



Two

Transformed

1 Peter 2–3

LAUREN'S STORY

Lauren duBois, from Chicago, Illinois, is a partner in an executive search firm.

I made bad choices in college. Then I dropped out, got married, and had two daughters. It was an abusive marriage and after eight years we divorced. My ex-husband defaulted on child support and my parents would not help me. Needing to support myself and my children, I worked hard and had professional success in a male-dominated sales field. Alone with small children and no help, I felt unworthy of God's love and began to doubt His existence.

Another marriage, another child, another divorce, again no child support. But, this time I paid alimony. I became an angry woman with little respect for men. I joined National Organization of Women and marched in support of abortion rights. I was independent. I needed and trusted no one but myself. *A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle* was my anthem.

Then 9/11 happened. As the World Trade Center fell, so did my world. In that chaos, I turned to God and He became my hope. I met and married a kind man. But at heart, I was still an angry feminist.





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In 2008, several friends and I attended the first True Woman conference. As Mary Kassian explained the history of the women's movement and the social damage it had done, I found myself nodding in total agreement. As Susan Hunt talked about biblical womanhood, my eyes were opened to the ways I had been a life-taker. I embraced the truth of my helper design and redemptive calling to be a life-giver.

I once thought my past was unredeemable, but the power of the gospel transformed this life-taker into a woman who leads Bible studies for women in my church.

Many women share my story and are living in hopelessness. I pray there will be many life-givers who tell them the creation and redemption story and who show them the transforming love of Jesus.





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THINKING BIBLICALLY

The infallible rule of interpretation of Scripture is the Scripture itself: and therefore, when there is a question about the true and full sense of any Scripture (which is not manifold, but one), it must be searched and known by other places that speak more clearly.¹

Westminster Confession of Faith





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1 Peter 2

¹*So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander.*

²*Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation –*

³*if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*

- What does the first word, So, refer back to?
- What is the imperative?
- What transforms our appetites?

Peter says, “The word of the Lord remains forever” (1 Pet. 1:25) so he encourages spiritual growth by encouraging us to examine our appetites. He mentions life-taking actions and attitudes that are the overflow of spiritually malnourished people. What we feed upon matters. Tasting the goodness of the Lord whets our appetites for more truth so Peter challenges us to let our appetites be transformed by feasting on God’s Word.

⁴*As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,*

⁵*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.*

⁶*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.”*

⁷*So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, “The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,”*

⁸*and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.” They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.*

⁹*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.*





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¹⁰*Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

- What do you learn about your identity in Christ?
- What do you learn about your connection to other believers?
- Underline the reason some stumble.
- How does Peter contrast our before-and-after status in verse 10?
- Identify some edges of your heart that need to be smoothed away in order for you to fit together with those around you.

Deep within every heart is the desire to belong. Our identity in Christ gives us people and place. Life together in the body of Christ, on the smallest scale or in the grandest fashion, allows us to enter one of God's ordained catalysts for our transformation. The Chief Cornerstone chooses, enlivens and reshapes us so we fit together to become a spiritual structure to house His presence. As we delight in the unity and diversity of fellow sojourners, we begin to get a glimpse of God's intended purpose found in the original community – the Triune God. Biblical community is a sanctifying foretaste of heaven as God transforms life-less stones into life-giving saints.

¹¹*Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.*

¹²*Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

¹³*Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme,*

¹⁴*or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good.*

¹⁵*For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.*



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¹⁶*Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God.*

¹⁷*Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.*

¹⁸*Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust.*

¹⁹*For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly.*

²⁰*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.*

- Underline the imperatives.
- Read the passage again and put brackets around the reasons given for the imperatives.
- Circle the words subject and servants.
- Describe the war within your heart between resisting and relinquishing.
- What has to die in order for us to submit?

There is a war going on and the frontline is a battle for our hearts. The inclination of our heart is to resist and rebel rather than submit. Submission is never natural. It is supernatural. It is never passive and must be intentional.

Peter unpacks the imperatives of our transformed inclinations. The rubber hits the road in the context of community. He moves from the most distant (the emperor) to the most intimate (husbands in 3:1) of relationships. To be subject is to submit, yield, relinquish or surrender. The postures of worship and surrender are identical, they are openhanded. Living openhandedly may seem frightening, but ultimately it is freeing. Christ is our reference point for submission. He opened His hands, letting go of heaven and submitting to crucifixion in our place. We are never more like Christ than when we submit.



