

Family Faith

Sermon Series by Pastor John R. Wiuff

God's House, God's Rules
God's House, God Rules
God's House, God's Choice
God's House, God's Voice



Sermon Series
Manuscripts
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In August 2018, Pastor John R. Wiuff joined Millarville Community Church as Pastor of Ministry Mobilization. With him, he brought 35 years' experience Pastoring and all that encompasses. His calling crosses many mediums and presents many obstacles which he combats with his well-rounded education and business understanding. Most importantly his immense love for the Lord, and a passion to see individuals find Jesus, Pastor John has set out to get the important things done, disciplining, teaching and encouraging those around him to be truly saved and born again. If this speaks to you and you want to find out more, please look for his manuscripts at the MCC Corner Book Shop or online at www.millarvillechurch.org under Resources or Sermons.



Pastor John R. Wiuff

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CHAPTER 1

Abraham: Family Begins

Genesis 12: 1-8

All around the world people are afraid of some coming disaster. The world seems to be falling apart. There is wide spread pollution, disasters, war, and terror. Masses of people are fleeing the countries where the ancestors lived for fear of their own lives. All around us we see families broken and breaking apart from huge radical socialist changes in our world. At times it seems all the world is against a family's faith, but there is one who is the champion of the family. He is the one who created family and wants to see it restored to its intended glory.

God has a plan to save this world from self-destruction. If you are concerned about what can be done to restore, heal, bring peace, and lift people out of despair, then you will want to hear this sermon series on "Family Faith." Family is the key to God's plan by which all the world will be blessed and has been blessed over thousands of years and many generations. With families under attack more than ever, we need to get back to God's original solution to a fallen world.

The Family of Faith was the plan from the beginning of creation with Adam and Eve. Their children came with a prophetic hope that one of their descendants would arise that would crush evil under his heel. His plan continued through Noah and the last faithful family on earth before the great flood. The earth groans for the revealing of the Family of Faith that will redeem this world with the blessings of God.

No matter who you are, or where you are, or what you have experienced in life so far, ... God wants you to be a part of this Family Faith. He has declared through His prophets:

25. ... "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,'
And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.'"

26. "And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' ... ***There they shall be called sons of the living God.***"

Romans 9:25-26

If you repent of your sins, ask Jesus to forgive you and receive the Holy Spirit into your spirit, the Gospel of John 3 says you are born again. With this new birth comes the right to be called a son or daughter of God. You are not just saved, you become a part of God's family! This Family of Faith is the hope of the world! No wonder evil seeks to destroy it every way it can.

God created all that you see and more out of nothing. He simply spoke and what we call the earth, the sea and the sky came into existence. Yet something more amazing happens,

because when He speaks, He can create a Family Faith out of broken and lost people like you and me. He takes the broken pieces and makes something wonderful over many generations when He can find someone who will believe in Him.

Let's see how God did this in the Old Testament in the book of Genesis:

1. Now the Lord said to Abram,
"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,

Genesis 12: 1-8

The beginning is always important. In this passage are essentials for how God takes a person and builds a family faith and then a nation based on that foundation. This is how He begins to build a better world for you and for all those who will follow.

If you are trying to build a better family life than the one you had growing up; if you are trying to do better than your parents; or if you are trying to reform nations ... what is in these few verses is critical to your success. If you don't build on the foundation of what God has created and with His intent, then whatever you build will collapse. That is what we are seeing all over the world right now as people try to get away from God's plans for the redeeming of this sinful world.

The first step for any single individual who encounters God by faith is **to leave what you have known and go where you have never been.**

God wants to change the world and He begins by calling anyone who will listen to follow Him by faith out of the corrupt thinking of our past in to the revelation of God's will in our lives. All this begins with baby steps.

God calls on Abraham to: **Go from** your *country*; from your *relatives*; and from your *father's house*. This is a radical step away from a family that is broken to let God create a family faith through you. This was no small thing that God asked of Abraham and what He is asking of you if you are going to have a family based on faith in God.

If you grew up in a nation, a tribe or a home that does not know or honor the God of the Bible, then leaving them to form a new family of faith is important. You can't build on the weak foundation of previous generations, but on the new foundation of Jesus Christ. This is what Abram did. He left behind the flawed foundations for a new family faith that Honored the God of Creation.

This is hard and probably one of the most remarkable events in the history of the World. Our connection to our family is strong even if it was a hard and abusive situation. Families may have problems, but they are our families. For Abram to leave behind these traditions, culture and patterns of behavior was monumental. The person who makes the choice to break the pattern in a family to begin a new way of being a better family by

God's design has to be courageous.

Most people dream of the day they can get free of their family and strike out on their own, being their own boss, and doing what they think is best. That is not what Abram did. He left his country, tribe and father's control and authority not to become his own boss. He left all that to make God His Lord and Master, the God of all creation.

Have you ever heard that expression: **'My house, my rules'**? The fundamental change that Abram made that was different than all others before him and since was that he embraced a different foundation. His new expression was: **'God's family, God's rules.'**

Maybe you grew up in a religious family, or even an active Christian family that honored the God of the Bible. Yet every generation must check the foundation of what they have inherited and make sure they are building on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and not on tradition. Each generation must make a new covenant with God that is personal and hold the line that **God is the head of the home.**

You can be the critical part of God's plan to bless the world through you, but this first step that Abram made has to be ours as well. We need to leave in order to cleave to the new Family of God that shapes the course of tribes, nations, and the world.

To the land which I will show you;
2. And I will make you a great nation,
And I will bless you,
And make your name great;
And so you shall be a blessing;
3. And I will bless those who bless you,
And the one who curses you I will curse.
And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."

Genesis 12: 1-8

When we strike out on our own, we think about what we can do and what we hope we will build. Abram left his past to walk into God's future, believing in what God promised He would do for Abram. This is a journey not of self-confidence, but a faithful following of the new head of the home, Almighty God Himself.

Notice what God promises Abram.

What is even more amazing is God is still doing this right now, in this place of worship. He calls us to 'leave and cleave' to Him and begin going down a new road to establish a family faith where God is the head of the home. All that was promised and realized by Abram is yours as well if you will answer the call today. You will need just as much faith and courage as Abram did, but it all begins with a heartfelt 'Yes, Lord' and then baby steps of obedience.

If you will do this, the impact is on a global scale! Abram said 'Yes, Lord' and the world

has never been the same since.

4. So Abram went forth as the Lord had spoken to him; and Lot went with him. Now Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran. 5. Abram took Sarai his wife and Lot his nephew, and all their possessions which they had accumulated, and the persons which they had acquired in Haran, and they set out for the land of Canaan; thus they came to the land of Canaan. 6. Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, to the oak of Moreh. Now the Canaanite was then in the land. 7. The Lord appeared to Abram and said, **“To your descendants I will give this land.”** So, he built an altar there to the Lord who had appeared to him.
Genesis 12: 1-8

There are people here today who think that this promise of God to establish a family of faith in your life does not apply to them. If you are thinking that way, you would be wrong. This is a promise to all of us. It does not matter if you are married or single, old or young, barren or burdened by a curse from the past. God can still establish a family of faith that will be a blessing to you and to the world.

