

**21 August 2022 Beloved Part 15: Relationship Restoration - Honour
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Scripture Reference: Genesis 12:1-4 (NLT); Genesis 13:1-4, 12, 14-18 (NLT); Genesis 15:1-2 (NLT); Genesis 16:1-16 (NLT); Genesis 17:1-27 (NLT); Genesis 18:16-24 (NLT); Genesis 21:1-4 (NLT); Genesis 22:1-3, 10-12, 16-18 (NLT)

Welcome to Sunday church. So glad you could join us. I did tell you when I had the last meeting together that this Sunday's church would be a digital church service. We put together some sound and song for you to enjoy before listening to me and I trust that you worshipped the Lord with it and that you are blessed in listening to this message and that the Word of God impacts and touches your heart and it causes you to flourish, it causes you to have greater wisdom and understanding about your life and the way God wants to minister to you. And since you were in the church last Sunday, I want to thank all the MiXchangers for being here so that I can talk to some people and not just to an empty, empty, empty church.

Well, praise the Lord. I submit my heart and I submit my mouth and I submit my body to Him and to the Holy Spirit to speak through me and that you will receive everything you need to receive, even though you may be in your lounge or watching from a mobile device, wherever you might be - that God would touch you meaningfully so that you would exchange your current life for a better life in God.

Of course, I have been ministering for some weeks and months actually about being the Beloved. If someone is a beloved they are precious, they're adored, they're loved, they're much loved or they're a favourite, and cherished, treasured, prized, esteemed, highly regarded, adored, valued. It is a great thing to be called a beloved of God. It is a great thing to be able to declare to God that He is our Beloved because we esteem Him, we value Him, we adore Him, we give Him the highest priority in our lives. And certainly if you do that, the thing that I've been talking about is honour. I've also been talking about it in the context of the framework of the relationship circle that God gave me. I am going to ask them to put it up on the screen so that I can just remind you of the relationship circle that we have been talking about.



Obviously again, just to remind you, we start with covenant. God is in covenant with us. He sent Jesus to be the One who establishes the covenant, then He touches us, and we touch Him back with giving our lives to Him. And then you go to the integration of ways. He tells us what His ways are, and we make choices and we integrate our ways with Him. And then we have strategic intentions because if you've been touched and you then integrate your ways, you position yourself to have His strategic intentions made known to you. And then divine productivity follows after that and then sometimes if you have a relationship with God of that significance, He might ask you to do a covenant thing. And that is always a very significant, significant thing that God will ask you to do. If He asks you to do it, it will be highly significant and highly costly to you, if He does ask you to do that.

And so, again I want to just remind you about honour. Last week when we talked about it, and we have been talking about it; we talked about honour your father and your mother; honour the Lord with your possessions and with the first fruits of all your increase. If you talk about honour, then you talk about esteem, hold in high esteem, respect, admire, look up to, think highly of, appreciate, value, cherish. When you read honour, then it is very similar to the word beloved. You can see that there are many things because if you really see someone as beloved, then there is an honour component to it and an honour and beloved have a very, very big crossover.

As I talk to you about the relationship circle, I am talking to you because, as I said previously, whatever you honour you will draw to you. Whatever you dishonour you will push away from you and depending on your world view and what are the influences that you are getting in your worldview you will determine because of the choices where your life is directed. If you remember, I ministered and I was sharing with you that we are spiritually seated with Christ in heavenly places, we are seated with Christ. Naturally, of course, we're in the world but Jesus prayed that we be protected from the evil one. So when we talk about relationships, for sure we can take that whole prayer and we can apply it to ourselves and we can say, "Thank You, Lord, that we live in the world of relationships and we live in the world and the way the world sees relationships but we are not of this world, and so we are in the world but we do not have relationships of the world." We're in the world and we have relationships while we're in the world but we are not of this world. We are sitting in heavenly places with Christ Jesus and we have relationships from that perspective.

