

# Royalty

by Tricia Berg

*But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. 1 Peter 2:9*

Being royal carries great honor and also great responsibility. Just ask anyone in the royal family in the United Kingdom, for example. They are keenly aware that every thing they do or say, or don't do or say, reflects on the family they belong to and represent. They are careful not to get into situations where the family name will be dishonored. We who are redeemed by the Lord can learn many valuable lessons by observing them. These comparisons can give all of us something to strive for in the way we represent our King to the world. *Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when He judges the world. 1 Peter 2:12*

*As you come to Him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in Scripture: "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame." 1 Peter 2:4-6*

They show a united front to the world—they are loyal to each other. *Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Philippians 2:2* If someone criticizes them or their loved ones, they try to handle it gracefully. *But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. James 3:17* Life carries on—the mission continues. *Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. 1 Timothy 6:12*

*Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2*

Hopefully we do the same. *Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9* They don't dwell on criticism or crumble at disapproval of outsiders. *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ. Galatians 1:10* "I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them, because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world." *John 17:14* But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. *1 Peter 3:15-16*

They don't believe lies told by outsiders about each other or let rumors discourage them. *Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so. Acts 17:11* But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed! As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to what you received, he is to be accursed! *Galatians 1:8-9* They know the truth—they are not easily shaken. *He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will never be shaken. Psalm 62:2* We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; *2 Corinthians 4:8-9*

They are confident in the strength of their family. *Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7* As believers, we know that our sovereign God and Ruler is trustworthy and true. *Your eternal word, O Lord, stands firm in heaven. Your faithfulness extends to every generation, as enduring as the earth you created. Psalm 119:89-90* Let those who love the LORD hate evil, for He guards the lives of his faithful ones and delivers them from the hand of the wicked. *Psalm 97:10* We can count on Him to get us through anything. *You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. 1 John 4:4*

Royals know that taking offense will not serve the greater purpose of representing the family in a positive light, and that the attacks are not really

against them personally, but against their family. *If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. 1 Corinthians 12:26 They stand firm together. Be alert and stand firm in the faith; be valiant; be strong. 1 Corinthians 16:13* Jesus said: *"If the world hates you, remember that it hated Me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you." John 15:18-19* It's our honor and privilege to suffer for His sake, because it's our great honor to be part of His family. *The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. Romans 8:16-17* Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. *Romans 5:3-5*

Petty disputes among family members are handled privately according to the family's code of ethics, not displayed for the world to give opinions and judge. Hopefully we do the same with our brothers and sisters in Christ, in our own "royal family." *"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector." Matthew 18:15-17*

*When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? 1 Corinthians 6:1-6*

If someone maligns our character, we're to trust God to defend and avenge us. *Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." Romans 12:19* We are to accept our Father's correction, in whatever form He gives, knowing that He loves us and only does what is best for us. *Those whom I love I rebuke and*

*discipline. So be earnest and repent. Revelation 3:19 In fact, we're to reflect God's mercy and grace even on our enemies: "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:44-45 "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil." Luke 6:35*

Needless to say, laws and authorities should be obeyed unless there is a direct conflict between civil law and God's law. (In the past, all of the laws used to be based on the Ten Commandments, so that was not a problem.) *Give to everyone what you owe them. Do you owe taxes? Then pay them. Do you owe anything else to the government? Then pay it. Do you owe respect? Then give it. Do you owe honor? Then show it. Romans 13:7 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by Him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. 1 Peter 2:13-15*

However, if we are ordered by our rulers to break the Ten Commandments, or to not to share the gospel, we are to disobey that order and obey God instead. *So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we must speak of what we have seen and heard." Acts 4:18-20 "We gave you clear orders not to teach in Jesus' name," he said. "But you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching..." Peter and the other apostles replied, "We must obey God instead of men!" Acts 5:28-29*

Members of royal families have many obligations that they may or may not always enjoy, but they do them cheerfully in servitude to the family. *Whatever your task, work heartily, as serving the Lord and not men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are serving the Lord Christ. Colossians 3:23-24* They are expected to be obedient. Do we obey our King or do we dishonor Him? *"Why do you call Me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?" Luke 6:36 And so the Lord says, "These people say they are Mine. They honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. And their worship of Me is nothing but man-made rules learned by rote. Isaiah 29:13*

