

# AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE

MERVIN SUNDBO

In the 24<sup>th</sup> chapter of Joshua from the NKJV we read, “Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and called for the elders of Israel, for their heads, for their judges, and for their officers; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said to all the people, ‘Thus says the Lord God of Israel.’” Now Joshua proceeded to remind them concerning all that God had done for them, going away back to Abraham and then brought them to the time when they possessed the land that God had promised them. Verses 14 & 15, ‘Now therefore, fear the Lord, serve Him in sincerity and in truth, and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the River and in Egypt. Serve the Lord! And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the River; or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.’”

This scripture causes us to consider the many ways in which we can serve the Lord. Let us name some of them.

1. We can serve the Lord in our kindness to others. “*And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (Ephesians 4:32). Forgiveness is a fundamental principle in serving Christ. He is our example as He demonstrated forgiveness many times in scripture, not the least of which was on the cross when He said, “*Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do*” (Luke 23:34, NKJV).

2. We can serve God in our families. Our marriages and our families should be examples to the world. The glue that holds marriages and families together is a little word called “love.” The best description of love that I have ever read is found in 1 Corinthians 13:4–8 and is particularly well expressed in the Phillips translation. “*This love of which I speak is slow to lose patience – it looks for a way of being constructive. It is not possessive: it is neither anxious to impress nor does it cherish inflated ideas of its own importance. Love has good manners and does not pursue selfish advantage. It is not touchy. It does not keep account of evil or gloat over the wickedness*

*of other people. On the contrary, it is glad with all good men when truth prevails. Love knows no limit to its endurance, no end to its trust, no fading of its hope; it can outlast anything. It is, in fact, the one thing that stands when all else has fallen."*

Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind. The second most important is similar. Love your neighbour as much as you love yourself. (Matthew 22:37–39, Living Bible).

One of the most beautiful and powerful analogies in Scripture is found in Ephesians 5:22–33. It is a description or comparison between the husband and wife relationship and the relationship between Christ and the church. We may not fully understand all that is spoken in this passage of scripture. However, God has opened our eyes to see not only the depth and beauty that is resident in the marriage relationship, but also to see the passion that Christ has for His bride, the church, and a love so deep and self-sacrificing that he gave His life for her.

3. Children can serve the Lord by obeying and honouring their father and mother. *"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it maybe well with you and you may live long on the earth'"* (Ephesians 6:1–3, NKJV).

4. We can serve God in our workplaces as servants or as masters. *"Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in sincerity of heart, as to Christ; not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart. And you masters, do the same things to them, giving up threatening, knowing that your own Master also is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him"* (Ephesians 6:5, 6 & 9, NKJV).

5. We can serve God wherever we live (our communities). Paul in writing to the church at Corinth said, *"You are an open letter about Christ which we ourselves have written, not with pen and ink but with the Spirit of the living God. Our message has been engraved not in stone, but in living men and women"* (2 Corinthians 3:3, Phillips). The songwriter penned the lines, "Let the beauty of Jesus be seen in me, All His wonderful passion and purity. Oh, thou Spirit divine, all my nature refine, Till the beauty of Jesus be seen in me." We are judged not so much by what we say as we are by how we live. *"Let your gentleness be known to all men"* (Philippians 4:5, NKJV).

6. We can each serve God in our churches through the gifts and ministries of the members of the body of Christ flowing in unison in our midst. Paul says in 1 Corinthians

14:12, *"Even so you, since you are zealous (desirous) of spiritual gifts, let it be for the edification (building up) of the church that you seek to excel (or to grow)."* Paul speaks of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians chapter 12. These gifts are all resident in the body of Christ and through their operation we can all grow in greater faith and maturity.

7. We serve God with our tithes. The scriptures instruct us to be good stewards of that which God has entrusted to us, whether it is little or much. Tithing not only shows our love for God, it is also one of the principles of good stewardship. *"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, 'If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it'"* (Malachi 3:10–12, NKJV). *"Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful"* (1 Corinthians 4:2, KJV).

Now in Matthew 6:24 Jesus made a statement similar to that of Joshua when He said, *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon (riches). The Phillips translation says, "You cannot serve God and the power of money at the same time."*

We might pass by some of these scriptures without a second thought because we feel we are not tempted as Israel was with the worship of idols or other gods. Idol worship is quite prevalent today, but in a different way than it was in Israel's day. Anything that is more important than our relationship with God has the potential for idol worship. Let us consider some common activities in our daily lives that could be stumbling blocks to our Christian walk.

**1. Where do we spend our time** - on the Internet? We choose where we go on the Internet. We don't have to click on questionable sites. Watching television? We have control over what we watch. We can change channels or press the "off" button. We can determine that we will not serve the Internet or television, but that they will serve us. The enemy doesn't care what we are addicted to as long as it is something that takes plenty of time and corrupts our minds with the ways of the world. *"And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God"* (Romans 12:2, NKJV).