So, while you are in a room, wherever you're sitting listening, and for you guys that are here in the auditorium with me, you can just say this with me; my spirit is the real me. [Congregation repeats after Pastor John] Say it with me again; my spirit is the real me. [Congregation repeats after Pastor John]. We have to keep reminding ourselves that the real me is my spirit me because we live in such a natural sense realm and everything that is impacting us with senses – sensory stuff - that we tend to always think about, that this is our reality, this is who we are. But actually, the real you is now the born again you, the spirit man where Jesus lives in you, that's the real you now. You are a new creature in Christ Jesus. And that spirit man wants to have relationships with people the way God does. That's why He says, we have relationships where we don't know you after the flesh but after the spirit because we don't want to know about all the flesh stuff that you deal with. We want to touch your

spirit life and we want your spirit life to touch my spirit life and so we have a relationship that has got a strong spirit life. So yes, we have natural things that obviously you've got to eat and drink, and you've got to do some fun things, and you've got to enjoy life, and drive a motor car and shower and so on. But those natural things are required for our bodies to be here. They're required for our soul to be in a place of peace and joy. But actually, God wants us to live inward-man-minded, not outward-man-minded. The spirit me is the real me. So, even if you're looking at my body, the real me is the spirit me and it is the spirit me that is talking to you. Even though my body is speaking words and you're hearing me, it is from my spirit that God is speaking to you. It is His Spirit inside of me that is communicating with you.

As I wanted to continue with this theme of honour and I felt the Holy Spirit leading me to continue with this theme of honour because actually honour is a choice. Honour is not something that just dawns upon you. It could but honour is a choice. It's not something that anybody can tell you what it means to you but you can make a choice and how you work with honour is actually your choice. So, because I have been blessed to travel with Brother Jerry Savelle quite a lot, we have had conversations and he said this to me on more than one occasion, he has said this to me on a number of occasions. He has said, "You know, John, the modern day world and the modern day ministries and people don't really understand honour the way Brother Copeland and I live in honour together." He said, "We have a level of living together in honour that very few people actually understand and very few people live it." You have to actually, and I wish everybody - obviously it's not possible - but I wish people could be around them the way that I've been around them and watched them and I've got some personal moments that I think I've been able to record and might be appropriate at this season of our lives that I can now release it. But to be around Brother Copeland and be around Brother Jerry and watch them interact together, share together, to be around Brother Jerry where Brother Copeland has invited him to do things and watch them flow together and the way their relationship is.

But you know, it's not just the personal things of what they do together that are really establishing honour. It's the choices they make to do things together or to give each other that esteemed, highly prized, high value thing. It's decisions that they make. I mean Brother Jerry made a decision; I don't know 30, 40 years ago, maybe early in his ministry when he was no longer working directly for Brother Copeland but still functioning with him wherever. He made a decision that, "Whatever happens to my itinerary, if Brother Copeland needs me, he has highest priority. I will do everything that I can to work with Brother Copeland and do what he wants me to do." So, the result of it is, even now, it's been like this 30, 40 years, certainly I've been around him for 26, 27 years, it's been like that all the time that I've been around him. He doesn't actually put any ministry engagements in his calendar for the next year until he knows what Brother Copeland's calendar is, and so when he knows what Brother Copeland is doing and what his part is, that's his highest priority. Once that's established, he will go ahead and make other arrangements. Even then, sometimes if Brother Copeland requires something of him, he will shift things and move things around if he can. Obviously, there are some ministry engagements, like he's coming here to South Africa next year in January and obviously he can't make a commitment to us and then shift that around too much because there's a lot of stuff that goes into planning; flight plans, any things that happen. But he might shift it a day or 2 if he

can, if it helps Brother Copeland. So that's how significantly they live honour. It's a beautiful thing.

Obviously, whatever you honour, you attract. Whatever you dishonour, you push away from you. It is clear to see that honour that exists between the two of them – it's a marvellous relationship and it's a choice. As you choose to make those commitments to relationships, those choices begin to impact your whole life. I did this many years ago and I didn't do it in the kind of way that I'm doing it now. Obviously, I have more insight and I have more revelation and I see things. So, I'm going to talk about the life of Abraham. I'm going to show you the relationship circle, the way that God gave it to me. The relationship circle, I'm going to show it to you through the life of Abraham. At the same time, I'm going to show you the impact of honour and dishonour and how it operated and functioned in the life of Abraham. Then we'll see how God takes us from here going forward. We'll see how and when God wants us to do things.