Do we remember that no matter what we do, we are doing it for God and our reward is in pleasing Him, not ourselves or other people? *"And whoever gives*

*one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward." Matthew 10:42 Do we only say we care or do we actually follow up on it? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? James 2:15-16 Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it"—when you have it with you. Do not plan evil against your neighbor, who dwells trustingly beside you. Proverbs 3:27-29*

No doubt you're thinking of many instances where members of an earthly royal family have not behaved in a way that was becoming to their calling, resulting in bad publicity. *For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges justly. 1 Peter 2:20-23*

We can learn from mistakes as well. How awful to make your earthly father look like a bad parent (the world might think "or why else would you act like that," right?). How much worse for us to make our heavenly Father look like a poor parent. *They kill the widow and the foreigner and murder the fatherless. They say, "The Lord doesn't see it. The God of Jacob doesn't pay attention." Pay attention, you stupid people! Fools, when will you be wise? Can the One who shaped the ear not hear, the One who formed the eye not see? Psalm 94:6-9*

Is our behavior showing the world that He taught us well - *You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness. Ephesians 4:22-24; that He provides for us - "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But **seek first** the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Matthew 6:31-33; I have been young and now I am old, yet I have not seen the righteous abandoned or his children begging for bread. He is always generous, always lending, and his children are a blessing. Psalm 37:25-26; that He loves His own - *I love those who love Me, and those who seek Me diligently find Me. Proverbs**

*8:17, I am the good shepherd. I know My own and My own know Me, just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. John 10:14-15; that His character is impeccable - As for God, His way is blameless, The word of the LORD is tried; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him. Psalm 18:30; that we care what He thinks of us and about what the world thinks of Him? For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does He withhold from those who walk uprightly. Psalm 84:11*

Are the fruits of the Spirit evident in our lives so that the world can see what our Father values in behavior? *Thus says the Lord: Do justice and righteousness, and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the resident alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this place. Jeremiah 22:3* How about what His nature is like? *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22-23* Do we abstain from indulging our sinful natures by watching TV shows and movies that have inappropriate content and themes, from listening to music that does not honor God but exalts sin, from enjoying humor that we would be ashamed of if our Father were right there (as if He doesn't see)? *So you must live as God's obedient children. Don't slip back into your old ways of living to satisfy your own desires. You didn't know any better then. But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God who chose you is holy. For the Scriptures say, "You must be holy because I am holy." 1 Peter 1:14-16* Are we honest? *Lying lips are an abomination to the Lord, but those who act faithfully are his delight. Proverbs 12:22* Better is a poor, simple person who walks in his integrity than the rich one who is crooked in speech and is a fool. *Proverbs 19:1*

*For "Whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil." 1 Peter 3:10-12* Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. *Colossians 3:9-10* Be angry and do not sin. Don't let the sun go down on your anger, and don't give the devil an opportunity. The thief must no longer steal. Instead, he must do honest work with his own hands, so that he has something to share with anyone in need. *Ephesians 4:26-28*

Would He approve of the way we present ourselves? *You have wearied the Lord with your words. But you say, "How have we wearied Him?" By saying, "Everyone who does evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and He delights in them." Or by asking, "Where is the God of justice?" Malachi 2:17* Or do we settle for the lax morals of the world, preferring to blend in rather than stand out by following God's way? *Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 1 John 2:15-16* Thus says the LORD: *"Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.'" Jeremiah 6:16*

Royals have a code of conduct. They know better than to break it. They have been taught the rules well and they follow them to the best of their ability. *Teach me Your way, LORD, that I may rely on Your faithfulness; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear Your name. Psalm 86:11* They don't conform to the low standards of the world. *"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world means enmity against God? Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God." James 4:4* Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. *Philippians 4:8-9* They have a higher calling. *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:14* They keep their word. *You shall be careful to do what has passed your lips, for you have voluntarily vowed to the Lord your God what you have promised with your mouth. Deuteronomy 23:23*

