

BOOK TWELVE · THE REVELA SERIES

# COVENANT LIFE

*Marriage, the Church, and the Kingdom That Never Ends*



FROM THE TEACHINGS OF APOSTLE GRACE LUBEGA  
THE SHELF

# Covenant Life

*Marriage, the Church, and the Kingdom That Never Ends*

Developed from the sermons and teachings of Apostle Grace Lubega and  
Apostle Stephanie Ike Okafor

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# Before We Begin: The Foundation of Salvation

This is the last book in the Revela series. Every chapter in it is about a life lived out loud, with other people, inside a marriage or inside a church. None of that is possible without the one thing this page exists to make sure has actually happened first.

*“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”*

*Ephesians 2:8-9 (KJV)*

## Word Study

The Greek word behind “saved” is **σῶζω** (*sōzō*, Strong’s G4982). This same word is also used in the New Testament for **healed** (Matthew 9:22), **delivered** (2 Timothy 4:17-18), and **preserved** (Acts 27:20). It is not four different words that happen to look alike. It is one word, used for four different things, because in God’s mind, they are one gift.

Here is what that means in plain terms. The moment you were saved, healing, deliverance, and safekeeping were not separate gifts you would have to earn later. They all came at once, in the same

moment.

## **Plain Explanation**

Everything this book describes, a marriage that keeps its word, a church that actually loves the people it serves, a life spent for something bigger than comfort, is the second half of a story. The first half already happened, the day you were saved. *Sōzō* did not just forgive you and leave the rest up to you. It gave you a completely new starting point.

Zacchaeus is the Bible's own picture of someone who understood this immediately. The moment Jesus said, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke 19:9), Zacchaeus did not wait to figure out what to do next. He gave half his goods to the poor and paid back everyone he had wronged, four times over, that same day.

## **How This Fits This Book**

Every chapter ahead describes covenant, a promise kept, on purpose, even when it is hard. None of that is possible for someone who has not yet received the one covenant that makes every other one possible. This is not a book about acquiring a new kind of life. It is a book about what a life already given by grace does next, together with other people.

## The Word

Scripture is specific about how this first happens:

*“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.” **Romans 10:9 (KJV)***

Two things, done together: believe it in your heart, say it with your mouth. If you have never said this and meant it, say it now, before you read any further:

*“I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, and I believe in my heart that God raised Him from the dead. I am saved.”*

## Living It Out

1. **Say the confession above out loud, today:** not silently in your head. Romans 10:9 specifically names the mouth, not just the heart.
2. **Notice one place where you have been waiting for permission to live out your faith with other people, when the permission was already given the day you were saved.**
3. **Say it plainly to yourself once:** “I am already saved. Every chapter in this book is teaching me what to do with that, together with the people God has put around me.”

*For the full, deeper treatment of what salvation accomplished in you, see Book 1 in this series, on Grace, Salvation & Righteousness.*



# Learning to See Rightly

Before God ever brought a wife to the first man, He brought him animals. Lots of them. And what happened during that strange, overlooked stretch of time is the reason Adam could recognize the right woman the instant he saw her.

*“Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field, and every fowl of the air; and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them: and whatsoever Adam called every living creature, that was the name thereof... But for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” **Genesis 2:19-20 (KJV)***

Think about what was actually happening here. God did not simply hand Adam a list of names to memorize. He brought one creature at a time, and let Adam look at it, study it, and decide what it was. This was not a quick errand. There were, by some counts, thousands of created kinds walking, flying, and crawling past this one man, one at a time, and each one required a real decision. Is this a bird or a beast? What does this creature do? What is it for?

Notice the last line of that passage: “for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.” In the middle of all these living, moving creatures, full of life, full of activity, Adam kept looking, and kept concluding, correctly, that none of them were what he actually

needed. God was not testing Adam's vocabulary. He was building something else in him: the ability to look carefully at what was right in front of him and tell the difference between what merely existed and what was actually suited to him.

This matters, because right after this long process of naming, God finally does something new:

*“And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” **Genesis 2:21-23** (KJV)*

Look at how sure Adam is. There is no hesitation here, no long courtship, no uncertainty. “This is now.” He recognizes her instantly. And it is worth asking why, because the answer is not that Eve looked more obviously right than a bird or a beast. It is that Adam had just spent an unknown stretch of time learning to actually see. He had practiced, over and over, telling the difference between something present and something suited to him. By the time the right one stood in front of him, he already knew how to recognize her.

This is worth sitting with, because most people skip straight from “alone” to “married” without ever doing what Adam did in between. The word behind “alone” in Genesis 2:18 “It is not good that the

man should be לָבֶדּוּ (*levado*)” describes being by yourself, without a suitable companion. It is not simply loneliness. God’s whole plan, from the very next verse, was never to rush Adam past that state as quickly as possible. It was to use that very state to build something in him first.

Think about what this means in practice. Someone who has never learned to look carefully at people, to notice character, to ask real questions, to tell the difference between someone who is simply present and someone who is actually suited to the life God has for them, is in a poor position to recognize the right person even when that person finally shows up. They will do what many people do: mistake an animal for a wife, so to speak. They will settle for whoever is closest, kindest in the moment, or most available, without ever developing the eyes Adam had to develop first.

The naming itself teaches something else, too. To name something, in that world, was to understand its nature, not just to slap a label on it, but to know what it actually was and what it was for. Adam was not simply cataloguing creatures. He was learning to see them for what they truly were. That is exactly the skill so many people skip when they are choosing who to spend their life with. They see someone’s charm, their humor, their attractiveness, the surface, without ever asking what this person actually is, and what they are actually for.

Eve did not have to compete for Adam’s attention. She did not have to be chased, or convinced, or won over through a long campaign. She simply had to be recognized, and she could only be recognized

by a man who had already trained his eyes to see clearly.

## Living It Out

1. **Think honestly about whether you have trained your own eyes the way Adam did**, before assuming you are ready to recognize the right person. Have you learned to look past charm and convenience, to actually study someone's character?
2. **If you are waiting on a marriage, use this season the way God used Adam's naming season**: not as wasted time, but as training. Practice paying attention to people's real nature, not just their surface.
3. **If you are already married, ask whether you saw your spouse rightly from the beginning**, or whether you are only now learning what Adam learned first. It is never too late to look more carefully at the person in front of you.

### What I Now Say:

*"I will not rush past the work of learning to see clearly. Like Adam, I will use this season to study what is actually in front of me, not just what is present or convenient. When the right person is before me, I want to recognize them the way Adam recognized Eve, not through a long campaign of convincing, but through eyes that have already learned to see."*

### A Closing Word:

*Father, give me Adam's patience and Adam's eyes. Teach me to look past the surface of people and see who they actually are. Do not let me settle for what is simply present when You have something suited specifically for me. Train my sight in this season, whatever season I am in. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# Now Will I Praise the Lord

A woman spent years having babies, hoping each one would finally win her husband's love. It never worked. What changed her was not a fifth child, or a better strategy. It was the moment she stopped trying to fill that need through him at all.