Abram is 75 when he first receives a call and has no children of his own! He is old and not likely to have more children, but the promise is audacious! God chose him just the way he is and that time in his life. God was not put off by Abram's circumstances.

Abram started out on his own with God, but others followed him into a radical new life and foundation of faith in the God of all creation. His wife Sarai, and his nephew Lot decided to take the risk for a better life and change. Most people did not follow Abram, but a few did. If they were going to follow him, they all had to agree to the new rule: 'God's family, God's rules.'

When you make the choice to lay this new foundation, and start this new path for yourself, there may be people who follow you who are looking for hope and a better life than what this world keeps offering and failing to produce. Whether anyone goes with you or not, don't wait for them, let them catch up to you as you follow.

BUT ...you may say, I have no family. Maybe you have a business and your new motto will be: 'God's business, God's rules.' Let that be a step of faith. The new motto for your life can be, 'God's life, God's way.' Family can be made by others joining you and bonding with you around the same Lord, same faith and the same blessing from the God of Abram, Isaac and Jacob. I have many sisters and brothers all over the world who are not a part of my original family. I have spiritual fathers and mothers who watch over me even now, who are not my biological parents. I have helped deliver into this world many new born believers in Jesus Christ by inviting them into the family of God. God can keep his promise even if you have no family. That is not too big of a problem for Him to overcome. His plan from the beginning was to change and bless this world through the family of faith.

Maybe you are married to someone who does not believe in God by a faith filled walk,

don't let that stop you! The new motto for your life can be, 'God's life, God's way.' Invite you husband or wife to join you in steps of faith and see if God does exactly what He promised to do to all who follow by faith. Test God in this and find Him faithful! If they don't follow, then challenge them to watch as you make the leaps of faith into the arms of a faithful loving God. Show them what they are missing and invite them again to join you in the blessings God wants to pour out on this earth.

No one here needs to miss out on this great promise of God to Abram and every heart that will respond, "Yes, Lord" and follow faithfully the Lord to the next step forward. God's audacious plan to change the world can and will happen through you if you will take up the promise made to you in this moment.

8. Then he proceeded from there to the mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, with Bethel on the west and Ai on the east; and there he built an altar to the Lord and called upon the name of the Lord.

Genesis 12: 1-8

Abram setup his family tent between two valleys. He followed the Lord to this place and was promised that it would all be given to him and his descendants, so they can be a blessing to the whole world. Abram did not know what was about to come, because the names of these two places are a foreshadowing of things to come.

On one side is Bethel, where his grandson Jacob would sleep and receive a vision from God with ladders ascending and descending between heaven and earth. Jacob would get through his doubts and fears to become born again with a new name: "Israel." From his sons would come the tribes of Israel and the beginnings of one of the most remarkable nations in the world. Bethel was the name Jacob gave to this place, being translated "house of God."

When you strike out like Abram and leave crumbling foundations for a forever family of faith in the Living God, then you are on your way to becoming the 'house of God', a Bethel, right here on earth where miracles happen, angels appear, and evil is defeated.

On the other side is Ai. Ai means "house of ruins." It sat in the same direction as Sodom and Gomorrah. If I may extend that meaning, it was the house of evil. It was the house of destruction. It was the house of ungodliness. It was the house of the evil one. The house of the lost. A place confused about their gender, sexuality, and even their own identity in this world. A place of experimentation and self-made, even re-made people. This is a place of plastic surgery, plastic stuff, and plastic people. Nothing is real, just happy masks placed over tragic lives lived apart from God's blessings.

And so, according to biblical names and the important meaning that is behind them, we can correctly say today that Abraham had set up his tent between the house of God and the house of ruins. **And God has sent him here, because He is giving Abraham all of this land. He has made the promise: "I'm going to bless you, and your family is going to own this land."**

Now - you and I too, friend, have been given this land that we stand on. And we have also been dropped into the middle of two worlds. Over here on this side is Bethel: the house of God. And over on this side is the house of this world! I'm sure that you feel in between sometimes.

And we all have a tent with which we will each set up our home - that place that we have accepted, and we have approved as appropriate and good for us and our family to live! And our home is going to be somewhere between Bethel and Ai!

God will lead you to establish a family faith that is called a 'house of God' where the motto is: 'God's house, God's rules.' But God has also promised you Ai the land known as the 'house of ruins.' He does not give this to harm you but, so you can be a blessing to those who do not know God and refused His promise of a better life by faith in Jesus Christ. First, we establish our tent as a 'House of God' then from that strength we reach out to those who are in a 'house of ruin.' The motto in the house of ruin is this: 'My house, I do whatever I want.' The problem is that this house will fall into ruin because they become entrapped by sin and enslaved by forces of evil in this world.

But, the 'house of God' will triumph over the 'house of ruin' by declaring God's promise of hope to those who have fallen into the despair of sin.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.
He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set free those who are oppressed,

Luke 4:18 New American Standard Bible (NASB)

The Lord God is promising us all this territory if we are faithful, to us and our descendants. **Remember:** "I will call those who were not My people, 'My people,' And her who was not beloved, 'beloved.' And it shall be that in the place where it was said to them, 'you are not My people,' ... *There they shall be called sons of the living God.*"

There is a war going on right now for families. The world of 'Ai' is seeking to make all families a 'house of ruins' under the control and influence evil spiritual forces. GOD'S PLAN IS TO SAVE THESE HOMES AND RAISE THEM UP FROM THEIR RUINS INTO A NEW FAMILY: 'A HOUSE OF GOD!'"

Do you know how He wants to do this? Through us, here today, through the blessings He will pour out through those who will adopt a new motto: 'God's house, God's rules.' Through those who will adopt a new foundation for building a home, Jesus Christ Himself. Through those who will follow by faith His leading, His pleading, and His blessings.

There are some from the 'house of ruins' who will be offended by this choice and by our offer of redemption and change. It matters not, because we must hold to the faith set before us by Jesus Christ Himself. Like the descendants of Abram we must say:

If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served... **but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.**"

Joshua 24:15

I don't know how you feel about it, brother! I don't know how you feel about it, sister! But I want **MY HOUSE TO BE KNOWN AS 'THE HOUSE OF GOD!!!'** I want to see every house lying in ruin, rebuilt on a new foundation in Jesus Christ, and raised up again by a new life and fresh faith and be redeemed. This is the promise and the purpose of God for everyone here today. Who here is for Bethel and against Ai! Who here is for building a family of faith which belongs to God and lives by His rules? Give God a witness to your choice.