*Obey the king since you vowed to God that you would. Don't try to avoid doing your duty, and don't stand with those who plot evil, for the king can do whatever he wants. His command is backed by great power. No one can resist or question it. Those who obey him will not be punished. Those who are wise will find a time and a way to do what is right, for there is a time and a way for everything, even when a person is in trouble. Ecclesiastes 8:2-6*

They refrain from using coarse language. *From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers, these things ought not to be so. James 3:10* No foul language is to come from your mouth, but only what is good for building up someone in need, so that it gives grace to those who hear. *Ephesians 4:29* They don't join in grumbling against their family. Is the same true of us? *Do all*

*things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world. Philippians 2:14-15*

They are proud of their family, not ashamed of it. *"For whoever is ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when He comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."* Mark 8:38 Thus says the Lord: *"Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord."* Jeremiah 9:23-24

Do we stand up for our King's truth instead of backing down whenever the world disagrees with us? *Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. Ephesians 6:11* Or do we stay quiet, not wanting to be identified with our family if it's not popular? *Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. Romans 5:3-5*

If we really understood and remembered on a daily basis that when we accepted Jesus' death for our sins and His Lordship over us as our risen King, we became adopted children of the Maker of the universe, what would that look like? *But to all who believed Him and accepted Him, Jesus gave the right to become children of God. John 1:12* But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship. *Galatians 4:4-5* Wouldn't our behavior be changed? *Therefore, be imitators of God as dearly loved children and live in love, just as Christ also loved us and gave Himself for us, a sacrificial and fragrant offering to God. But among you there must not be either sexual immorality, impurity of any kind, or greed, as these are not fitting for the saints. Ephesians 5:1-3*

If we thought the world was watching us, and it is, how would our lives reflect the beauty and majesty of our Lord and Savior, of our heavenly King, of the royal family of which we are members? *Nevertheless, God's solid foundation stands firm, sealed with this inscription: "The Lord knows those who are his,"*



*and, "Everyone who confesses the name of the Lord must turn away from wickedness." 2 Timothy 2:19*

*For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with goodness, goodness with knowledge, knowledge with self-control, self-control with endurance, endurance with godliness, godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they will keep you from being useless or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 2 Peter 1:5-8*

*Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as Jesus is righteous. Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for His seed abides in him, and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother. 1 John 3:7-10*

*What did our King say He expected of us? Do we know? These are the things you shall do: Speak each man the truth to his neighbor; Give judgment in your gates for truth, justice, and peace; Let none of you think evil in your heart against your neighbor; And do not love a false oath. For all these are things that I hate,' Says the Lord." Zechariah 8:16-17 Jesus said: "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand." John 10:27-28 And that if we were worthy of Him, we would take up our cross daily. "Whoever does not take up their cross and follow Me is not worthy of Me." Matthew 10:38 What does that mean? But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. Hebrews 10:32-33*

*Do we spend time reading the Bible for ourselves to find out what God said? All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Members of earthly royal families instruct each other and they also employ tutors. ...so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. Colossians 1:10 So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold fast to the teachings we passed on to*

*you, whether by word of mouth or by letter. 2 Thessalonians 2:15 We have only one Teacher - "And don't let anyone call you 'Teacher,' for you have only one teacher, the Messiah." Matthew 23:10*

*And now, my sons, listen to me: happy are those who keep my ways. Hear instruction and be wise, and do not neglect it. Happy is the man who listens to me [wisdom], watching daily at my gates, waiting beside my doors. For he who finds me finds life and obtains favor from the Lord; but he who misses me injures himself; all who hate me love death. Proverbs 8:32-36*

*We're to obey God ourselves and not only point out the errors of others, thereby making ourselves hypocrites. (However, this is not to say that we refrain from judging at all.) "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye." Matthew 7:3-5 Stop judging according to outward appearance; rather judge according to righteous judgment. John 7:24 You may think you can condemn such people, but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. Romans 2:1*