Leah's story starts with a trick. Jacob loved her younger sister Rachel and worked seven years for the right to marry her. On the wedding night, their father Laban substitutes Leah instead, and Jacob does not find out until morning (Genesis 29:16-25). The text is blunt about what this meant for Leah's marriage from the very beginning: "when the LORD saw that Leah was hated, he opened her womb: but Rachel was barren" (Genesis 29:31). Leah was not simply the less-loved wife. She was hated, next to a sister everyone, including her own husband, obviously preferred.

Watch what she does with each of her first three sons:

*"And Leah conceived, and bare a son, and she called his name Reuben: for she said, Surely the LORD hath looked upon my affliction; now therefore my husband will love me." **Genesis 29:32** (KJV)*

The first son arrives, and Leah names him Reuben “see, a son” and says the quiet part out loud: *now my husband will love me*. It does not work. The second son comes:

*“And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Because the LORD hath heard that I was hated, he hath therefore given me this son also: and she called his name Simeon.” **Genesis 29:33 (KJV)***

Still hoping. Still naming her son around what she wishes would happen in her marriage. Then a third:

*“And she conceived again, and bare a son; and said, Now this time will my husband be joined unto me, because I have born him three sons: therefore was his name called Levi.” **Genesis 29:34 (KJV)***

Three sons. Three attempts to fix a marriage through motherhood. Three times, the text does not record any change in how Jacob felt about her. If you read these three verses slowly, you can hear the same ache repeating itself, getting a little more desperate each time, *now he will love me... now this time...*

Then comes the fourth son, and something is different:

*“And she conceived again, and bare a son: and she said, Now will I praise the LORD: therefore she called his name Judah; and left bearing.” **Genesis 29:35 (KJV)***

No mention of Jacob at all. The Hebrew word behind “praise” here is **יָדָה** (*yadah*), the same root the name Judah comes from. After three sons named around a hope that kept disappointing her, Leah’s fourth son gets a name pointed somewhere else entirely: toward God, not toward her husband. She stops trying to earn love from a man who was never going to give it the way she needed, and she turns, instead, to thanking the One who actually could.

This is worth sitting with, because it is such an easy trap to fall into, and such a hard one to notice from the inside. Leah was not doing anything wrong by wanting her husband’s love. That desire was not the problem. The problem was expecting a person to fill a hole that person was never built to fill. Three times, she tried a strategy, have another child, and maybe this time it will work. Three times, it did not. It was not until she stopped measuring her worth by Jacob’s response and started praising God instead that something in her actually settled.

And here is what makes this worth remembering: Judah, the son she named toward God instead of toward her marriage, becomes the ancestor of King David, and eventually of Jesus Christ Himself. The line of the Messiah does not run through Reuben, Simeon, or Levi, the three sons born out of Leah’s disappointment. It runs through Judah, the one son born the moment she finally stopped needing her husband to complete her. What looked like Leah giving up on getting Jacob’s love became, instead, the exact moment something greater than she could have imagined started to grow.

No marriage, however good, was ever built to be a person's whole source of worth. A spouse can love you well and still not be able to reach the place inside you that only God was ever meant to fill. Leah spent years discovering that the hard way, one disappointed hope at a time, before she finally turned in a different direction. What changed her life was not a better husband. It was a better source.

## Living It Out

1. **Ask honestly whether you are naming your own “sons”:** your effort, your achievements, your attempts to be loved, around a hope that a person keeps failing to satisfy.
2. **Notice where you have tried the same strategy three times, expecting a different result,** the way Leah tried three children before anything in her actually changed.
3. **Practice Leah's fourth response this week.** Whatever you have been seeking from someone who cannot give it, turn instead toward thanking God directly for who He is, not for what your spouse or anyone else has failed to be.

### What I Now Say:

*“I will not ask a person to be my whole source of worth. Like Leah, I will stop naming my life around a hope that a human being keeps failing to satisfy, and I will turn instead toward praising the God who can actually reach the place inside me that nothing else was built to fill.”*

### A Closing Word:

*Father, forgive me for the times I have tried to earn love or worth from a person the way Leah tried with Jacob. Thank You that You see me the way You saw her, noticed, not forgotten. Turn my heart, the way You turned hers, from seeking to be loved by someone else toward simply praising You. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# The Beginning of Miracles

Jesus's very first public miracle happened at a wedding, and He almost did not do it at all. The whole scene is easy to read past quickly, but it says something important about how much God actually cares about ordinary married life, right down to the details nobody else thought were spiritual.

*“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage. And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine.” **John 2:1-3 (KJV)***

Running out of wine at a wedding feast was not a minor embarrassment in that culture. A wedding could last several days, the whole community was invited, and hospitality was tied directly to a family's honor. Running out partway through would have shamed the couple and their families for years. This is a small, practical, deeply human problem, not a matter of life and death, not a healing, not a demon cast out. Just wine, running low, at a party.

Jesus's first response sounds almost like a refusal: “Jesus saith unto her, Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come” (v. 4). But Mary does not treat this as a final no. She simply

turns to the servants and says, “Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (v. 5). And Jesus does something about it after all:

*“And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece. Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim. And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom, And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.” **John 2:6-10 (KJV)***

Notice the scale of it. Each waterpot held two or three firkins, somewhere around twenty to thirty gallons apiece. Six of them, filled to the brim. That is well over a hundred gallons of wine, created out of plain water, at a wedding for two people nobody outside their own town had ever heard of. This was not a miracle performed for a crowd of thousands, or in front of religious leaders who needed convincing. It happened quietly, known only to the servants who drew the water, to save an ordinary couple from public embarrassment on their wedding day.

Then comes the sentence that gives the whole story its real weight: “This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him” (v. 11).

The Greek word behind “beginning,” ἀρχή (*archē*), means the first in a sequence, the starting point everything after it builds on. Of every possible place Jesus could have chosen to reveal His glory for the very first time, a temple, a battlefield, a courtroom, He chose a wedding. Not because weddings are more important than everything else He would go on to do, but because it tells you something about what He considers worth showing up for. An ordinary couple’s ordinary celebration was worth His first public miracle.

This matters for how a person thinks about marriage itself. It is easy to assume that the truly spiritual parts of life are the dramatic ones, the crisis prayed through, the mountain climbed, the sermon preached, while an ordinary marriage, with its ordinary needs and ordinary embarrassments, is somehow beneath God’s attention. Cana argues the opposite. Jesus was present at this wedding as an invited guest, not as a visiting dignitary performing for an audience. And when a very ordinary problem showed up, not sin, not sickness, just a practical shortage, He met it fully, generously, and quietly, in a way that let a bridegroom keep his honor and a family keep its name.

