

Introduction

You were created to enjoy a relationship with the living God of the Bible. As you might expect, this relationship is too wonderful to be easily described. To help you more fully understand what it is like to know God the Bible employs many similes and metaphors. Each presents different aspects of your fellowship with God. Let me give you two examples:

^The Bible says you are a steward in your relationship with God:

1 Corinthians 4:1-2 Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

A steward is a servant or slave who is put in charge of all of his Master's wealth, especially while the Master is away. You are *God's* steward, entrusted with the Gospel and its service, while Jesus Christ is away. The picture of the steward speaks, among other things, of responsibility, faithfulness, and expectation - - helping you to more fully understand what it is like to know the living God.

%The Bible says you are a soldier in your relationship with God:

2 Timothy 2:4 No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.

You are God's soldier involved in a serious spiritual warfare. The picture of a soldier speaks, among other things, of discipline, watchfulness, and obedience - - helping you to more fully understand what it is like to know the living God.

In our text in Genesis Eighteen there is another beautiful metaphor: Abraham has supper with God! This is a true, literal, historic account of God actually visiting Abraham in bodily form. It is *also* a picture for you of what knowing God is like. It's like having supper with someone! That's why Jesus can say, in Revelation 3:20,

"Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me."

Your relationship with God is like having supper, or 'supping,' with Him. Just as a steward or a soldier describe certain unique aspects of your relationship with God, so also does the picture of your supping with Him. You see some of them here as Abraham and God sup together on the plains of Mamre under the Terebinth tree.

#1 God Gives You Opportunities
To Refresh His Heart In Supping With him
(v1-8)

#2 God Takes The Opportunity
To Reveal Your Heart In Supping With Him
(v9-15)

#1 God Gives You Opportunities To
Refresh His Heart In Supping With Him
(v1-8)

It is almost universally accepted among evangelical Bible scholars that the three persons Abraham entertained were God and two angels who had assumed bodily form. The text clearly states, in verse 1, "...the Lord appeared to him," using the word "Jehovah" for Lord. You find out later, in chapter nineteen, that the other two persons are angels. In verse one of chapter nineteen you read, "now the two angels came to Sodom..." Which two? *The* two - - the two who had previously accompanied Jehovah to dinner with Abraham!

The most precious statement in the whole dialog between God and Abraham in found in verse five:

Genesis 18:5 "... I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

The supper is not a matter of necessary nourishment for God and the two angels. It is entirely a spiritual matter. Abraham has an opportunity to somehow refresh their

hearts! Their affirmative answer, "Do as you have said," tells you that God relishes those moments in your life when you are granted the opportunity to refresh His heart. He has no lack and no need; but He condescends to allow you to refresh Him.

I cried for a moment this week when I realized the tenderness of God's love toward me in this metaphor of supping with Him. I can't capture that experience for you...But I can encourage you to consider that God, Who has no need and no lack, allows Himself to be refreshed by *you* in your fellowship with Him.

How was it that Abraham refreshed the heart of God and two angels? There are three principles for us to discover in the first eight verses.

Genesis 18:1 Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day.

Abraham's position, "sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day," tells you he was prepared to refresh God's heart. Preparation of your life is the first principle to understand if you want the experience of refreshing God.

"Sitting in the tent door" meant that he was watching for potential desert travelers whom he could invite in to extend hospitality. I want you to see that he was able to assume that position only because of previous preparation: He was prepared to share his resources, and those in his household were prepared to submit to and support him.

{ He was prepared to share his resources...

Sitting in the tent door was a surefire way to guarantee that he would have to share his resources with others!

{ Those in his household were prepared to submit and support him...

He was able to sit in the tent door because all was in order *behind* him!

Any good supper requires previous preparation. If you are to sup with God and refresh His heart, there is a lot of work to do within your own "tent" first.

Genesis 18:2 So he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him; and when he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground,

Genesis 18:3 and said, "My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant.