*God is not a respecter of persons and neither are we to be. For God shows no partiality. Romans 2:11 Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. Leviticus 19:15 My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. James 2:1 As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of the elect angels I charge you to keep these rules without prejudging, doing nothing from partiality. 1 Timothy 5:20-21*

*Earthly royalty is associated with great wealth, but our riches are kept for us in heaven. "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Matthew 6:19-21*

*Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Hebrews 13:5 "No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one*

*and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." Matthew 6:24 "What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul?" Matthew 16:26*

The amazing thing is that unlike earthly royal families, anyone can become a member of this Royal Family that we belong to. *Look at how great a love the Father has given us that we should be called God's children. And we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it didn't know Him. 1 John 3:1* We can't make anyone believe and accept Christ, but we are meant to show His love to each other and our neighbors. If you want to see a picture of what loving your neighbor looks like, see the parable of the Good Samaritan: <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+10%3A25-37> Notice that Jesus did not define loving your neighbor as telling them whatever they want to hear. He never adjusted His message to please His audience. *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." Isaiah 55:8-9*

God's truth doesn't change over time or in various situations. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life, and He never changes. *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6 Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Hebrews 13:8* He answered the question about who is our neighbor by giving an example of meeting the dire needs of someone we may not even know and might even think of us as their enemy, without any expectation of repayment. *"But when you give a reception, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed, since they do not have the means to repay you; for you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." Luke 14:13*

We may not ever encounter a life or death situation where someone needs our help to survive, but we can be kind to everyone we have contact with. *"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? 1 John 3:17"* We can forgive and forget trespasses against us as Jesus instructed. *"For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." Matthew 6:14-15* We can pass up opportunities to get into fights. *Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. James 1:19*

We can refrain from gossip or jumping to negative conclusions about others.

*"But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned." Matthew 12:36-37* We can stand by our brothers and sisters in Christ so that the world will know we belong to the same family. *For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. Galatians 5:13* We can stand up for the weak and helpless, and try to give them a hand up. *For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings. Hosea 6:6*

Most importantly, we need to share the Good News that anyone can become a child of God if they believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths that Jesus died for their sins and rose from the dead. *If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. Romans 10:9-10* For God did not send His Son into the world that He might condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. *Anyone who believes in Him is not condemned, but anyone who does not believe is already condemned, because he has not believed in the name of the One and only Son of God. John 3:17-18*

We can't make anyone believe--faith is a gift of the Holy Spirit - *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. Ephesians 2:8-9*, but we are not EVER to be ashamed of Jesus or deny His precious, Holy name. He is the very center of our life—without Him we are still dead in our sins, bound to pay the price for them ourselves eternally. *When Christ **who is your life** appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. Colossians 3:4* Without faith in Him, we can do nothing whatsoever to please God. *And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him. Hebrews 11:6* If we deny His name or are ashamed of Him, then so will He be of us. *"But whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven." Matthew 10:33* Doesn't that thought make you shudder? It should. What a horrible thing to imagine happening! I can't actually fathom anyone who is born again doing that.

Speak the truth in love. *Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body, the church. Ephesians 4:15* Teach your children. *You shall teach these commandments to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along*

*the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens remain above the earth. Deuteronomy 11:19-21 "But if you cause one of these little ones who trusts in Me to fall into sin, it would be better for you to have a large millstone tied around your neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea. Woe to the world because of its stumbling blocks! For it is inevitable that stumbling blocks come; but woe to that man through whom the stumbling block comes!" Matthew 18:6-7*

He is worthy of ALL of our love, worship, praise, thanks, honor, obedience and loyalty. *"Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created." Revelation 4:11* If we are giving those things to anyone or anything else in this world, then we are cheating Him. *"The most important command," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."* Mark 12:29-31

We belong to Him. *If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord. Romans 14:8* If we truly belong to Him, then there is absolutely nothing that can separate us from His love, from being a member of His royal family. *For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Romans 8:38-39* We are to be faithful and utterly devoted to Him. *But I fear that somehow your pure and undivided devotion to Christ will be corrupted, just as Eve was deceived by the cunning ways of the serpent. For you happily put up with whatever anyone tells you, even if they preach a different Jesus than the one we preach, or a different kind of Spirit than the one you received, or a different kind of gospel than the one you believed. 2 Corinthians 11:3-4* I am the LORD; that is My name; My glory I give to no other, nor My praise to carved idols. Isaiah 42:8