There is something else worth noticing in this account. Jesus’s miracle did not remove the need for the servants to do their part. He told them to fill the pots themselves. He told them to draw it out and carry it themselves. The miracle happened somewhere inside their obedience, not instead of it. This is worth remembering for anyone waiting for God to fix a struggling marriage without any

actual participation from the people in it. God can do more with a marriage than either spouse can imagine, but He still tends to ask the people involved to fill the jars and carry the cups.

## Living It Out

1. **Consider what it means that Jesus's first miracle addressed something as ordinary as a wine shortage at a wedding.** Bring your own ordinary, unglamorous needs, in your marriage, your home, your daily life, to Him without assuming they are too small to matter.
2. **Notice Mary's instruction to the servants: "Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it."** Practice obeying specific instructions, even when you cannot yet see what they will produce.
3. **Ask what "filling the jars" looks like in your own marriage right now.** What is your own part to do, even while you trust God for something only He can supply?

### What I Now Say:

*"I will not assume my ordinary needs are too small for God's attention. Jesus showed up for an ordinary wedding and turned an ordinary shortage into abundance. I will bring my own home, my own marriage, my own daily life to Him, and I will do my own part, filling the jars, carrying the cups, while I trust Him for what only He can supply."*

### A Closing Word:

*Father, thank You that Jesus chose an ordinary wedding for His first miracle. Thank You that nothing in my home or my marriage is too small for Your attention. Where I am waiting for You to move, show me my own part to do in the meantime. Turn whatever feels like it is running low into abundance, in Your timing. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# I Am My Beloved's

Right in the middle of the Bible, sitting between Ecclesiastes and Isaiah, is a whole book made up almost entirely of two people telling each other how much they love one another. No commandments. No history. No prophecy about the future of nations. Just a bride and a bridegroom, saying, over and over in different ways, that they belong to each other completely.

Song of Solomon makes some people uncomfortable, because it is so plainly about desire and delight between a husband and wife. But that discomfort says more about us than it does about Scripture. God put this book in the Bible on purpose. He wanted married love, including its physical joy, to have its own place in His Word, not tucked away as something to be embarrassed about.

Listen to how the bride describes her own belonging:

*"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine: he feedeth among the lilies." Song of Solomon 2:16 (KJV)*

And later, almost the same words again, but reversed:

*"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." Song of Solomon 6:3 (KJV)*

The Hebrew word behind “beloved” throughout this book is tied to the word for a bride, **כַּלָּה** (*kallah*), a word that carries the whole weight of a covenant just entered into, new, treasured, set apart. This is not casual affection. It is the language of two people who have given themselves to each other completely, and who keep saying so out loud, again and again, because saying it strengthens it.

Near the very end of the book comes one of the most quoted lines in all of Scripture about what love actually is:

*“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame. Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned.”*

***Song of Solomon 8:6-7 (KJV)***

A seal, in the ancient world, was pressed into wax to mark something as belonging to a specific person, protected and claimed. To ask to be set as a seal on someone’s heart and arm is to ask for a love that is visible in both, felt deeply on the inside, and acted on visibly with the hands. And then comes the comparison that gives the whole book its power: love as strong as death, unable to be put out by any amount of water, worth more than everything a person owns. This is not a shy or timid picture of love. It is fierce, permanent, and completely unembarrassed about wanting to belong to someone else that much.

What makes this book worth including here, at the start of a chapter on marriage, is what it refuses to do. It does not talk about marriage only in terms of duty, or partnership, or raising children, or building a household together, all of which matter, and all of which this book touches on elsewhere. Song of Solomon simply lingers, for chapter after chapter, on how good it is for a husband and wife to delight in each other. The bride praises her husband's body. He praises hers. Neither one apologizes for it.

This matters, because it is easy for married life to slowly lose this part without anyone deciding to lose it on purpose. Responsibilities pile up. Exhaustion sets in. A couple can end up running a household together, faithfully and honestly, while forgetting to actually delight in each other the way this book describes. Song of Solomon exists, in part, to remind married people that this delight is not something extra, added on top of the “real” work of marriage. It is part of what marriage is actually for.

There is something else worth noticing in how the book is structured. The bride and groom speak to each other directly, using their own words, describing what they actually see and feel, not vague, generic compliments, but specific, personal ones, the kind that could only be said about this particular person by someone who has actually paid attention to them. That kind of specific, spoken delight is available to any marriage willing to practice it, not just to the ones that feel naturally passionate. It is, in part, a discipline,

choosing to say out loud what you notice and love about the person you have committed your life to, the way this bride and groom do throughout the whole book.

## Living It Out

1. **If you are married, practice speaking specific, genuine delight to your spouse this week:** not a generic compliment, but something true and particular, the way the bride and groom do throughout this book.
2. **Notice whether you have let delight quietly disappear from your marriage while responsibility took over.** Both matter. Neither should replace the other.
3. **Read Song of Solomon 8:6-7 slowly**, and let its picture of love, strong as death, unable to be drowned, shape how seriously you hold your own covenant.

### What I Now Say:

*“I will not let delight quietly disappear from my marriage. I will say, out loud, what I love and notice about my spouse, the way this book does, again and again. My love is not a shy or embarrassed thing, it is strong, it is chosen, and it is worth saying plainly.”*

### A Closing Word:

*Father, thank You for putting this book of delight and desire in Your own Word. Teach me to speak love specifically and often, not just to assume it is understood. Let my marriage carry both faithfulness and*

*real delight, the way this book describes. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# The Marriage That Kept Its Word

God once told a prophet to marry a woman he knew would be unfaithful to him, so that the prophet's own marriage could become a living picture of something too painful to explain in words alone. Hosea's marriage is one of the strangest instructions in all of Scripture, and it holds one of the clearest pictures anywhere in the Bible of what it means to keep a covenant even when the other person breaks it.

*"The beginning of the word of the LORD by Hosea. And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredoms and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed great whoredom, departing from the LORD." **Hosea 1:2 (KJV)***

Hosea marries a woman named Gomer, and the marriage does not stay faithful. Later chapters make clear that Gomer eventually leaves Hosea for other lovers, and even ends up, at some point, in a situation serious enough that Hosea has to actually buy her back:

*“Then said the LORD unto me, Go yet, love a woman beloved of her friend, yet an adulteress, according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods... So I bought her to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley.” **Hosea 3:1-2 (KJV)***

Picture what this actually meant for Hosea. His own wife had left him for other men. And God’s instruction to him was not to simply move on, or to demand she come crawling back on her own. It was to go and buy her, to pay, out of his own pocket, for the return of a wife who had already broken every promise she made him. This was not a comfortable assignment. It was a public, painful, humiliating one, played out for years in front of an entire nation watching Hosea’s own marriage as a kind of live sermon.

