The two will become one flesh.' But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. Flee immorality." (NAS)

Now I think we have to see that there's an analogy there between two different relationships; one in the flesh, the other in the spirit. In the flesh, a man unites himself with the harlot, the prostitute, he becomes one body with her. On the other hand, in the spirit, a man, through faith, a believer, unites himself with God and becomes one spirit with God. I think it's very obvious that the analogy is exact. The sexual relationship in the flesh between a man and a woman is an analogy of the relationship that God desires with a believer in the spirit. If we are too pious and refuse to see the plain implications of that analogy, I think we are failing to see what God is trying to communicate with us in that passage.

Now, I believe it's very significant that Paul says the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him. In a certain sense, the initiative is with the believer. It's the believer who joins himself to the Lord. The Lord will not make the union until the believer moves out and reaches out to God for that union. And then he says he is one spirit with Him. I believe it is the spirit of man that can unite with God. Jesus said of worship: the true worshipers must worship Him in spirit and truth. And I believe there is a relationship that a man or a woman, any believer, can have in the spirit with God that is analogous to a marriage union. It's a total commitment.

You see, God, even in human marriage lays down the requirement of a covenant. A total commitment. God does not recognize as marriage that which is not preceded by total commitment. God does not recognize trial marriages or experimental relations. And what I want to say to you very plainly right now is this: God doesn't have trial relationships with believers. God does not commit Himself to the uncommitted. If you want that kind of intimate, personal relationship with God, then you have to enter into a covenant with God that's based on total commitment to Him.

Unfortunately, many of our churches are full of people today that have never done that. There are a great many things that people do which they somehow hope will achieve that kind of relationship, but they don't do it. It wouldn't be possible to name all the different religious substitutes that people have produced for this kind of commitment to God. I'll just mention a few. People talk about making a decision, signing a card, shaking a minister by the hand, joining a church, having your name on the roll of the church, being baptized or confirmed, and there are many, many other things that people talk about in this context.

Now, I want to make it clear that there's nothing wrong with any of those things in the right context but none of them is a guarantee for that relationship with God that we're speaking about. There is no substitute for total commitment to God. God doesn't offer you an experimental union. God isn't on trial. God will commit Himself only to the one who is committed to Him. The basis of the relationship is covenant. The basis of covenant is a sacrifice. It's the laying down of a life. It's the letting go of my own will, my own possessions, my own ambitions, everything I hold dear and hating anything that comes between God and me. For the Lord says He is a jealous God. That word "jealous," again, is primarily in the context of the marriage relationship. When God says He's a jealous God, what He's saying is, "If you want to be married to Me, there is nothing else in your life that can take precedence over Me. I demand all and I will accept no less."

Let me close by saying this. The essential qualification for being part of the collective bride is to have first established this individual relationship with the Lord.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back again with you at the same time next week, Monday through Friday. Next week I'll continue with this theme of personal relationships but I'll be dealing with relationships on the human plane.

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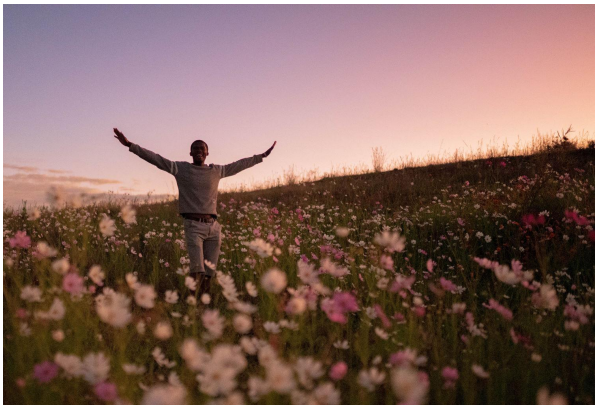

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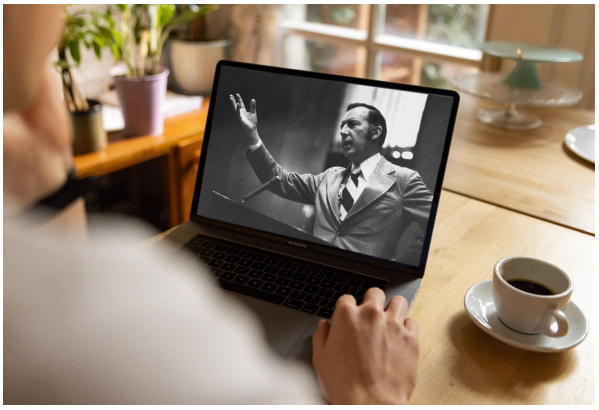

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