CHAPTER 2

Isaac: Family Renewed

Genesis 22:1-18

Last week the Lord led us into understanding how important a 'Family Faith' in Jesus Christ and the God of the Bible is to the plans of the Lord to redeem and bless this world. We learned from the Word of God that we all have a place within this Family of God to impact this world. Every one of us needs to find our role to play within the Family of God with God as our Heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit spoke to our hearts and we were challenged to take up the fight for a 'Family Faith.'

Today the Lord has something new to reveal to us about how to keep a Godly Faith focused on Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The motto: '**God's House, God's Rules**' is not something you say once but all the time as a guiding principle. We can change the saying just a fraction and bring out a critical renewing power in our families. This is the second motto: '**God's House, God Rules.**' Our Heavenly Father has rules that are meant to guide and protect us from the evils of this world, but if we are going realize the power of faith then the relationship must become more personal than a set of rules. For there to be a powerful life changing faith in our homes, God needs to have the position of ruler over our homes.

Why does God need to rule our families as King of Kings? So, we can learn to trust Him for challenges beyond our control. If we just follow the rules like so many religious people do, we will start bending the rules and re-interpreting the rules. People who follow the rules forget the ruler and just try to keep the 'letter' of the law. We think that we are in good standing if we keep rules and cannot be accused of breaking a law. This religious way thinking is dangerous because it does not honor the one who made the rules.

Laws and rules are guidelines that set the lowest common denominator. If you are not guilty of committing any crimes that does not mean your innocent. If you **ONLY** do the minimum necessary, you will miss the full blessing of God in your life. 'God's House, God's Rules' will place you under the protection of God. 'God's House, God Rules' will bring you into the fullness of God's blessings on your home. God wants you and your home to know an abundant life. Jesus said: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" – John 10:10

God wanted to bless the world through Abraham and Isaac and for that He would have to challenge them both to rise to an excellence of faith. God intended to renew the faith of this family at a higher level than where it began. This brings us to Genesis 22:

Now it came about after these things, that God tested Abraham, and said to him, "Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am." 2 He said, "**Take now your son, your only**

son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.” 3 So Abraham rose early in the morning and saddled his donkey, and took two of his young men with him and Isaac his son; and he split wood for the burnt offering, and arose and went to the place of which God had told him. 4 **On the third day** Abraham raised his eyes and saw the place from a distance. 5 Abraham said to his young men, “Stay here with the donkey, and I and the lad will go over there; and we will worship and return to you.” 6 Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac his son, and he took in his hand the fire and the knife. **So, the two of them walked on together.** 7 Isaac spoke to Abraham his father and said, “My father!” And he said, “Here I am, my son.” And he said, “Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?” 8 Abraham said, “God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.” **So, the two of them walked on together.**

Genesis 22:1-18

God tested Abraham... that very idea seems strange to our hearts sometimes. We automatically think that God tests people in order to find out what they know, what they can do, and what kind of character they have. Let me remind you that any time God asked a question, He already knew the answer. When God asks us a question, it is not to get information but for us to realize something we have not understood. Jesus uses this style of teaching with questions all the time.

Let's build on that. When God tests Abraham, or any of us, it is not to learn something about us, but for us to realise what we can do, and what kind of character we have as Born-Again believers. A testing from God is not to break us or punish us for wrongdoing. It is a challenge from God to go further in our faith than we have dared to go up to this point. That is why God allowed Job to be tested. It is why Jesus Christ allowed Peter to be tested.

A test from God, is God telling us that He believes we can be more than what we believe about ourselves. I can promise you that you have yet to know your full potential of what God can do through you by your faithful obedience. When God tests His family, He believes that we can meet the test and discover greater blessings in our lives than we could ever imagine possible. When we pass the test of faith, we will discover how amazing God's love for His family really is.

The Apostle Paul knew these kinds of faith 'tests' and past many while failing a few. He prayed for the church and for us today that we would have even greater courage than he did when facing the test of our 'family faith' in God. He wrote:

14. For this reason I kneel before the Father, 15. from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. 16. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17. so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. **And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, 18. may have power, together with all the**

Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, 19. and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

The only way to really know the love of Christ for us is to pass the tests of faith He gives. The test the Father God gives to Abraham is hard. God chooses the very person that was a gift from God, a promise and a future for generations to come. God chose Isaac, the only son of Abraham who he loved and gained by many trials of faith. God tells Abraham, **"Give back to me what I gave to you."**

Has God given you any good thing in your life? Every good thing in my life comes from God. I am very happy and content with what I have been given. If you can pass the test, then God can give you even greater things in your life.

I have been at many restaurants over my life and when the waiter gives us the menu it is a real challenge to make a choice. Yet I know that I must choose carefully, because that waiter is going to come around again and ask, "Have you left room for dessert?" Of course, my answer is "No, I'm afraid not..." So many of us fill up on the main course leaving no room for dessert, that I have noticed something else has happened in restaurants. Desserts are shrinking to a little scoop of ice cream or just a bite of some pastry!

We receive many blessings from the Lord, and He is coming around this morning to see if you have room for more. Many of us are going to roll our eyes and say, "Oh, no... pass me on by I am more than satisfied." The Lord wants to pour into our lives with abundance not so we can feel more stuffed than we already are, but because He wants to bless all the families of the world through us! He wants to overflow our cups so others can be blessed as well.

To make room in Abraham's life for even greater blessings, God asked for **the sacrifice of the blessing** that was already given, the promised son Isaac. Isaac was a great blessing, an impossible dream and promise of the future. **BUT** ...God had even bigger and greater plans than what would happen through Isaac, but God asked for Isaac to be placed back into His hands so He could increase the blessing.

Every good thing you have in your life today comes from God. Every evil in our life is the result of listening to the corrupting voice of the demonic world. When God asks for you to surrender something into His hands it is not to deprive you of the good thing, He gave you, but to increase the blessing beyond your life and personal concerns.

Please remember this, as you surrender the sacrifice of the blessing you have received: **God will provide.**

9 Then they came to the place of which God had told him; and Abraham built the altar there and arranged the wood and bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Abraham stretched out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But **the angel of the Lord called to him from heaven and said, "Abraham, Abraham!" And he said, "Here I am."** 12 He said, "**Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.**" 13 Then Abraham raised his eyes and looked, and behold, behind him a ram caught in the thicket by his horns; and Abraham went and took the ram and offered him up for a burnt offering in the place of his son. 14 Abraham called the name of that place **The Lord Will Provide**, as it is said to this day, "In the mount of the Lord it will be provided."

Genesis 22:1-18

The faithfulness of Abram was evident when he left his country, tribe and fathers house to follow God by faith. His faithfulness was tested in believing that he would have a son even as an old man. But here, on the mountain of the Lord, he willingly surrenders the most precious person in his life before the Lord as an offering to God, simply because He was asked. He believed that God would provide all that was needed, but He did not know what or how. "Abraham said, "**God will provide** for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." So, the two of them walked on together." (v. 8). He simply lived his faith by obeying each methodical step of the way.