Why would God ask this of anyone? The text tells us plainly: “according to the love of the LORD toward the children of Israel, who look to other gods.” Hosea’s marriage was not simply his own personal story. It was a picture of God’s own relationship with a nation that had repeatedly broken covenant with Him, chasing after other gods the way Gomer chased after other men, and yet God kept pursuing, kept buying back, kept refusing to let the relationship end the way it deserved to end.

The Hebrew word that captures what God is describing in this book is **חֶסֶד** (*chesed*), a word that shows up throughout the Old Testament and is usually translated “lovingkindness,” “mercy,” or “steadfast love.” It describes loyalty that goes beyond what the covenant

technically requires. It is love that keeps its word even after the other person has already broken theirs. God says it plainly, later in the same book, using the actual language of a wedding vow:

*“And I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD.” **Hosea 2:19-20 (KJV)***

Notice the word “again” is not there. God does not say He will betroth Israel to Himself for the first time, as though nothing had happened before. He is choosing to make the vow stand, permanently, even after it had already been broken once. That is *chesed*, not a feeling that comes and goes with circumstances, but a decision to keep a promise regardless of what it costs.

This matters for anyone thinking honestly about what marriage actually requires over a lifetime. No marriage is exempt from real failure, moments of selfishness, seasons of neglect, sometimes worse. Hosea’s own marriage is an extreme, painful example of exactly that kind of failure. What makes his story worth reading is not that Gomer’s unfaithfulness was somehow acceptable. It clearly was not. What makes it worth reading is what Hosea chose to do in response, not walk away and call it justified, but go and buy her back, at real personal cost, because that is what the *chesed* he had been asked to model actually requires.

This is not a claim that every marriage should stay together no matter what happens inside it, or that every spouse should absorb every kind of harm indefinitely. Book 11 in this series already named plainly that some marriages end through no fault of the one left behind, and that this deserves compassion, not judgment. Hosea's story is not a rule to apply mechanically to every situation. It is a picture, a specific, costly demonstration of what covenant love looks like when it is stretched further than it was ever supposed to have to stretch, and chooses to hold anyway.

## Living It Out

1. **Consider what chesed, loyalty that outlasts what is technically owed, looks like in your own most important relationships.** Where have you kept a promise only as long as it was easy?
2. **If you are in a marriage that has been hurt, ask honestly what it would mean to pursue restoration the way Hosea did,** at real cost, rather than simply keeping score of who owes whom.
3. **Read Hosea 2:19-20 as God's own vow to you.** Notice that He describes betrothing Himself to His people "for ever," in righteousness, judgment, lovingkindness, mercy, and faithfulness, even after they had already broken their side of it once.

**What I Now Say:**

*“I choose covenant love that outlasts what is technically owed. Like the love God showed Israel through Hosea, I will not let my own commitments be conditional only on how well I am being treated in return. Where restoration is possible, I will pursue it at real cost, the way Hosea pursued Gomer.”*

### **A Closing Word:**

*Father, thank You for the chesed You have shown me, love that kept its word even after I broke mine. Teach me to love this way in my own closest relationships, not because it is easy, but because it is who You have shown me You are. Where restoration is possible in my own life, give me the courage Hosea had to pursue it. In Jesus’s name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# Expounded More Perfectly

A married couple appears in the book of Acts and in several of Paul's letters, always together, always named as a pair, and always doing real, risky, useful work for the sake of the gospel. Aquila and Priscilla never get a chapter of their own. They show up in the margins of other people's stories, again and again, and that is exactly what makes them worth studying: a marriage that found its whole shape around a shared mission, rather than around either partner alone.

We first meet them when Paul arrives in Corinth:

*"And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers." Acts 18:2-3 (KJV)*

They were refugees, forced out of Rome, rebuilding a life and a business together in a new city. Paul, a fellow tentmaker, moves in and works alongside them. From this ordinary beginning, shared trade, shared roof, shared labor, grows one of the most significant partnerships in the early church.

Later, when Paul leaves Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla go with him partway and settle in Ephesus. It is there that we see exactly what kind of partnership this marriage actually was:

*“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.” **Acts 18:24-26 (KJV)***

Apollos was already an impressive teacher, eloquent, well-versed in Scripture, bold in the synagogue. But his understanding was incomplete. Notice what Aquila and Priscilla do about it. They do not correct him publicly, in front of the crowd, in a way that would embarrass him. They “took him unto them” privately, personally, and explained the way of God “more perfectly.” The Greek phrase behind that, **ἀκριβέστερον** (*akribesteron*), means more accurately, more exactly, more completely. Notice, too, that both names are given together, doing this together. Scripture does not say Aquila taught him while Priscilla watched. It says they both did it.

This one small scene tells you a great deal about this marriage. Both of them were spiritually mature enough to recognize a gap in someone else’s teaching. Both of them were humble and wise enough to correct it privately rather than publicly. And both of

them were confident enough in their shared understanding of Scripture to sit down together and teach a gifted public speaker something he did not yet know. This was not a marriage where one partner carried all the spiritual weight while the other simply supported from a distance. It was a marriage where both people were equipped, engaged, and actively serving the same mission side by side.

Paul's own words about this couple, written years later, confirm how much their partnership had meant to his own ministry:

*"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles."* **Romans 16:3-4 (KJV)**

"Laid down their own necks" is not a small phrase. At some point, not recorded in detail anywhere in Scripture, this couple risked their own lives to protect Paul's. Whatever happened, it was serious enough that Paul says every Gentile church, not just Paul himself, owed them gratitude for it. This was a couple whose marriage was not simply a private arrangement between two people. It had become something the whole church benefited from.

This is worth holding up as a picture of what marriage can actually become when two people build it around a shared purpose bigger than either of them. Aquila and Priscilla were partners in business, partners in hospitality, partners in teaching, and, when it came to it, partners willing to risk everything together. Nothing in the text suggests this happened by accident. It happened because two people

who both knew and loved God built their whole life, including their marriage, around serving Him together, rather than treating their faith as something each of them practiced separately, side by side but not truly together.

## Living It Out

1. **If you are married, ask what shared mission your marriage is actually built around**, beyond simply living in the same house and raising a family together. What are you both actually doing for God's kingdom, together?
2. **Notice how Aquila and Priscilla corrected Apollos privately, not publicly.** Practice this kind of gentle, private correction in your own relationships, whether married or not.
3. **Consider what it would look like for both people in a marriage to be equally equipped and engaged in serving God**, rather than one person carrying the spiritual weight while the other watches from a distance.

### What I Now Say:

*"I want a partnership like Aquila and Priscilla's, built around a shared mission, not just a shared household. I will not let my faith become something I practice alone, separate from the people closest to me. Where I can serve God's kingdom together with someone else, I will build that partnership on purpose."*

### A Closing Word:

*Father, thank You for the picture of Aquila and Priscilla, a marriage built around Your work, not just around each other. Where I am married, teach me to build that same kind of shared purpose. Where I am not, teach me the value of real partnership in serving You. Make me as willing to serve, and as willing to risk, as this couple was. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# As His Name Is

A wealthy man's own name meant "fool," and by the end of one very bad decision, everyone around him agreed the name fit perfectly. His wife's wisdom is the only reason his household survived his own foolishness, and her story is one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of what it costs to keep honor alive when someone close to you keeps throwing it away.