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²¹For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

²²He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth.

²³When 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.

²⁴He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

²⁵For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

- What do you learn about Jesus in these verses?

As we increasingly entrust ourselves to Him who judges justly, the Spirit transforms our identities, appetites and inclinations so that we begin to look more and more like Christ.



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LIVING COVENANTALLY

The communion of saints is the living fellowship of all true believers who are united in love by their union with Christ and have spiritual communion with one another as they share in corporate worship, spiritual gifts, Christian graces, material goods, and mutual edification.²

Philip Graham Ryken





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Redeemed Reality: 1 Peter 2:1-10

*Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!*

(Ps. 34:8)

Peter piles up gospel realities in chapter one and then shifts to gospel imperatives: “So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander” (1 Pet. 2:1).

My reality - I can't do this. I can pretend. I can make you think I have. But ugly stuff slinks in my heart. Pastor Peter is so pastoral. He acknowledges our inability to be good by pointing us again to the One who is good: “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up to salvation – if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good” (1 Pet. 2:2-3).

I can't change my heart but I can increase my appetite for what is good. I can develop the holy habit of reading my Bible. The more I taste His goodness, the more bitter sin tastes, and the more my affections, ambitions, attitudes, and actions are shaped by His Word. I begin to connect with other living stones to become a living house.

In the Old Testament, the house, or temple, symbolized God's Presence with His people. The splendor of the place was the glory of God. Now we, individually and collectively as the church, are His temple (1 Cor. 6:19; 3:16). As shocking as it sounds, His glory is in us. Jesus said so (John 17:22). What does this mean?

There are two aspects of God's glory; external and internal. His *external* glory is the visible manifestation such as the glory cloud over the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34-35). James Boice explains that Jesus' *internal* glory “consists of his intrinsic worth, or character ... Thus, all that can be properly known of God is an expression of his glory ... When the disciples beheld his glory ... they actually beheld his character, which was the character of God.”³

When Moses prayed, “Show me your glory,” God replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you” (Exod. 33:18-19). Then, when God passed by, He described His goodness, His attributes that are celebrated throughout the Old Testament and are embodied in Jesus.





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The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. The LORD passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.”
(Exod. 34:5-7)

The goodness of His glorious character, His Holy Spirit, is in us. By His Word and His Spirit He transforms us into good people who are merciful, gracious, slow to anger, loving, faithful and forgiving. And the living house embodies what we have by grace been declared to be: “A chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession” (1 Pet. 2:9).

This is our redeemed reality. However, petty irritations often trip me up. Malice and slander taste good. The bifurcated road looms large. The spiritual struggle to return to the Word and taste the goodness of Jesus is hard. I’m grateful that I’m part of a holy nation of people who have received mercy, so they extend mercy. They proclaim to me the excellencies of our Savior, remind me that the Lord is good and encourage me to trust and obey. And together we are transformed into a living house where the marvelous light of Glory shines to beckon people who are still in darkness.



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Points to Ponder

Is your appetite for God's Word increasing or decreasing?

*How are you participating in a community of grace
where you are encouraged and equipped to trust
and obey God's Word?*





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Transformed by Prayer

Oh how I love your law!

It is my meditation all the day.

*Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies,
for it is ever with me ...*

*How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!*

(Ps. 119:97-98, 103)



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Gracious Goodness: 1 Peter 2:12-25

*Gracious words are like a honeycomb,
sweetness to the soul and health to the body.*

(Prov. 16:24)

The discussion of submission does not begin with Peter's words to women in chapter 3. He begins this conversation by reminding us that our chief end is to glorify God.

Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God ... (1 Pet. 2:12).

Then he tells us, men and women, to submit: "Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution ... Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God" (1 Pet. 2:13-16).

Oddly, Peter juxtaposes *submission* and *freedom*. Isn't submission the antithesis of freedom? No, Jesus said, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free ... Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin ... if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:31-36).

This is not a subjective freedom. This is freedom to be what God created and redeemed us to be. Submission from the heart is the fruit of freedom in Christ. Submission "is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly ... But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God" (1 Pet. 2:18-20).

"Gracious" is one of the attributes God revealed to Moses when He described His goodness (Exod. 34:5-7). Showing grace to others is not just improbable, it is impossible apart from the Cross; therefore, Peter tells us to "be mindful of God".

Be mindful of the *example* of Jesus: "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" (1 Pet. 2:21).

Be mindful of the *substitutionary atonement* of Jesus: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness" (1 Pet. 2:24).