If you are going to get ready for greater things that God has in mind, you need to come to the mountain of the Lord and offer **the sacrifice of the blessings** you have already received. Why? Because the greater blessings will harm us if our hearts are not ready to receive. Blessings are fuel to a fire and if that fire in our hearts is for the Kingdom of God, then we won't get burned. BUT if that fire in our hearts is for ourselves, we can be destroyed by even greater blessings from God. To offer back to God what He has already given us, is to recognize that what we have always belong to the Father and we are only stewards.

Why are we stewards of the things of God? What is God's purpose in putting these blessings in our hands? The answer is so we can be a blessing to all the families of the Word by advancing the Kingdom of God! Giving to God is how we get our hearts in the right place to receive even more from God to advance the Kingdom of God.

In the offering we prove God right and surprise ourselves at how much trust we can have in the Lord. The trust in God is based on a love for God, not on bargains and trade agreements. We give back to him out of a grateful heart, a hopeful future and a growing family of God.

Something else happened here. Isaac, the first born, the only child, the special golden child of the house of Abraham ...now knew that God came first and that he was nothing without God. The next generation must always establish their own

personal covenant with God even as they enjoy the benefits of parents who walked by faith. They must go under the knife and be willing to give to God the sacrifice of a blessings they have received from God through their ancestors.

**Abraham was willing to give up His son as a sacrifice to God.
Isaac was willing to be given as a sacrifice to God.
BUT God was not willing to be receive more than He had given...**

15. Then the angel of the Lord called to Abraham a second time from heaven, 16. and said, "By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17. indeed **I will greatly bless you**, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18. In your seed **all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.**"

Genesis 22:1-18

Many years ago, an old retired pastor in my congregation told me: "***John, you can't out give God.***"

You know what, he was right. Abraham and Isaac knew this on the mountain of the Lord. God will not be outdone by your faithful obedience. He will match and exceed what you do ***by the leading of the Holy Spirit*** every single time. Every generation and every person must discover this for themselves even though they may have inherited many riches from the ancestor's faith.

This sacrifice of the blessing on the mountain of God is where we all must come. On this very same spot where Abraham offered Isaac, the later generation of King David would offer up a sacrifice to the Lord to stop the judgment of God upon Israel. On this very location the son of David, King Solomon would build the Temple of God. Generations later Jesus Christ would stand on this same mountain and proclaim the Gospel, be tried by the religious leaders of His day, and be turned over to the Romans to be crucified. On this mountain the early church after the death and resurrection of the Lord would gather daily to proclaim that Jesus Christ is alive, and ready to forgive all those who would repent and become a part of the Family of God. This mountain would come to be known as Zion.

This and more, God put into motion because of the obedient faith and the sacrifice of the blessing given by both Abraham and Isaac. Such faith challenged God to offer up His own Son, and for Jesus Christ to be given for the sins of the world.

You cannot out give God.

We give out of obedience and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

We are asked to give so we can be a greater blessing to this world by God's supply.

We give our money, our children, our homes not to get, but for the Kingdom of God.

If the Lord lets you keep what He has given, as God spared Isaac, it is so God can work through you to be more than you could ever imagine.

Right now, we have climbed the mountain of Zion. God has already provided all that we need. He is calling on each of us to surrender to Him something we hold dear to our hearts. He is doing this not to take away what you need but pour out His blessing on every family in the world.

Abraham and son Isaac climbed this mountain and received the blessing of a renewed Family Faith. King David and his son Solomon climbed the mountain and received the same renewed covenant. God Himself and His Son Jesus Christ climbed the mountain and made the covenant for the world. Now it's your turn to make the sacrifice of the blessing for the sake of this world. What will you give the Lord and what will He do with it? Let's find out... Amen? Amen! This is God's House, God Rules.

CHAPTER 3

Jacob: Family Diverted

Genesis 28:10-22

Has anyone told you: *“You are not my first choice...?”* None of us like to be the runner up or a second choice. We like to be chosen because we were the best and most obvious contender to be selected. The idea that *‘we will do for now’* seeing how there is no other choice or option is not very inspiring.

In many homes there is **the chosen child, the golden child**, who can do no wrong. They are held up before others as the example of what we should all aspire to become. If you are the **‘black sheep’** of the family, who is blamed for the troubles of the family, you may not get along with the **golden child** who redeems your bad choices. Have I hit any nerves? Were you one of these children in your home?

Today we are going to consider **a son who was not the first choice, but an afterthought through which the blessings of God were diverted**. God’s plan to bless the world flows like water and finds a way into this world through willing hearts. You may think you are not qualified, good enough, or confident enough to be worthy of God’s plan. All God needs is a willing heart. He will divert the flow of blessings to this world through a person who is ready to be used and humble enough to submit to God’s leading.

That humble person, whether or not they are a Golden Child or a Black Sheep, can be the person through whom the blessings of God flow to a hurting world. Humility is realized when we take as our guiding moto: **“God’s House, God’s Rules”**; and **“God’s House, God Rules.”** Today we add to these guiding moto’s another important principle: **“God’s House, God’s Choice.”**

No matter who you are, or what you have done in the past, God wants to channel the abundance and power of His blessings through you. It is best if you are open with a humble heart rather than restricted with a proud heart! If you think you are qualified by your talent and ability you may be too qualified to be effective. If you think you are unworthy, lack skill, ability and spirituality then you may be too negative to be faithful. Both the Golden Child and the Black Sheep can be very self-centered as to restrict what God can do through their lives. Yet there is hope for us all if we can learn to live the moto: **“God’s House, God Choice.”**

Let’s consider the next son in the Family Faith story who follows Abraham, Isaac. This is the story of Jacob, the black sheep of the family:

10. Then Jacob departed from Beersheba and went toward Haran. 11. He came to a certain place and spent the night there, because the sun had set; and he took one of the stones of the place and put it under his head and lay down in that place. 12. He

had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it.

Genesis 28:10-22

Jacob is the 'black sheep' of the family because he tricked his brother and father to give up him a spiritual inheritance bestowed on the family by God's choice. **The assumption made by us humans is** that the promise goes to the eldest son or the 'Golden Child' whoever that is in your family. Those of us who don't measure up get the left overs if anything at all.

If you remember the last message Jacob's Grandfather, Abraham, pitched his tent between the places called the 'house of God' (Bethel) and the 'house of ruins' (Ai). This was in the Judaeen Mountain country. Abraham, and then later Isaac, kept moving south along the mountains. Lot moved east towards the fertile valley of Sodom and Gomorrah and when God judged those places for their rebellious sin the water became known as the Dead Sea. Isaac kept moving south trying to find new land to graze his large flocks and kept running into trouble with those living in this region who grew jealous of his prosperity.

Isaac found a spot at Beersheba where he wasn't bothering anyone and settled there with his family in the valley near not far from a river, south of the Judaeen Mountains. Esau was the first born, the Golden Child, the one to inherit the promise of God. Esau was supposed to be the one blessed with the covenant of God started with Abraham. Why? Because he was the first born. Like so many who inherit titles, wealth, and a future they often neglect the covenant. So, it was with Esau.