David, still years from the throne, is hiding in the wilderness with his men, and they have been quietly protecting a wealthy sheep farmer named Nabal's flocks and shepherds, without asking anything in return.

*"Now Nabal was very great, and he had three thousand sheep, and a thousand goats... but the man was churlish and evil in his doings; and he was of the house of Caleb. And Nabal answered David's servants, and said, Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse?.. shall I then take my bread, and my water, and my flesh that I have killed for my shearers, and give it unto men, whom I know not whence they be?" 1 Samuel 25:2-3, 10-11 (KJV)*

David had sent a polite, reasonable request during the sheep-shearing feast, a natural time for generosity. Nabal's response is not just a refusal. It is a deliberate insult, pretending not even to know

who David is, after David's men had protected his property for weeks. David's reaction is immediate and dangerous: he arms four hundred men and rides out to destroy Nabal's entire household (vv. 12-13, 22).

This is exactly the moment Abigail, Nabal's wife, steps in. A servant warns her what her husband has done and what is coming: "he is such a son of Belial, that a man cannot speak to him" (v. 17). Notice she does not go to Nabal first to reason with him. She knows that would be pointless. Instead:

*"Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laded them on asses. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal."* **1 Samuel 25:18-19 (KJV)**

She acts fast, generously, and without her husband's knowledge, to undo the damage his own foolishness has caused. When she meets David on the road, she does not defend Nabal's behavior. She falls at David's feet and names the problem plainly: "let not my lord, I pray thee, regard this man of Belial, even Nabal: for as his name is, so is he; Nabal is his name, and folly is with him" (v. 25). The Hebrew word behind "Nabal," נָבָל (*nabal*), means fool, not simply someone unintelligent, but someone who lives as though God does not

matter, who acts recklessly without any real regard for wisdom or consequence. Abigail is not making an excuse for her husband. She is stating a plain, painful fact: he is exactly what his name says he is.

What she does next is remarkable. She takes personal responsibility for a wrong she did not commit, offers a generous gift to make it right, and appeals to David's own future and character rather than simply begging for mercy: "let this trespass be forgiven thine handmaid... for the LORD will certainly make my lord a sure house; because my lord fighteth the battles of the LORD, and evil hath not been found in thee all thy days" (vv. 28). David's response shows exactly how much this intervention mattered:

*"And David said to Abigail, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: And blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hand." 1 Samuel 25:32-33 (KJV)*

David, a man being shaped by God into a king, was about to commit an act of bloody, personal revenge that could have haunted his entire future reign. One woman's wisdom and courage stopped it. When Abigail returns home and tells Nabal what happened the next morning, once he has sobered up from a feast the night before, "his heart died within him, and he became as a stone" (v. 37). Ten days later, he dies. Abigail, freed from a marriage to a man whose own name had defined him, later becomes David's wife.

This story is worth holding up as a picture of honor and its absence, both. Nabal dishonored men who had done him nothing but good, and it cost him everything. Abigail honored a future she could see clearly even when the man closest to her could not see it at all, and her wisdom protected an entire household, and possibly the future king of Israel's own conscience, in a single day. Honor, in this story, is not about flattering people or avoiding all conflict. It is about seeing situations clearly, acting with real courage and generosity when it matters, and refusing to let someone else's foolishness become your own.

## Living It Out

1. **Ask honestly whether you have ever been like Nabal in a specific relationship:** dismissive, ungrateful, or careless with someone who deserved better treatment.
2. **Consider Abigail's specific courage: she acted quickly, generously, and without waiting for permission from the person who had caused the problem.** Where might that kind of decisive honor be needed in your own life right now?
3. **Notice that Abigail's wisdom protected David from a decision he would have regretted for the rest of his life.** Think about who in your own life might need that kind of protection from you, a word or an action that stops real harm before it happens.

**What I Now Say:**

*“I will not live as though my name is Nabal, reckless, ungrateful, careless with the people around me. Where I see foolishness about to cause real harm, I will act with Abigail’s courage and speed, not waiting for permission, and I will offer honor generously, even when it costs me something.”*

**A Closing Word:**

*Father, keep me from living as though my own name were folly. Give me Abigail’s wisdom, quick to see danger clearly, quick to act with courage and generosity, quick to protect what matters most. Where I have dishonored someone carelessly, show me, and let me make it right. In Jesus’s name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# Time, Resources, Reputation

A man spent decades building something nobody around him had ever needed before, for a kind of disaster nobody around him had ever seen. He gave his time, his resources, and his good name to an instruction that made no sense to anyone watching, and Scripture holds him up as one of the clearest pictures of what real faith actually costs.

*“These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God... Make thee an ark of gopher wood; rooms shalt thou make in the ark, and shalt pitch it within and without with pitch.” **Genesis 6:9, 14 (KJV)***

The Hebrew word behind “perfect” here, **תָּמִים** (*tamim*), does not mean flawless in the sense of never making a mistake. It means whole, complete, blameless in the sense of genuine integrity, a person whose life matches on the inside what it looks like on the outside. This is the kind of man God chose for an assignment that would test every part of that integrity for years, because it would require him to keep building something enormous, for a threat nobody had ever seen, long after any reasonable person would have quit.

Consider what this actually required of Noah. Rain had never fallen on the earth before, according to the pattern most scholars trace in this passage, the earth was watered instead by a mist or by rivers (Genesis 2:5-6). God was asking Noah to spend years building a massive boat, in preparation for a kind of judgment nobody had a single point of reference for. There was no news report to point to, no historical precedent, no way to prove to a skeptical neighbor that any of this was real. Noah simply had to believe God and keep building, one plank at a time, for as long as it took.

This cost him in at least three specific ways worth naming directly.

It cost him time. Building a vessel this size, by hand, with the tools available at the time, took years, some traditions say as many as a hundred years, though Scripture does not give an exact number. Every one of those years was spent on something with no visible payoff yet, while the rest of the world went on with ordinary life around him.

It cost him resources. God gave Noah detailed instructions about the ark's construction, but nothing in the text suggests God simply handed him unlimited materials to work with. Noah had to gather the gopher wood, the pitch, and everything else needed, at his own expense, for a project the rest of his community almost certainly thought was a waste.

And it cost him his reputation. Peter later calls Noah "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Peter 2:5), which means he was not simply building quietly in private. He was warning people, publicly, about a

coming judgment that had no precedent, and, as far as the text records, not one person outside his own household believed him. Imagine what it must have been like to be known, for decades, as the man building an enormous boat on dry land for a flood that never seemed to come. Whatever standing Noah had in his community, this project almost certainly cost him most of it.