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In Gethsemane Jesus prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will” (Matt. 26:39). He voluntarily submitted to the Father’s will in order to glorify Him by accomplishing our salvation. Freedom and submission met at the Cross. The power and grace of this love leaves us speechless. When we are consumed and compelled by His love, we gratefully submit to His will (John 14:15; 2 Cor. 5:14).

How do we live this way? The same way Jesus did — He *entrusted* Himself to the One who judges justly. And so should we.

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 Pet. 2:23)

Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good. (1 Pet. 4:19)



Moment by moment we hand over responsibility for ourselves to our faithful Creator. We stop trying to run our own, and other’s lives. We don’t have to earn approval because we are accepted in Christ. Self-protection is unnecessary because we are safe in Christ. We don’t have to resist or fear earthly authorities because our hope is not in them. From this place of grace, our freedom in Christ is evidenced by our submission. Trust and obey. Gracious goodness.



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*P*oints to *P*onder

What is your perspective of submission?

Is it shaped by God's Word?

Who are you entrusting your life to — right now?





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Transformed by Prayer

*You, O LORD, are a God merciful and gracious,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and
faithfulness.*

*Turn to me and be gracious to me;
give your strength to your servant ...*

(Ps. 86:15-16).



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Free to Submit: 1 Peter 2:24-3:7

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not lean on your own understanding.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*

(Prov. 3:5-6)

In 1 Peter chapter 3 Peter speaks specifically to women who were chosen and redeemed by Sovereign Grace. Don't let the chapter break deflect you from the potency of Peter's words. Just prior to his instructions to women he said, "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness ..." (1 Pet. 2:24). Then he continues: "Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands ..." (1 Pet. 3:1-2).

Likewise – like Jesus – use your freedom to submit to the Father's will. *Like Jesus*, when you are reviled, do not revile in return. *Like Jesus*, entrust your soul to your faithful Creator.

Some of the women in this passage were married to men who were not Christians. The congregation likely included single women and women married to believers. Whatever our marital status, Peter encourages us to remember the scope of the whole, reach up and grab the spiritual blessings that are ours in Jesus, and infuse the moment with His glorious grace. One way we do this is to graciously submit to those He puts in authority over us.

Mother Eve will teach us more about submission, but for now let's be clear. Submission is not easier for certain personalities and it was not easier in certain periods of history. Submission from the heart is unnatural because we are rebels. Submission is a work of grace. It is not a response to the character of one in authority over us. It is a response to Jesus' love and a reflection of His character. A woman is not to submit to sin. When she must refuse to submit, she can do so with a submissive and respectful heart. Submission is God's idea and it is good because He is good.

The desire and the will to do such a radical thing will not originate in the heart of one who is dead in sin. C. S. Lewis explains that there is a difference between biological life and spiritual life, and that a person who receives spiritual life





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“would have gone through as big a change as a statue which changed from being a carved stone to being a real man. And that is precisely what Christianity is about. This world is a great sculptor’s shop. We are the statues and there is a rumour going through the shop that some of us are some day going to come to life.”⁴

Peter calls the women to do something that is only possible for those who have “come to life”. Outward expressions of submission are manipulative and controlling because they are motivated by self-interest. Free women have the capacity to submit from the heart because they have Life. Their power is God’s grace and their motivation is His glory.

When we submit, our lives proclaim the excellencies of God. This submission is wordless. It’s winsome. It’s wise. It’s on the inside yet it is so obvious that it cannot be denied by those who know us and eventually they begin to ask about the reason for the hope that is in us (1 Pet. 3:15). And we give them words of life.

Submission is not passive. It was the active obedience of *Jesus* that freed us from slavery to sin. It is our active obedience to *Jesus* that frees us to submit.



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*P*oints to *P*onder

What difference does it make to see 1 Peter 3:1-7 in the context of chapters 1 and 2?

Is your submission like that of Jesus “who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”? (Phil. 2:6-8).





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Transformed by Prayer

Search me, O God, and know my heart!

Try me and know my thoughts!

*And see if there be any grievous way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting!*

(Ps. 139:23-24)



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Beautiful Women: 1 Peter 3:1-7

Jesus, thy blood and righteousness my beauty are, my glorious dress;

'midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed, with joy shall I lift up my head.⁵

Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf

Peter clarifies his directives to women. He is not simply talking about outward behavior.