34. When Esau was forty years old, he married Judith the daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the daughter of Elon the Hittite; 35. and **they brought grief** to Isaac and Rebekah.

Genesis 26: 34-35

Esau chose to marry outside the promise with people who did not believe in God or in the covenant with Abraham. Their gods were not the God of Abraham. Esau did not seem to care about such things and easily gave away a Birth Right to the promise to Jacob for some food. Esau wanted the benefits of the Birth Right but did not want to make the sacrifices necessary to receive the covenant. He did not want God's Rules to govern his life and he did not want God to rule his life. How could the promises flow to a proud heart?

Jacob was called 'simple' or 'noble', but he was primarily humble towards his family and their God. While Esau went out hunting and fellowshiping with the Hittites, Jacob was happy to focus on the Family Faith and the promises made to them by the one true God.

Now here is the key point to the whole story. Esau may have been the first born, but he was not God's first choice. Jacob was a man that God could work through because he believed in the Family Faith. When God called, it was Jacob that was listening, not Esau.

Later in history you will see this same principle at work in the story of the Kings of Israel. The first king, Saul, was rejected by God because he was too much like Esau in his pride. The prophet went looking for another King of God's choosing and was led to the house where David was among the youngest. There were stronger and more likely brothers ready for the job, but it was David, a man after God's own heart that was chosen to be King. The blessings of God flow to those who God will choose. God's House, God's Choice.

7. ... "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for **God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.**"

They brought in David from the fields where he was watching the sheep...

12. And the Lord said, "**Arise, anoint him; for this is he.**" 13 Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; **and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.**

1 Samuel 16:7,12-13

God is always making the choice of who His blessing will flow from which He will build the Family of God and bless every family on earth. **God's House, God's Choice.** If you want to be God's Choice, then you need to know that what matters to God is the state of your heart. Are you humble enough to walk by faith in the Lord God Almighty?

Remember what Christ taught us through the sermon on the mount: "**Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.**" (Matthew 5:5)

Jesus Christ, a descendent of Jacob would show this same character described by the prophet Isaiah who described the promised Messiah:

1 Who has believed our message?
And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?
2 For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot,
And like a root out of parched ground;
He has no stately form or majesty
That we should look upon Him,
Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.
3 He was despised and forsaken of men,
A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief;
And like one from whom men hide their face
He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.

Isaiah 53:1-3

Jacob was meek, humble and placed the interests of the Family Faith first before his own needs. He grew to place God first in His life and received a new name Israel. His children became the twelve tribal leaders of the nation of Israel that Moses led to the promise land.

God's House, God's Choice. If you want to be His choice, then check your heart and humble yourself before the Lord every day. Put the Family of God first in your life.

31. Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' 32. For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33. **But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.**

Matthew 6:31-33

God believes in the growing Kingdom of God and those who call each other brother and sister in the Lord. If you want to be chosen as one through whom His blessings can flow, then you must believe in that same Family of God. This is His plan for redeeming this world!

Jacob fled his home and Esau to find a wife of God's choosing. He accepted God's Rule's and God's Rule on his life. He made many sacrifices of blessings to prove it and grew in even greater blessings. When any of us are chosen by God because we have the right faithful attitude, we will find ourselves stumbling into the House of God, and into His presence.

13. And behold, the Lord stood above it and said, "I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie, I will give it to you and to your descendants. 14. Your descendants will also be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east and to the north and to the south; and in you and in your descendants shall all the families of the earth be blessed. 15. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you." 16. Then Jacob awoke from his sleep and said, "**Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it.**" 17. **He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."**

Genesis 28:10-22

Some call it luck, but there is nothing like a blessing from God. Blessings from the Lord march to beat of angel wings. The blessings of the Lord flow like a mighty river. Science, logic, and particle strategies will never reach the scale of God's plans which impacts all of creation. When others have made their calculations and educated guesses they will take all the credit when the outcome is good and blame the data when it all falls apart. God's blessings are blocked by such thinking because it is too small and constricted by the size of our pride/self-confidence.

The blessings of God are greater than life itself and no matter what our circumstances the blessings of God cannot be deterred by the small barriers of this world. They may seem big to us, **but** God is bigger than what the world can throw at you. On our own we are no match for the pain, suffering and misery this world inflicts, but with God even the hardest moments can be a source of great strength, joy and abundance.

God shows up for those who say: God's House, God's Choice. He makes His will known and reveals His hidden plans. What He reveals to the humble/faithful follower may seem foolish to this calculating and scheming world. Yet when God shows up and accomplishes what He said He would do, then we can't deny His reality in our lives: ***"Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it." "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."***

When you are at the end of your plans and schemes, when you have no place to put your head at night except a rock, you might have stumbled into the presence of God and the gateway to heaven itself.

18. So Jacob rose early in the morning and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. 19. **He called the name of that place Bethel;** however, previously the name of the city had been Luz. 20. Then Jacob made a vow, saying, **"If** God will be with me and will keep me on this journey that I take, and will give me food to eat and garments to wear, 21. and I return to my father's house in safety, **then the Lord will be my God.** 22. This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, **will be God's house,** and of all that You give me **I will surely give a tenth to You."**

Genesis 28:10-22

If you would let God claim your home as His Home, then you can let Him have the choice of when and where to work in your life. Jacob did not open the door of heaven; he opened his own heart to receive what God was already trying to give over many generations. Heavens gates are already open, and blessings are flowing, but if you will not receive them like Esau then they will flow around you to another more open heart like Jacob.

I know you and I think we live in a limited world. The reason that people rely on science and intellectual possibilities to figure out their best course of action is because we believe that we live in a world with calculable limits. Their only so much time, health, love, and ability that anyone person can reasonably expect. That is what the modern mind that worships science thinks.

What if we are wrong? What if there is a good God? What if we have placed limits on Him that are a joke compared to what He is prepared to do for us and through us? Do we really want to risk the blessings of God to bypass us because we were not willing to live by the motto: "God's House, God's Rules"; "God's House, God Rules"; "God's House, God's Choice."?

Listen Family of God, all you believers here today. There are hundreds of thousands of people within our easy reach who do not know the Lord, are enslaved to sin, and live without a hope for eternity. There are masses of people all around us who are just fighting to survive and hang on to what they have. They wonder if there is a God and if He cares.

God wants to reach them, bless them, and shake their world. He would like to do this through us here at MCC! Will we wake up and call this place a Bethel, ...a gate way to heaven itself? Like Jacob we can mark this day when we allow God to choose our willing hearts, and hands to do His work. Don't come to me and tell me what you think we should be doing, and what others ought to do. Get busy doing what He has chosen you to do so we can be a blessing to those lost in this dark world. If we would do that, you will not find yourself alone any more.