What makes Noah's story worth holding up is not that his sacrifice was rewarded quickly or easily. It was not. He kept building for years with nothing to show for it but ridicule, until the exact day the rain actually started. And what he did once he was finally safe, after the flood, completes the picture of what his whole life had been oriented toward:

*"And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake."*  
**Genesis 8:20-21 (KJV)**

Noah did not offer this sacrifice before the flood, hoping to earn his own rescue. He offered it after, in gratitude, once he had already been saved by grace he did nothing to deserve. This is worth noticing carefully: Noah's years of sacrifice were never the price of his salvation. God had already decided to preserve Noah and his family before a single plank was cut (Genesis 6:8, 18). The sacrifice, the years, the reputation spent, all of it came after that decision, as a response to it, not as payment for it.

This has real weight for how a person thinks about what serving God's kingdom might cost. Some assignments do not pay off quickly. Some cost real time, real resources, and real standing in a community that does not understand what you are doing or why. Noah's story does not promise that sacrifice will be publicly vindicated on any particular schedule. It simply shows what faithful obedience looked like for one specific man, over one specific stretch of decades, and what came of it in the end, not because he earned his rescue through the sacrifice, but because his sacrifice was the shape his faith actually took.

## Living It Out

1. **Identify one assignment from God that has cost you time, resources, or reputation, with no visible payoff yet.**

Consider Noah's decades of building before a single drop of rain fell.

2. **Ask honestly whether you are serving God to earn His favor, or in response to favor you have already received,** the way Noah's sacrifice came after his rescue, not before it.

3. **Practice one specific sacrifice this week:** of time, resources, or reputation, for something God has asked of you that the people around you may not understand or support.

**What I Now Say:**

*“I will not measure obedience by how quickly it pays off. Like Noah, I will keep building what God has asked me to build, even if it costs me time, resources, and reputation, and even if nobody around me understands why. My sacrifice is a response to grace I have already received, not a price I am paying to earn it.”*

### **A Closing Word:**

*Father, give me Noah’s kind of integrity, whole and complete, matching on the inside what it looks like on the outside. Where You have asked me to build something that costs me time, resources, or standing, give me the endurance to keep going even without a visible payoff. Let my obedience be gratitude for what You have already done, not an attempt to earn it. In Jesus’s name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# Legion, and the Territory Retaken

A man lived among tombs, cut himself with stones, and could not be held by any chain strong enough to bind him. Then Jesus stepped off a boat, and within minutes, that same man was sitting quietly, clothed, and in his right mind. His story is one of the clearest pictures in the Bible of what it looks like when the kingdom of God actually takes ground back from the kingdom of darkness.

*“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, Who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: Because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones.” **Mark 5:1-5 (KJV)***

Notice where this man lived: among the dead. His outward surroundings mirrored what was actually happening inside him. This is worth remembering, because it is often true in a smaller way

for anyone whose life has been shaped by the same kind of pain, the places we end up, the company we keep, and the habits we fall into often reflect an inner condition more than we realize.

When Jesus asks the spirit its name, the answer reveals the scale of what this man had been carrying:

*“And Jesus asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many.” **Mark 5:9 (KJV)***

A Roman legion could number several thousand soldiers. Whatever this man had been living with was not a single problem. It was an army’s worth of oppression, occupying one human life, for who knows how long. And notice what happens once these spirits are cast into a nearby herd of pigs: “and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea” (v. 13). Two thousand pigs, destroyed by what had been living inside one man. The scale of the deliverance matches the scale of what had been oppressing him.

The change that follows is the whole point of the story:

*“And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid.” **Mark 5:15 (KJV)***

Sitting. Clothed. In his right mind. Three simple details, and each one describes the complete opposite of how this man had just been living. He is no longer wandering among tombs. He is no longer

naked, cutting himself with stones, impossible to restrain. He is calm, dressed, and thinking clearly, a person, not a battlefield.

What happens next is worth paying close attention to, because it says something important about what real deliverance is actually for. The man, understandably, wants to leave with Jesus:

*“Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel.”* **Mark 5:19-20 (KJV)**

Jesus does not take this man away from the very place where he had once been the terror of the region. He sends him back, to the same territory that had once been controlled by an entire legion of unclean spirits, now to be a witness of what God had done there instead. Decapolis means “ten cities” this man’s testimony did not stay in one small village. It spread across an entire region. The territory that had once been held by darkness became, through one changed life, a territory that heard about the kingdom of God instead.

This matters for how anyone thinks about their own history of struggle, addiction, trauma, or oppression. The place where you were once most controlled by something destructive does not have to remain permanently defined by that history. It can become, instead, the exact place your testimony carries the most weight, because the people who remember what you used to be are the ones

who will notice most clearly what you have become. This man's neighbors had watched him live among the tombs for years. Now they watched him walk among them, clothed and calm, telling them what Jesus had done, and the text says they marveled, because they had eyes to compare the before and the after in a way strangers never could have.

## Living It Out

1. **Consider what “territory” in your own life once looked like the tombs this man lived among:** a place, a habit, a relationship shaped by real darkness, and ask whether that same territory might now be exactly where your testimony carries the most weight.
2. **Notice the three simple words that described this man's restoration: sitting, clothed, in his right mind.** Ask honestly which of these you still need God to fully restore in your own life.
3. **If God has genuinely changed something in you, consider Jesus's specific instruction to this man: go back and tell the people who knew you before.** Do not assume your story only matters to strangers who never saw the “before.”

### What I Now Say:

*“Whatever territory in my life was once held by darkness, I trust God to take back completely, the way He took back this man's whole mind and body in a single afternoon. I will not hide what God has done. I will go*

*back to the people who remember who I was, and let them see who I have become.”*

### **A Closing Word:**

*Father, thank You for the picture of complete restoration in this man's story, sitting, clothed, in his right mind, after years of being controlled by something far bigger than himself. Take back whatever territory in my own life is still held by darkness. And when You do, give me the courage to go back and tell the people who remember the before. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# O Thou of Little Faith

A man walked on water. For a few real steps, in the middle of a storm, in the dark, he did something no human being had ever done before. Then he looked at the wind, and he began to sink. Peter's story is worth reading slowly, because both halves of it are true at once, and both halves matter for anyone trying to trust God in the middle of their own storm.

*"And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid."* **Matthew 14:25-27 (KJV)**

The disciples had been fighting a difficult sea all night, "the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary" (v. 24). Into that exhausting, frightening night, Jesus simply walks toward them across the water, and their first reaction is terror, not relief, they assume they are seeing a ghost. It takes Jesus's own voice, plainly identifying Himself, to calm them at all.

Then comes the detail that makes this story so remarkable. Peter does not simply wait for Jesus to arrive at the boat:

*“And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.”*

***Matthew 14:28-29 (KJV)***

Notice this plainly: Peter actually did it. For however many steps, he was walking on the surface of a stormy sea, held up by nothing natural at all. Of the twelve men in that boat, eleven stayed where it was safe. One climbed out, into the wind and the waves, because Jesus said one word “Come” and he trusted it enough to put his own weight on water.