The Hebrew words indicate that one second there was nothing there, then the next three men stood before him! The suddenness of their appearance did not hinder Abraham's response. He "*ran*" from the tent door to meet them. Abraham was not taken by surprise; he was prompt to refresh God's heart.

Prompt means "ready to act." Once you've prepared, you need to be ready to act when a spiritual opportunity presents itself. Promptness is either helped or hindered by your priorities, with what you consider most important:

{ You can miss the experience of refreshing God's heart if your priorities are out of wack. Opportunities present themselves; but they will "pass on by" if not seized.

{ When your priorities are in order you'll be free to be prompt when opportunities do present themselves.

^ You should be prepared; you should be prompt; *and* you should pursue your opportunities with a passion for excellence.

Genesis 18:4 "Please let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree.

Genesis 18:5 "And I will bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh your hearts. After that you may pass by, inasmuch as you have come to your servant." They said, "Do as you have said."

Genesis 18:6 So Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah and said, "Quickly, make ready three measures of fine meal; knead *it* and make cakes."

Genesis 18:7 And Abraham ran to the herd, took a tender and good calf, gave *it* to a young man, and he hastened to prepare it.

Genesis 18:8 So he took butter and milk and the calf which he had prepared, and set *it* before them; and he stood by them under the tree as they ate.

Abraham goes all out in ministering to these guests:

{ Abraham washes their feet...

Foot washing was of immense practical importance. They would eat reclining on one elbow around a low table; you always had someone's feet near your face! In the New Testament Church, "washing the saint's feet" became a phrase which meant you had ministered to their every need. You should be thoughtful about others. Put yourself in their "shoes," so to speak. What is it that would really minister to them?

{ Abraham gives them more than the basic necessities...

In verse five he offers them "a morsel of bread"; but, as you see, he set a much better table than that. Be resourceful! How can you best use the resources God has graciously provided?

{ Abraham took the place of a servant...

"He set it before them and he stood by them..." He did not sit down to eat with them. He was interested in their needs, not his own. It can happen in your trying to serve someone that you really put a burden on them instead.

Before we talk about the passion of pursuing excellence in ministry, there are a few other things I must point out:

v Pastors, Elders, and Deacons could learn an important lesson from Abraham's household. He always had a servant on duty! When the need arose, he was able to turn over important details to the on-duty servant - - who accomplished them with zeal.

v Husbands could learn an important lesson from Abraham's household. He was personally involved in the menial tasks necessary to the situation.

v Wives could learn an important lesson from Abraham's household. She willingly submitted to this interruption, not offering any resistance - - even though she would assume an almost invisible, supporting role closed-up in her tent.

v Employees could learn an important lesson from Abraham's household. His request of his servant was extraordinary; but the servant performed it as unto his master.

v One final important insight. You can't help but recognize Jesus in the actions of Abraham! Jesus laid aside His position to come to earth as a servant, washing the feet of His disciples - - leaving us with a most precious encouragement.

Abraham was prepared; he was prompt when the opportunity presented itself; and he passionately pursued the opportunity with excellence. You should have a passion for excellence as a Christian. A morsel of bread will certainly suffice, if that's all you have. But even then it ought to be presented as the best morsel of bread possible!

When you are prepared, prompt, and passionate for excellence in ministering to others, you find that God thinks of your actions as refreshing His heart:

Matthew 25:34-40 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' "And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.' "

The believers that Jesus is addressing thought that they were only ministering to those in need. But their actions refreshed the heart of God and He counts their actions as affecting Him.

The Apostle Paul summarizes all that we've said in Colossians 3:23 and 24, saying,

"And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ."

Opportunities present themselves all of the time. If you are prepared, prompt in seizing them, and passionate in pursuing them, God says your activities are like sitting down to a supper that refreshes His heart. You will have the joyous experience of looking back upon what you've done as if you and God had simply sat down together over a meal for a time of wonderful, enriching, refreshing fellowship.