“God's house, God's choice.” Let God make the choice in your life for what lies ahead. Let Him find the people, the place and the purpose for which you were made. You will not regret it.

CHAPTER 4

Mary & Joseph: Family Fulfilled

Luke 2:22-39

Do you hold something sacred? We all do, no matter what our beliefs, some things just matter more than other things. There are people and events in your life that made a difference beyond words, and we feel them deep in our soul. We have ‘keep sakes’ in our homes that someone else might think is junk but to us they are priceless. They remind us of what matters and the meaning of our lives. Family is one of those sacred events in our lives that we long to gain and to keep safe from the corruption of this world. We will sacrifice all we have to gain it and defend family with our lives.

While family remains elusive for many some have been blessed with this sacred gift. We have learned in this sermon series that if we can follow some basic principles, we can make family work despite all the up’s and down’s that life throws at us. They are:

- God’s House, God’s Rules
- God’s House, God Rules
- God’s House, God’s Choice

These are great life-giving Truths that help God’s people to build a Family Faith that could grow and develop into a beautiful foundation for our lives together. On this foundation nations have been built and blessed just as promised by God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Yet family seems to be a pursuit and a every pressing battle. We always seem to be struggling to keep it together and wonder if it will ever get better.

Everything that God did through the Family of God in the Old Testament was to bring about the fulfillment of family when Jesus Christ came as a baby in the first century over two thousand years ago. In our pursuit of a Family Faith **we may be missing a key element that will take us from doing better than most, to discovering the amazing powerful presence of God in our homes.** That key, which Jesus Christ brought to us through His teaching, death and resurrection, is this:

- **God’s House, God’s Voice**

In the Bible there is a moment when the parents of Jesus Christ, Mary and Joseph, go to worship to present their child before God. This is one of the most sacred moments in our lives, both for parents and children. Listen drop into the story at Luke chapter 2, verse 22...

22 When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took him to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, “Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord”), 24 and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: “a pair of doves or two young pigeons.”

Luke 2:22-39

This moment is a critical moment in the history of the world, but you wouldn't have known it if you were there. Joseph and Mary were poor. They bring an offering designated for the poor, a pair of doves and young pigeons, that they would have bought in the outer courts of the temple. Mary would have dropped the payment in the offering chests placed in the Court of Women, the outer court of the temple. The Rabbi's and Priests were focused on the inner court and the Holy Place at the middle of the temple and along with them the rest of the worshipers.

Being the first-born, the child belongs to God as did all the first fruits of their labor. With this small offering they acknowledged that the child belonged to God, and they were only stewards of this life, to help Jesus discover the purpose for which He was placed in their home and on this earth.

If we want to move as a Family of God into more than just getting by, but into the amazing purpose for which He created us, then we must consecrate not only the first fruits but consecrate all we have to God. Even our most precious possessions, especially our children must be given back to God so we can recognize that we are only stewards of an amazing miracle happening before our eyes.

Dear family, have you ever felt embarrassed by a child crying in a worship service or making a fuss? Have you been annoyed by a child making too much noise, so you can't hear what I am preaching? This is one of the reasons the Temple to which Jesus Christ was brought had women and children in the outer court only the men could enter the inner court where the teaching took place. That way there was a lot less distraction in the worship of God.

But what if God entered our place of worship by the back door, through a poor family, and through a small baby like He did that day with Mary and Joseph? **What if** the most important miracle here today, happening before our very eyes, is causing you to be annoyed and distracted from what you are focused on at this very moment? The answer to our prayers may be squirming in the arms of mother right now and dealing with a pinch in his stomach.

Children, according to the Bible, is God's favorite way of answering prayers and making powerful changes for good in this world. Through family, and the passing of our faith in Jesus Christ to our children, God intends to bless every family on earth! Children matter to God. They are of utmost importance to God. Shouldn't they matter to you?

There is a way children can become the means through which God speaks so that we can hear the voice of God. This usually requires the intervention of a senior citizen...

25 Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was on him. 26 It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. **27** Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple

courts. **When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, 28 Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying:**

29 “Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.

30 For my eyes have seen your salvation,

31 which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.”

33 The child’s father and mother marveled at what was said about him. 34

Then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, 35 so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

Luke 2:22-39

For God’s voice to be heard in our family, the older and wiser must watch and pray over the younger. The older and wiser earnestly pray for our nation and for God to reveal His mighty hand. Like Simeon they watch the children coming in and out of the Worship of the Lord for the answer to their prayers, because this is God’s favorite way of bringing the next great awakening!

When God reveals the answer to their prayer in the life of a child, they do what Simeon did. They hear God’s voice; they see God’s answer in a child, and they hold that child in their arms giving voice to the great and mighty purpose of God in that family’s life. Children are too young to know, and parents too worried and tired to understand, but us older ones are the ones to give voice to God’s promise.

Are you earnestly praying for this world and all the trouble you see about you? Have you lived through wars and watched the moral decline of our culture while faith in Jesus Christ grows cold? Have your own children, and grandchildren lost their way and their faith? Then you know what Simeon felt and agonized over every day as he prayed to God.

Are you watching for the promise of God and the answer to your prayers? Do you believe that will God will do something great in our land because you have been watching and praying? Yet you have been silent for so many years hoping your faith will not be disappointed, hiding away your fears and anxiety. Simeon saw the answer to his prayers in a child for that is where he believed the answer would come from God. This is still true today. There are children in our midst, some who may have even been a distraction in church, who are the answer to your prayers from God.

On Friday I held a funeral service in Calgary for a dear elderly mom who had passed away. The family had gathered and a few friends to pay their last respects and to say goodbye. The children were there, and despite the best efforts of the family, did not really understand what was happening. One little boy had the worst time sitting still. He was

everywhere all at once. During the service he got away from his mother when we started to sing a hymn. He saw me up front leading the singing and then came and stood beside me facing the congregation. I couldn't see but my wife tells me that he stood quietly beside me at attention one hand formerly behind his back, with his head tilted towards heaven and eyes closed. Towards the end he mouthed some of the words although he probably didn't know them or the music.

His mother may have been embarrassed, and anxious, but I felt like Simeon stand before God with a promise of God beside me in ministry. Have your eyes seen the answer to your prayers in the children we have today? Can you tell the parents what God has planned for these precious children who have been placed in all of our hands as a promise from God?

36 There was also a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. **She was very old;** she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, 37 and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. **She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying.** 38 Coming up to them at that very moment, **she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem.**

39 When Joseph and Mary had done everything required by the Law of the Lord, they returned to Galilee to their own town of Nazareth.

Luke 2:22-39

Anna picks up on how we should watch for the promise of God in children. We should worship, fast and pray with an expectation that God will answer. Some of us are very old like Anna. We may have been worshipping, fasting and praying for many years, ...just like Anna. BUT ...one of these days we may see a child and give thanks to God for that child, and that hope we have that God will work through that child to redeem this sinful world. Can you be a Simeon or an Anna? If you are looking, if you are listening, you could speak to everyone that is looking for the move of God's hand in bringing a revival to this land. You may be the one that helps us from neglecting and missing the promise of God in a child by speaking for God about children in our congregation today.