We are to be faithful to the Lord alone, not only spiritually, but also by remembering that our very bodies are His dwelling place (after we are born again.) *Flee sexual immorality. Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral man sins against his own body. Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you*

*have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:18-20*

*For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; that no one transgress and wrong his brother in this matter, because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we told you beforehand and solemnly warned you. For God has not called us for the purpose of impurity, but in sanctification. **So, he who rejects this is not rejecting man but the God who gives His Holy Spirit to you.** 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8*

This includes accepting God's definition of male and female, as well as marriage. *For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed. Genesis 2:24-5* No, this isn't only an Old Testament teaching—even though the question asked of Him dealt with divorce, Jesus took the opportunity to reiterate God's intent. *"Jesus answered, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?" Matthew 19:4-5* (Also see my article about sanctification entitled Speak the Truth in Love, available on the side bar of my blog: <http://layoutfortoday.blogspot.com>.)

Strong families spend a lot of time together. The same applies to the members of the church and to our personal relationship with our Father. *You hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of you, when he said: "This people honors Me with their lips, but their **heart** is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men."* Mark 15:7-9 If we spend an hour or less a week with our family (as some people consider going to church once a week all they need to maintain their relationship with God), problems will arise. *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. Romans 10:17*

If our spouse has been away for a while, we truly miss them and long for them to come back to us. *Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:8* So should we feel about Jesus, our Bridegroom, the One who loved us enough to redeem our souls so that we could spend eternity with Him instead of in the lake of fire. (Matt. 25:41, Rev. 20:15, 21:8) He has gone to prepare a place for us. *"Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that*

*I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also.” John 14:1-3 We should greatly anticipate His return, or the time when we go to Him after this life ends. He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! Revelation 22:20 For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. 1 Thessalonians 4:16:17*

*Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and even though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls. 1 Peter 1:8-9 If we don't love Him now, then how will that suddenly change after this life is over and eternity begins? **Start now.** “Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” John 14:21 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.” John 15:9-10*

*Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen Me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” John 20:29 That is what faith is, assurance of things not seen. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1 For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7 Do we believe? Then let's act like it! Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience, accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you must also forgive. Above all, put on love—the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body, control your hearts. Be thankful. Let the message about the Messiah dwell richly among you, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, and singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. Colossians 3:12-17*

*When each of us first believed in our hearts (not only our minds), God's very Spirit came to live inside of us to help us walk the walk. In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our*

*inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory. Ephesians 1:13-14 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. 1 John 2:3-6*

God will always provide a way out of any temptation He allows in our lives. *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13* Often people leave off the first part of this next verse, but the two parts go hand in hand: *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. James 4:7* When we are fully surrendered to God, He will help us remain strong.

None of us have any excuses. If anyone has slipped, stumbled or slumbered, they need only ask His forgiveness and He will forgive anything. *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9* We can also ask Him to correct any bad habits or attitudes in our lives that we have embraced. *And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Hebrews 12:5-8 Or do you think Scripture says without reason. "He jealously longs for the Spirit He has caused to dwell in us?" James 4:5*

Let's ask Him to renew the fire for Him inside our hearts.

*But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Therefore remember from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds you did at first; or else I am coming to you and will remove your lampstand out of its place—unless you repent. Revelation 2:4-5* Only He can enable us to live in a way that pleases Him and He can use us for His good purpose. *Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy. Ephesians 4:23-24* For it is God who is working in you, enabling you both to desire and to work out His good purpose. *Philippians 2:13* He has plans for every believer. *For we are his workmanship,*