#2 God Takes The Opportunity To Reveal Your Heart In Your Supping With Him (v9-15)

Another aspect of what it means to sup with the living God is described in the remaining verses. Remember: Each Bible simile or metaphor describes many different aspects of your relationship with God. When you invite someone over to supper you're trying to get to know them better. When God sits down to sup with you there is an intimate exchange like you'd expect at any other supper- - only with an important difference. God already knows everything about you! In your supping with Him, He takes the opportunity to reveal to you *your* own heart. Sarah learned this the hard way.

Genesis 18:9 Then they said to him, "Where *is* Sarah your wife?" So he said, "Here, in the tent."

Genesis 18:10 And He said, "I will certainly return to you according to the time of life, and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son." (Sarah was listening in the tent door which *was* behind him.)

Genesis 18:11 Now Abraham and Sarah were old, well advanced in age; *and* Sarah had passed the age of childbearing.

God had promised Abraham a son by his wife, Sarah, and now confirms the promise and puts it on the calendar. Abraham was old; Sarah had gone through menopause. Natural circumstances cannot void God's promises.

Genesis 18:12 Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, "After I have grown old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"

We are privileged to be able to see into Sarah's secret heart-life. We often think we can do that today - - see into each other's hearts. In some cases God the Holy Spirit grants the supernatural gift of the Word of Knowledge, by which secrets of the heart are revealed. Normally, though, when we judge someone else's heart we're really expressing and exposing our own!

Genesis 18:13 And the LORD said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I surely bear a *child*, since I am old?'

Genesis 18:14 "Is anything too hard for the LORD? At the appointed time I will return to you, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son."

We ought to underline the first phrase of verse fourteen: "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" It is a rhetorical question, demanding a "No" answer. If we asked it of ourselves more often we might have less worry and anxiety.

Genesis 18:15 But Sarah denied *it*, saying, "I did not laugh," for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh!"

This verse highlights the reason *why* you need God to reveal to you your heart: Your heart is deceitful! Jeremiah records this insight from the Lord:

Jeremiah 17:9-10 "The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, And desperately wicked; Who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, *I* test the mind, Even to give every man according to his ways, According to the fruit of his doings."

God reveals to you your heart. When a brother or sister tries to reveal to you your heart, the results can be mixed:

{ Sometimes, as we've said, what they are really revealing is their *own* heart, with its pride, bitterness, anger, jealousy, or resentment towards you or towards God.

{ Sometimes they *do* come with God's anointing, having first judged their own heart, to exhort or rebuke or reprove you in love. Your deceived heart can refuse rather than receive what the Lord is seeking to say to you.

While you are serving as God's steward or soldier, remember that you are also *supping* with Him. In the midst of your faithful stewardship and your fearless soldiering, God wants to set many tables for supper. We often thrive on the work and the warfare. When the busyness of your work for Him subsides, He wants to sit down to supper to reveal some things about your heart. When there is a break in your warfare for Him, He wants to sit down to supper to reveal some things about your heart. What He shows you there will make you a better steward and a better soldier.

Conclusion

Sarah laughed, then she lied...Sarah doubted, then she denied - - all because of the deceitfulness of the human heart.

God simply acknowledged the truth without annulling His gracious promise to her!

There are laughs and lies in each of our hearts...Doubts and denials as well. God will acknowledge them without annulling His gracious promises to you!

I am thankful for David's understanding of this in Psalm 130 - -

Psalms 130:1 Out of the depths I have cried to You, O LORD;
Psalms 130:2 Lord, hear my voice! Let Your ears be attentive To the voice of my supplications.
Psalms 130:3 If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?
Psalms 130:4 But *there is* forgiveness with You, That You may be feared.
Psalms 130:5 I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, And in His word I do hope.
Psalms 130:6 My soul *waits* for the Lord More than those who watch for the morning;
Yes, *more than* those who watch for the morning.