God's House, God's Voice. This is the key difference between getting by or just good enough and realizing the amazing power of God's purpose in the Family of God.

If you are a parent of children today, I want to encourage you to remain faithful and to shepherd the gift of God's promise in your children. They are so important. But I want you to know we are watching you. All the time people are watching you and your children not to see if you are a good parent or if your children are behaving. The whole world is watching and looking for a hope that our future will be blessed by God.

The Lord brought that home to me this week. I received a letter that was written many years ago by a former student of mine in Bible College. Here is what he said:

Dear John,

I just wanted to take a moment to send you a letter of appreciation.

One Saturday while I was in 'Old Main' I had a fight with Amanda. It wasn't any big thing and it wasn't about anything really important. Our relationship was built off of these little tiffs. We kind of enjoyed them. But this time I felt like it was enough, I had had enough of this relationship. I believe we were engaged by this time, but I was ready to call it all off.

I ended up walking by your office and noticed the door open. I went in and you invited me to have a seat. I told you I was finished with Amanda and you heard me out. I don't remember exactly what your response was, but you simply told me I needed to stick with it. I walked out of your office with the resolve to stay on in this relationship and not give up.

I knew there were a myriad of different reasons why we would not work out together, and I had no idea of what would happen to us through the years. **I walked out of your office not knowing anything except that I should stick it out. I have always felt that this was a crucial event in my relationship with Amanda. I firmly believe that we would've broken up and separated for good if it wasn't for the role you played that day. And many times, I have thought of you with great appreciation for how you were part of our story. I could've walked away from Amanda that day and I would not have known what I was losing.**

I received twenty-three years with Amanda and twelve incredible children with one son-in-law and one grandchild. My life has been changed and enriched because of that one day. Thank you!

Your student,
Mark Ogden

If you are a parent today; if you have adopted: God's House, God's Rules; God's House, God Rules; God's House, God's Choice; God's House, God's Voice... then people are watching you and your children. You are giving us hope for what God can do in this world.

Family ...can you see what Father God is doing in our midst right now? Don't you want to be a part of that? After this service find and thank a mother or father and encourage them to hang in there, don't give up. Tell them that their children are precious to you and to God's plans. Show them that they matter, find Jolene Tosh our Christian Education leader, and ask her how you can help. Our children need teachers and our families need encouragement. God is calling us all to pull together as His family.

CHAPTER 5

God: Family Forever

Ephesians 3:14-19

What a journey we have been on through the Bible learning about how to grow a Family Faith in our homes and in our life together as a church. This is the last sermon in this series. As we have followed the lives of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob all the way to Jesus Christ ...we have learned a few great truths on which to build. They are:

- God's House, God's Rules
- God's House, God Rules
- God's House, God's Choice
- God's House, God's Voice

You don't need a favorite and it's not pick and choose option. Each truth builds on the one before as we move further into realizing God's plan to bless every family on earth through the faith filled home. Each step leads you higher into the will of God and the experience of His blessings on your life.

I have so enjoyed digging into the Word of God with you ever since Mother's Day and here we are ending the series on Father's Day. Throughout this series I have had people come up to me and thank me for talking about families and God's plan to bless them when we let Him. Many of you have told me that you are letting other people in your families know about this series, so they can read the messages and hear the pod-cast on line. That is so encouraging to know that we are working together to build stronger families devoted to God and the foundation of faith.

This brings me to our last message on Father's Day, and it is not to extol the father's that are here or to scold them into being better Dad's. Today we go back to the original Father, the first Father, and I am not talking about Adam. We have considered Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Marry and Joseph in the Bible. Now we find the ultimate parent in Father God Himself! Today we learn our last great foundation truth:

- God's House, God's Family

Turn with me in your Bibles to the New Testament and the book of Ephesians, chapter three starting at verse 14...

14. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15. from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, 16. that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man,

Ephesians 3:14-19

Do you know the difference between a biological father and a real father? In the 1960's there was a sexual revolution that revolted against the Bible and God's rule against fornication and adultery. For over 60 years now the culture has been telling us that sex should be free and without commitment but pure enjoyment. That rebellion against God's Rules has led to millions of babies being aborted and millions of families shattered into pieces where children grew up without fathers. This has led to economic disaster for every home and a collapse of the moral code of our culture.

One of the great tragedies of that age is the loss of what it means to be a Father or to be loved by a Father. That has weakened our entire culture. Some don't even want to refer to God as a Father because they are so wounded by the cultural rebellion against God's rules.

God is the father that has created us, but there are many who don't recognize Him as their true father. He may come and say that He wants a relationship with us, but we have been raised in homes and a culture that has rejected God's rules, God's rule, God's choice, and God's voice. We don't want Him in our homes. We know if we were to let God into our lives, He would bring all these truths with Him and we would lose our freedom to do as we please. **Yet we won't admit the terrible truth we all know in our hearts. Our homes are in ruins because God is not allowed into our lives as Father God.**

Father God wants to be more than just our creator, the one who made everyone. He wants to be our Father in our hearts. **If He is not your Father God, taking first place in your heart, then He is not your true father and you are lost in your rebellion.**

Jesus encountered people in His day that thought their biological existence, their DNA ancestry automatically made them children of God. They claimed God as their Father by right of a physical birth. Jesus Christ, the one and only Son of God corrected them:

⁴² Jesus said to them, "**If God were your Father, you would love Me**, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me. ⁴³ **Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word.** ⁴⁴ You are of *your* father the devil, and **you want to do the desires of your father.** He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

John 8:42-44

Every good thing we have ever received comes from Father God, including family. God is the original Father not just in creating us, but in His love and care for us. All over the world people know what a father ought to be even if they don't always experience this expectation. We all have this ideal in our heads and hearts because it is in our DNA. Love of a Father and the care of a family began with God, is sustained by God and will be brought into completion by God.

16. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Colossians 1:16-17 NASB

All good things, including family, come from God. Evil is the taking of a good thing and twisting it to a different purpose than intended by Father God. **All evil flows from rebellion to Father God, breaking his rules, and His heart.**

Isaiah 63:10 - But they rebelled against him and grieved his Holy Spirit. So, he became their enemy and fought against them.

Hebrews 3:15 - Remember what it says: “Today when you hear his voice, don’t harden your hearts as Israel did when they rebelled.”

So, it should be clear that although we begin with God, we have lost our way when we rebel against God. Today Father God calls on us to repent of a rebellious heart that is hard towards Him and come back asking for forgiveness. If we will do that through Jesus Christ, we can be **Born Again** and receive a new heart that wants to do God’s will.

Paul gets down on his knees and prays in his War Room that every person he meets and talks to will repent of their sins and be saved by being Born Again. He keeps praying that all of us will be “**strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.**” We need power if we are going to be obedient to Father God as Jesus Christ was when He gave His life for our redemption.