What happens next is the part most people remember, and it is worth reading without rushing past it:

*“But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?”* ***Matthew 14:30-31 (KJV)***

The Greek word Jesus uses here, **ὀλιγόπιστος** (*oligopistos*), is a compound word, *oligos* meaning “little” or “few,” and *pistis* meaning “faith.” It is worth noticing exactly what Jesus does and does not say. He does not say, “You have no faith at all.” He says, “little faith” faith that was real, faith that had already carried Peter out of the boat and onto the water itself, but faith that ran out partway through, the moment Peter’s attention shifted from the word that had called him out there to the wind that was still genuinely blowing around him.

This is worth sitting with, because it is easy to read this story as a story about failure, when it is really a story about how far real, imperfect faith can actually carry a person. Peter's sinking does not erase what he had already done. He is, and remains, the only human being in the Gospels ever recorded walking on water, and he did it by trusting one word, spoken across a stormy sea, enough to actually step out of the boat. His fear when he noticed the wind was real. His faith before that moment was also real. Both things were true of the same man, in the same few minutes.

And notice what Jesus does the instant Peter cries out. He does not lecture him first, or make him swim back to prove his sincerity. "Immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him." The rescue comes before the correction. The correction "O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" comes only after Peter is already safely held.

This matters directly for anyone trying to trust God through their own storm. The instruction this whole book has already touched on, through the centurion in an earlier book of this series, was to hear a word and trust it enough to act, not to wait until every visible circumstance has calmed down first. Peter did exactly that, for a real, unrepeatable moment. What sank him was not a lack of any faith at all. It was the ordinary, human habit of shifting attention from the word that had called him out, to the wind that was still blowing exactly as hard as it had been the whole time. The wind never actually got worse in the middle of Peter's walk. What changed was where he was looking.

## Living It Out

1. **Identify one “word” God has given you that has called you out of a safe, familiar boat:** an instruction, a promise, a specific calling, and ask honestly whether you have actually stepped out on it, or stayed where it felt safer.
2. **Notice where your own attention tends to shift from the word to the wind:** from what God has said, to how loud your circumstances currently are. Practice returning your attention to the word, the moment you notice the shift.
3. **Remember that Jesus caught Peter before He corrected him.** If you are currently sinking in the middle of your own storm, cry out first. The correction can come later, once you are already held.

### What I Now Say:

*“I will step out of the boat when God says ‘Come,’ trusting the word more than I trust the calm of my circumstances. When the wind is loud and I feel myself sinking, I will cry out, trusting that His hand reaches for me before His correction ever does. My faith may be little, but little faith that acts is still faith that walks on water.”*

### A Closing Word:

*Father, thank You for Peter’s whole story, not just his sinking, but his walking. Give me the courage to step out of the boat when You say “Come,” and give me grace for the moments my attention shifts to the*

*wind instead of Your word. When I cry out, catch me the way You caught him, before You ever need to correct me. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# An Example, That Ye Should Do

The night before He was crucified, Jesus got up from supper, tied a towel around His waist, and washed His disciples' feet, one at a time. This was a servant's job, one of the lowest, dirtiest tasks in that entire culture, normally left to the household's least important worker. Jesus did it Himself, hours before His own death, to the very men who would abandon Him by morning.

*“Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded.” **John 13:3-5 (KJV)***

Look closely at what John records right before describing this act. Jesus knew “that the Father had given all things into his hands.” He knew exactly who He was and exactly how much authority He carried. This was not a man with nothing better to do, or a man unsure of his own status, humbling himself because he had no other choice. This was the single most powerful person in the room, fully aware of it, choosing to kneel down and wash dirty feet anyway.

Peter's reaction is the one most people remember, because it is so recognizably human:

*"Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, Lord, dost thou wash my feet?.. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." **John 13:6, 8 (KJV)***

Peter's discomfort makes sense. It felt backward for the Teacher to serve the student this way. But Jesus's answer reframes the whole scene: this washing was not optional, and it was not really about clean feet. It was about what it means to actually belong to Him "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me." Receiving this kind of humble service from Jesus, uncomfortable as it feels, turns out to be part of what it means to be His.

Once He finishes, Jesus explains exactly why He did this:

*"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you?.. Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you." **John 13:12-15 (KJV)***

The Greek word behind "example," **ὑπόδειγμα** (*hypodeigma*), describes a pattern or model meant to be copied exactly, not a general inspiration, but a specific act, meant to be repeated in the

actual lives of the people watching it happen. Jesus is not simply telling His disciples to be generally humble. He is telling them, in the plainest possible terms, to actually do what He just did, to find the lowest, most unglamorous forms of service available, and perform them for each other, without waiting to be asked and without considering it beneath their own status.

This is worth holding up as the clearest possible picture of what real leadership in the church is supposed to look like. It is easy, and common, to picture leadership as being served, having others defer to you, carry your burdens, and treat your time as more valuable than theirs. Jesus, the actual Lord and Master of everyone in that room, defines it in the opposite direction. The towel and the basin, not a throne, are what He hands His followers as the model for how they are supposed to lead each other.

It is worth remembering, too, exactly who was at that table. Judas, who would betray Jesus within hours, was present for this washing (John 13:2, 10-11). Peter, who would deny Him three times before morning, had his feet washed along with everyone else. Jesus did not reserve this act of service only for the disciples who would prove faithful. He washed the feet of a betrayer and the feet of a man about to deny Him, in the same basin, with the same towel, hours before either failure happened. Real service, modeled this way, is not a reward given only to people who have already earned it. It is given first, to people who have not yet proven anything at all.

## Living It Out

1. **Identify one form of low, unglamorous service in your own church or family that you have considered beneath you, or simply not your job.** Consider doing it yourself this week, without waiting to be asked.
2. **Notice that Jesus washed the feet of a man who would betray Him and a man who would deny Him, in the same act of service.** Practice serving someone who has not earned it and may never repay it.
3. **Remember that Jesus knew exactly who He was “all things given into his hands” and served anyway.** True humility is not confusion about your own worth. It is confidence secure enough to kneel down without feeling diminished by it.

### What I Now Say:

*“I will take up the towel and basin, the way Jesus did, not waiting until I am asked and not considering any real service beneath me. I will serve people who have not earned it, the way Jesus served Judas and Peter in the same evening. This is the example He gave me to actually do, not just to admire.”*

### A Closing Word:

*Father, thank You for the picture of Jesus kneeling to wash feet, fully aware of His own authority and choosing to serve anyway. Give me that same security, confident enough in who I am that I can kneel down*

*without feeling smaller for it. Show me the towel and basin You are placing in my own hands this week. In Jesus's name, Amen.*

\* \* \*

# Even So, Come

This is the last chapter of the last book in this series. Eleven books ago, this whole series began with a single, simple claim: something actually happened the day you were saved. Every book since then has been one more angle on what that first, simple fact grows into over an entire lifetime. This chapter is not really about Adam naming animals, or Noah building an ark, or a man walking on water. It is about all twelve books at once, and about how the whole story ends.