Do not let your adorning be external ... but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.
(1 Pet. 3:3-4)

Peter calls these “living stones” (1 Pet. 2:5) who have been “ ... born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ ...” (1 Pet. 1:3), to adorn their hearts with the gospel. A rebellious heart is restless. A heart submitted to God is gentle and quiet. Jesus describes His own heart as “gentle and lowly” (Matt. 11:29).

The Greek word translated gentle “denotes gentle, mild, meek ... It is that temper of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting ... This meekness, however, being first of all a meekness before God, is also such in the face of men, even of evil men, out of a sense that these, with the insults and injuries which they may inflict, are permitted and employed by Him for the chastening and purifying of His elect ... The meekness manifested by the Lord and commended to the believer is the fruit of power ... the Lord was ‘meek’ because he had the infinite resources of God at His command. Described negatively, meekness is the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied with self at all.”⁶

In his book, *The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness*, Tim Keller writes, “Because the essence of gospel-humility is not thinking more of myself or thinking less of myself, it is thinking of myself less ... [It] means I stop connecting every experience, every





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conversation, with myself. In fact, I stop thinking about myself. The freedom of self-forgetfulness. The blessed rest that only self-forgetfulness brings.”⁷

The Greek word that is translated quiet “indicates tranquility arising from within, causing no disturbance to others.”⁸ Proverbs tells us, “A tranquil heart gives life to the flesh, but envy makes the bones rot” (14:30).

We are products of our theology. What we believe about God shows up every day in every situation and relationship. Peter illustrates this by pointing to fearless women who believed God’s Word and the transforming difference this made in their lives.

For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord ... (1 Pet. 3: 5-6)

Eve and Sarah help us understand why submission is such a defining characteristic of a life-giver. Together they teach us why Peter expects such big things from us, because we have a big gospel that is powerful enough to transform us from life-takers to life-givers. So Peter moves our focus back to this live-giving gospel by reminding us that we are heirs of the grace of life.

Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life ... (1 Pet. 3: 7)

Liberated women, who live in the freedom of self-forgetfulness, have a life-giving beauty that is eternal.





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*P*oints to *P*onder

Reflect on the big idea that our dead, sinful hearts can be transformed by God's grace into something that is alive with gentleness and quietness that is very precious to Him and life-giving to others.





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Transformed by Prayer

*Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes;
and I will keep it to the end.*

*Give me understanding, that I may keep your law
and observe it with my whole heart.*

*Lead me in the path of your commandments,
for I delight in it.*

*Incline my heart to your testimonies,
and not to selfish gain!*

*Turn my eyes from looking at worthless things;
and give me life in your ways.*

(Ps. 119:33-37)





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Living Covenantally: 1 Peter 3:8-22

And the LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time."

(1 Kings 9:3)

Suffering does not exempt us from the privileges and responsibilities of covenant life.

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing ... For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. ... (1 Pet. 3:8-9, 12)

The covenant community is a *called* community of people who are not defined by their suffering – even though suffering is part of life – but by their relationship with the One who always sees and hears them.

The Westminster Confession of Faith makes a startling statement about covenant life in God's family. It explains that those who are united to Christ are also "united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good ..."

We are *united* and *obliged*. These strong words are counter-intuitive and counter-cultural, but this is what Jesus prayed for us: "The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one ..." (John 17:22-23).

Our covenant union with Christ ignites our covenant love for His other children. Our positional unity is a gift of grace. Our privilege and responsibility are to nurture this unity in practical ways so that our local churches are vibrant witnesses of the transforming power of the gospel. Peter gives a stunning summary of the gospel.





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For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit. (1 Pet. 3:18)

Peter becomes doxological as he points to the eschatological reality of Christ's rule and reign – the now and not yet of our redemption.

[Jesus] has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him. (1 Pet. 3:22)

The Cross and the Consummation compel elect exiles to live covenantally and to let that quiet, redemptive beauty transform the culture of our home, church, and world.

And now, let's look back to the beginning and ask Mother Eve to disciple us by sharing the gospel and her life with us. It's the covenant way.



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*P*oints to *P*onder

*Have you seriously considered that your union with Christ
unites you to His other adopted children?*

*How are you nurturing covenant family life
in your church?*





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Transformed by Prayer

*Remember me, O LORD, when you show favor to your people;
help me when you save them,
that I may look upon the prosperity of your chosen ones,
that I may rejoice in the gladness of your nation,
that I may glory with your inheritance.*

(Ps. 106:4-5)