To be very clear: God is not your Father, until you repent of your sins and ask Jesus Christ to forgive them. When you do this, Jesus will wash away your sins, and give you a new heart by placing the Holy Spirit in your spirit so you can be spiritually born again. This new birth, being born again, is how you become a child of God and in the family of God. **THERE IS NO OTHER WAY!**

JESUS SAID: ... “Truly, truly, I say to you, **unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.** – John 3:5-6

That Holy Spirit makes you a child of God through the new birth and gives power to obey Father God with a willing heart. He may have created you, but He is not a real father to you until you are born of the Holy Spirit.

17. so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, 18. may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19. and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God.

Ephesians 3:14-19

You can know God the same way Jesus Christ knew God, as a faithful child of God, serving in His kingdom.

I have pursued a knowledge of God all my life. I found Him in my heart when I repented of sin and was forgiven by the sacrifice Jesus Christ made on the cross. This experience only made me want to know more about God. I searched for God in the scriptures and I learned to ask for Wisdom. I searched for Him in my studies as I submitted to the teaching and instruction of scholarly men and women. I searched for God in the lives and example of saints who walked this earth. I searched for Him in signs, wonders and miracles. I searched for Him in a purpose for my life. I searched for Him at gravesides, and times of great loss and sorrow. In all of this I have caught a glimpse of His glory.

Yet the Bible and the Holy Spirit tells us today if we are really going to know the fullness of God it would be in study, spiritual wonders, or moments of transfiguration. If we want to know more than a glimpse of His glory, then we must be **rooted and grounded in love** of Jesus Christ. When we are filled up with this love of Christ, we will know God fully. This is a knowing that surpasses knowledge, words, and any charismatic event.

You may ask, “But how Pastor John, do I experience this?”

Let me tell you what Jesus Christ said, and is saying to us who have been redeemed by His blood, the true children of God who are not in rebellion to His rule. He told us that if we are going to know the fullness of God in our lives, then you must LOVE God’s family. God’s House, God’s Family.

There is probably no greater passage for this great truth for us this morning than 1 John 4. Let me lift a few key verses from this important chapter:

1. Beloved, **do not trust every spirit but test the spirits** to see whether they belong to God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. -1 John 4:1

We must begin to take this passage seriously. Not everyone who believes they are a Christian is really a Christian. Not everyone who is created by God has God as their true Father. Not everyone who has a spiritual experience, is experiencing God. There is a evil twist and counterfeit to all the good God is doing. In a world of imitations and counterfeits we must TEST every spirit.

That is why, since the day I came, I have asked the first question: “Tell me your Born-Again story.” If you don’t have one, then you need one to be a part of the family of God, and for your creator to become your Father God. That is a test.

Every person who is born again does not overcome the twists and perversions of the enemy right away. Even after being saved from your sins you can still believe in the lies

of the enemy and may have surrendered influence to evil through unforgiveness, sins and even the receiving of false spirit. Some are even false prophets according to this passage.

So how do we test our spirits and discern what is of God and what is not? Further down in 1 John 4, it is revealed:

6 We **belong** to God, and anyone who knows God listens to us, while anyone who does not **belong** to God refuses to hear us. This is how we know the **spirit of truth** and the **spirit of deceit**.

This may be a hard verse for us to understand, so let me make it simple. What has made it complicated is all the church fights we have had for the last 2 thousand years. We created tests for each of us by which we have judged each other. Do you wear the right clothes; do you act in the right way; do you believe the right things; do you support the right cause; or do you have the right spiritual gifts? These have only been a few.

How we discern between the spirit of truth (The Holy Spirit) and the spirit of deceit (The Enemy) is by our belonging to God. To put it simply, I will believe a brother over a stranger any day. If I know Christ, I look for the Christ I know in the person who claims to be Born Again. If there is a false spirit in that brother, I discern it by any attitude that is not Christ like. The golden ruler I use to measure a brother or a sister's spirit is this:

No one has greater love than this, to **lay down one's life for one's friends**. -John 13:15

Jesus taught us this, it is His very nature to put the needs of others, before His own. When I encounter an attitude in myself or in another that refuses to love this way, then I have **found a spirit of deceit**. 1 John 4: 7-8 drives this home:

7. Beloved, let us love one another, because love is of God; everyone who loves is begotten by God and knows God. 8. Whoever is without love does not know God, for God is love.

Discernment begins with you knowing the Love of God through Jesus Christ. You measure your own conflicted soul by that standard everyday and we test the spirits of others by the powerful presence of God's Love in our spirit. There is no other or better test by which spirits are tested. This is made painfully clear in 1 Corinthians 13:

1. If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. 2. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. 3. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. 4. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, [love] is not pompous, it is not inflated, 5. it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, 6. it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but

rejoices with the truth. 7. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

1 Corinthians 13:1-7

If I don't know that you love me with a Christ like love, spiritual manifestations mean nothing, our knowledge is worthless, and our sacrifice changes nothing. If we do all these religious things with a jealous, pompous, inflated, rude and self-seeking spirit ...the we have a spirit of deceit living within our hearts.

Show me the patience, the kindness, the bearing of wrongs with endurance, and I will learn to trust your spirit of Love that reflects the heart of Jesus Christ. 1 John 4 goes on to say:

11. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also must love one another. 12. No one has ever seen God. Yet, **if we love one another, God remains in us, and his love is brought to perfection in us. 13. This is how we know that we remain in him and he in us, that he has given us of his Spirit.**

16. ...God is love, and whoever remains in love remains in God and God in him.

God's House, God's Family.

If you want to be in this family, you must be Born Again. Tell me your story or come up to the front after this service and we will help you become Born Again. If you want to know the fullness of God in your life, learn to Love like Jesus Christ. Test your own spirit and others by the DNA of the Love of God. Reject the spirit of deceit that is jealous, pompous, inflated, rude and self-seeking spirit. Embrace the Holy Spirit of truth which displays patience, kindness, and the bearing of wrongs with endurance.

This is the commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

1 John 4: 21

Other verse on the priority of Love:

21. Whoever has my commandments and observes them is the one who loves me. And whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him.” 22. Judas, not the Iscariot, said to him, “Master, [then] what happened that you will reveal yourself to us and not to the world?” 23. Jesus answered and said to him, “Whoever loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our dwelling with him. 24. Whoever does not love me does not keep my words; yet the word you hear is not mine but that of the Father who sent me.

John 14:21-24

Let every person be subordinate to the higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been established by God. Therefore, whoever resists authority opposes what God has appointed, and those who oppose it will bring judgment upon themselves.

Romans 13:1-2

Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:21

1. I, then, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live in a manner worthy of the call you have received, 2. with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another through love, 3. striving to preserve the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace: 4. one body and one Spirit, as you were also called to the one hope of your call; 5. one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

Ephesians 4:1-6