What worries the enemy is a people on their knees seeking God. What worries him is intercessory prayer warriors. What worries him is Spirit-motivated and operated ministries that break down his strongholds. What worries him are moms and dads who rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and grandmas and grandpas who support them in their spiritual walk.



It is as the scripture says, *“I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live”* (Deuteronomy 30:19, NKJV). We choose life and serve Christ not only for ourselves but also for the generations to come.

**2. Where do we spend our money?** *“Why do you spend money for that which is not bread, and your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance”* (Isaiah 55:2, NKJV). What is this scripture saying? It is saying that the material does not satisfy. It is here today and gone tomorrow. It is only the spiritual that truly satisfies the inner longings of the human heart. “Christ is the answer to all my longing. Christ is the answer to all my need.” *“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him! There is no want to those who fear Him”* (Psalm 34:8 & 9). Jesus said, *“I am the living bread which came down from heaven”* (John 6: 51, NKJV).

**3. How pure are our thoughts?** We live in a society where once the unacceptable is now acceptable, a society where “sin is made to look normal and righteousness is made to look strange.” Isaiah 5: 20 & 21 gives a good description of where we are today, *“Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! Woe unto them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight.”* The Psalmist says in Psalm 11:3, *“If the foundations are destroyed, what can the righteous do”* (NKJV)? The answer to that question is to trust in the Lord, regardless of circumstances. We receive good instruction in Philippians 4:8 regarding our thought life, *“Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble (honest), whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy – meditate on these things”* (NKJV).

Jesus speaking in Matthew 6:33 says, *“But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you”* (NKJV). Another way of saying this might be to seek first the King of that kingdom and He will supply all of our needs according to His riches in glory. God’s storehouse is always full. There is absolutely no lack there.

**4. How materialistic are we?** I would like to make a few comments on money. One of the best scriptures on this topic is found in 1 Timothy 6:10, *“For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows”* (NKJV). Note: it is not money that is at the root of evil; it is the love of money. Obviously money can be used for good purposes as well as evil purposes. I heard

a very rich man say, “Money is good for the good it will do.” That is really all that money is good for. We all use it in our daily lives. It clothes, feeds and shelters our families, transports us to where we want to go (including to our work places) provides us with educational opportunities, makes available a modern communication network, provides healthcare services and assists in the ministry of the gospel of the kingdom to many parts of the world, and this list could go on. If money were not important, the scriptures would be silent on such things as tithing and stewardship. There is much in the scriptures about the wise use of money. The caution is that money should serve us rather than that we should serve money.

There is an interesting account in scripture of what some translations refer to as “the rich young ruler” found in Mark 10:17–22. If that description is accurate, it would seem that as far as this world is concerned, this man had it made. He was young (his whole life was ahead of him), he was rich (he had already accomplished what a lot of people only dream of in their youth), and he was a ruler (he was a man of authority). Yet, in spite of all this, there was obviously something lacking in his life, for he came to Jesus one day and said, *“‘Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ So Jesus said to him, ‘You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’ And he answered and said to Him, ‘Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.’ Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, ‘One thing you lack: go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross and follow Me.’ But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.”*

Jesus put his finger on precisely what the young man lacked. It takes us right back to the statement Jesus made in Matthew 6:24, *“You cannot serve God and the power of money (mammon) at the same time”* (Phillips).

When we partake of communion, the instruction is that *“a man (woman) examine himself (herself), and so let him (her) eat of the bread and drink of the cup”* (1 Corinthians 11:28, NKJV). Note that it does not say to examine another person. It says to examine yourself. At times like this we can ask of the Lord, “What do we lack?” If we are sincere, He will reveal our lack just as He did in the case of the rich young ruler. But rather than responding as he did, let us allow the Spirit of God to work in us to overcome the lack and meet the need.

If we are to grow and mature spiritually, I believe we cannot forget about the basic principles of our walk with God. The way is growing ever narrower and as we mature, more is expected of us. As parents, we do not expect the same level of responsibility from a 6-year old as from a 16-year old. Make no mistake about it; God’s expectation is full maturity, from the new birth experience

to a complete transformation; from sons of men, to sons of God; from the natural to the spiritual; from the nature of Adam (the living soul), to the nature of Christ (the life-giving Spirit). This is the heritage of God's people.

Let the same spirit be in us as was in Joshua as he declared before Israel, "*As for me and my house we will serve the Lord.*" †

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Headquarters:  
802 Airport Road  
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Mailing Address:  
P.O. Box 934  
North Battleford, SK S9A 2Z3 Canada

Telephone:  
(306) 445-2733

Email:  
info@globalmissionsinc.org

Online:  
www.globalmissionsinc.org

Traveling Ministry Contact List:  
www.globalmissionsinc.org/about

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