Scripture itself ends with an invitation, not a lecture:

*“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.” **Revelation 22:17 (KJV)***

And a few lines later, the very last recorded words spoken between heaven and earth:

*“He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.” **Revelation 22:20-21 (KJV)***

The Greek word behind “come” in that final prayer, **ἔρχου** (*erchou*), is the same word running through the whole book of Revelation, used of Jesus’s own promise to return, and now used right back, by the church, as a prayer and a longing. The whole Bible, from Genesis to Revelation, ends with two voices calling the same word back and forth to each other: Come. Even so, come.

Think back over everything this series has walked through together. It started with the plain, simple fact that you were saved by grace, not by anything you did (Book 1). It moved into what it means to actually trust God the way Abraham did, against every visible fact (Book 2), and what it looks like to hope and love the way faith’s two closest companions do (Book 3). It showed you who you actually are now, not who you used to be (Book 4), and what it means to actually know God, not just know facts about Him (Book 5). It taught you to hear His Word the way good ground receives seed (Book 6), and to recognize your own mind as a real battlefield, already won (Book 7). It showed you that your calling was written before you were even formed, and taught you to actually listen for it (Book 8), and what it means to live, day after day, led by His Spirit rather than by your own plans (Book 9). It walked you through how real growth happens, mostly in the dark, mostly underground, long before anyone can see it (Book 10), and what it means to steward faithfully whatever you have been given, understanding that none of it was ever fully your own (Book 11). And now, in this last book, it has shown you what all of that looks like lived out loud, with other people, in a marriage and in a church, for the rest of a lifetime.

None of these were ever twelve separate books, the way they might have looked on a shelf. They were one long answer to one question: what does it actually mean to know God, not just know about Him? Every chapter, in every book, in this whole series, has been circling that same center.

There is a temptation worth naming honestly as this entire series closes. It is possible to read twelve books, agree with all of it, and still not actually live any differently than before. Information was never the goal here. Revela's whole name means "to reveal" not to add more facts to what you already know, but to open your eyes to see what was already true. If these books have simply added information without opening anything, they have not done what they were written to do.

The whole Bible ends the way it does, with an invitation, not a summary, because that is the actual point of everything that came before it. Not simply "here is what happened." Instead: "come." The last word of Scripture is not a conclusion to be filed away. It is a door held open.

So here, at the very end of this series, is the same invitation, extended one more time. If you have never said the words this whole series has assumed from its very first page, say them now:

*"I confess with my mouth that Jesus is Lord, and I believe in my heart that God raised Him from the dead. I am saved."*

And if you have already said them, if you have walked through all twelve of these books with that confession already true in your life, then the invitation is simply this: keep coming. Keep hearing. Keep receiving. The Spirit and the bride still say, Come. Let whoever hears this say the same word back.

## Living It Out

1. **Look back over all twelve books in this series and name one specific thing that actually changed in how you live,** not just what you know. If nothing has changed yet, choose one thing from this final book to act on this week.
2. **Say the closing prayer of Scripture as your own,** not as a formality, but as a real request: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.” Let it shape how you live today, not just how you think about the future.
3. **Consider who around you has never heard the invitation this whole series began with.** Revela exists to help open the eyes of exactly one more person. Be part of how that happens for someone near you.

## What I Now Say:

*“I have been saved by grace, not by my own works. I have learned to trust, to hope, to love, to know who I am in Christ, to know God Himself, to hear His Word, to guard my mind, to hear my calling, to live led by*

*His Spirit, to grow in the dark before I ever grow into the light, to steward what I have been given, and to live all of it out loud, with other people, for the rest of my life. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”*

### **A Closing Word:**

*Father, thank You for this whole series, from its very first page to this very last one. Thank You that none of it was ever meant to simply inform me, it was meant to open my eyes, again and again, to what was already true. Keep opening them. Keep revealing Yourself. And even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.*

\* \* \*

*This concludes Covenant Life, and with it, the Revela Series. If these twelve books have done their work, you have not simply read about God. You have come to know Him, and revelation, once it starts, never actually finishes. It keeps growing with you, for the rest of your life. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.*

\* \* \*

# Appendix: Glossary of Greek & Hebrew Words

Every original-language word unpacked in this book, gathered here for reference.

**לְבַדּוֹ, Levado** (Hebrew) “Alone” (Genesis 2:18). Being without a suitable companion, the state God used to train Adam’s eyes before Eve ever arrived. *Chapter 1.*

**יָדָה, Yadah** (Hebrew) “Praise” (Genesis 29:35). The root behind the name Judah, the moment Leah turned from seeking love through her husband to thanking God directly. *Chapter 2.*

**ἀρχή, Archē** (Greek) “Beginning” (John 2:11). The first in a sequence, the starting point everything after it builds on, used of Jesus’s first miracle, at a wedding. *Chapter 3.*

**כַּלָּה, Kallah** (Hebrew) “Bride” (Song of Solomon). A word carrying the whole weight of a covenant just entered into, new, treasured, set apart. *Chapter 4.*

**חֶסֶד, Chesed** (Hebrew) “Lovingkindness” (Hosea 2:19). Covenant loyalty that goes beyond what is technically owed, love that keeps its word even after the other side has broken theirs. *Chapter 5.*

**ἀκριβέστερον, Akribesteron** (Greek) “More perfectly” (Acts 18:26). More accurately, more completely, used of Aquila and Priscilla’s private teaching of Apollos. *Chapter 6.*

**נָבָל, Nabal** (Hebrew) “Fool” (1 Samuel 25:25). Someone who lives as though God does not matter, the actual name of Abigail’s husband. *Chapter 7.*

**טָמִיךְ, Tamim** (Hebrew) “Perfect” (Genesis 6:9). Whole, complete, blameless, genuine integrity, not flawlessness. *Chapter 8.*

**λεγιών, Legion** (Greek) “Legion” (Mark 5:9). A Roman military unit numbering thousands, the name given by the spirits possessing one man among the tombs. *Chapter 9.*

**ὀλιγόπιστος, Oligopistos** (Greek) “O thou of little faith” (Matthew 14:31). A compound of “little” and “faith” real faith, but faith that ran out partway through. *Chapter 10.*

**ὑπόδειγμα, Hypodeigma** (Greek) “Example” (John 13:15). A pattern meant to be copied exactly, not merely admired, Jesus’s own word for washing His disciples’ feet. *Chapter 11.*

**ἔρχου, Erchou** (Greek) “Come” (Revelation 22:17, 20). The last word exchanged between heaven and earth in Scripture, an invitation, not a conclusion. *Chapter 12.*