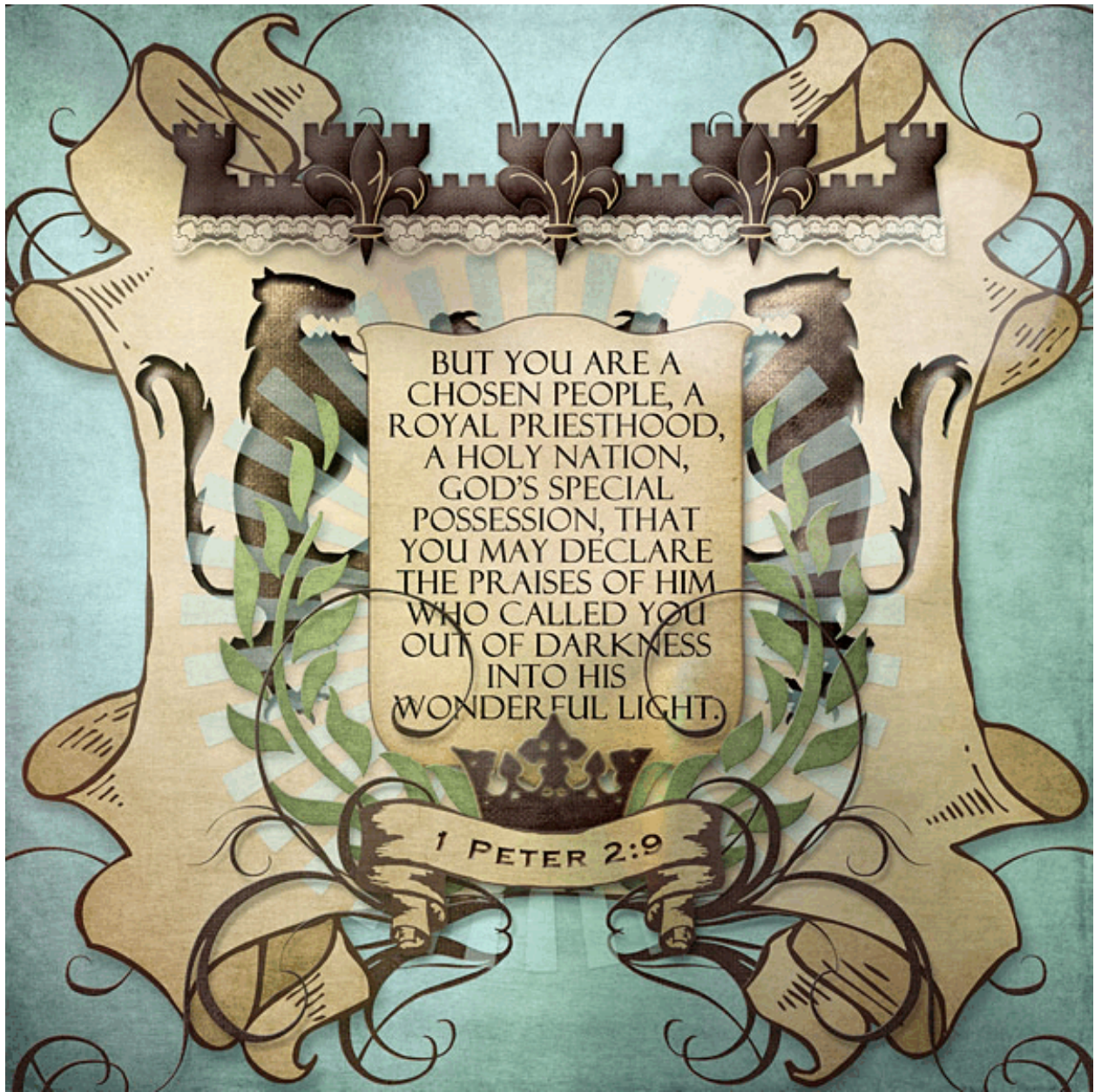


*created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:10*

Some people think that believers have been expecting the return of Christ for so many years that the chances of His returning soon are slim to none. They may mistake the Lord's mercy for inattentiveness. I would encourage them to think again. *Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? Romans 2:4 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. 2 Peter 3:9*

*May the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the steadfastness of Christ. 2 Corinthians 3:5* He loves us. How awesome is that? See you in the Kingdom. ♥

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