I'm going to deal first with touch in the life of Abraham. Out of all of the components I'm talking about, I'm going to talk more about touch because of the significance of how God had to touch Abraham before He could get to the integration of ways. In Genesis chapter 12 in the New Living Translation and I'm mostly reading out of the New Living Translation. Genesis 12 verse 1, **“The Lord had said to Abram, “Abram, leave your native country, your relatives, and your father’s family, and go to the land that I will show you. ²I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. ³I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with contempt. All the families on earth will be blessed through you.” ⁴So Abram departed as the Lord had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.” (Genesis 12:1-4 NLT).**

There's quite a lot of story there that is not told in the scriptures. The first thing is Abram's father had made a decision that wherever they lived, they came to live in Haran and so then Abram kind of spent a lot of time in Haran. Abram's father lived 205 years. This was still a time when men lived quite long on the earth. When God spoke to Abram and said, “Leave the place where your father brought you, leave the place where you grew up culturally. Leave the place where all your strength and all of your connections are – everything that made you what you are to this point – leave it and let me be your God. Let me bless you and let me do something significant with your life.” Obviously, this is no small interaction because at that time in Haran, they worshipped other gods. In particular they worshipped the sun god and the moon god but they had lots of gods because Haran was a trading city. It was a multi diverse cultural place where different people came and they traded. It was a strong city. So, for Abram to leave the city, he was leaving the confines of the city walls that were designed to protect the people that lived there and the traders that came to trade and do the business. It was a strong city with a strong hold, with strong defences. It had a lot of peace and security because of that. He had to leave all of that based on, ‘God said.’ He heard God speak. I mean it is not clear how God spoke to him but God spoke and said, and so then he did as God instructed. He left.

When you are touched by God, you begin to change the way that you live life, you begin to change the way you receive things, and you do things. But you're still in the

touch mode. You are still in the touch mode because touch still makes meaningful change because touch is an experience and you are moved because of the experience. Can I put it to you this way? If something emotional happens to you and it brings you to tears, you may get up and go and fetch some tissues, and you might wipe your eyes, and you may blow your nose and you may cry a little bit. You've been touched by something and it's caused you to act on it. That doesn't mean to say that you're integrating ways with whatever has touched your emotion. It's just your emotion has made you do things. In this case, God touched Abram with words, gave him instructions and he obeyed and he's leaving.

He gets to the place God tells him to be. When he gets there, there's a famine, so he goes to Egypt and he stays in Egypt until the famine is over. Now he's leaving Egypt to go back to the land that God gave him. There's a lot that I can say about that because there's a lot about Abraham's life that is amazing if you study it deeply and you see things in his life. There is so much to learn about Abraham's life. He left Egypt, Genesis 13 verse one, ¹ **So Abram left Egypt and traveled north into the Negev, along with his wife and Lot and all that they owned (Genesis 13:1 NLT).** His nephew, or his cousin, Lot, is still with him. He came from Harran, went to the place where God had for him, as a result of famine they went to Egypt, now they're going back to Canaan, to the land that God gave them. Lot is still with him. But I want you to note what verse two says. ² **Abram was very rich in livestock, silver and gold (Genesis 13:2 NLT).** Abraham was very rich. How did he get so rich? He already got touched by God and was already obeying God through the touch and God said, "I will bless you." Just when God says I will bless you, it was already at work in Abraham's life. I will bless you.

I would like you to say wherever you are sitting in your lounge, wherever you are, wherever you are listening, I'd like you to say, "God blesses me. I am blessed by the Heavenly Father, through Jesus and the Holy Spirit. I am blessed. I receive a blessed life. Amen." [Congregation repeats after Pastor John] The Word says in verse three, ³ **from Negev, they continued travelling by stages towards Bethel, they pitched their tents between Bethel and Ai, where they had camped before. This was the same place where Abram had built an altar and there he worshipped the Lord again (Genesis 13:3-4 NLT).** I want you to see that previously Abram had built an altar and worshipped God - this is still touch because he doesn't know this God that well. He's just doing what this God told him. He knew a lot about the moon god and the sun god and all of the things that went with all the other gods. But this God had spoken to him only once and he had obeyed the God. He doesn't know who this God is. But he knew this God was real because this God spoke to him and so he worshipped the God. He built an altar and worshipped at that altar.

I'm just putting it to you in those terms, so that you can understand where Abram was coming from. So, this is the only living God but Abram is still getting to know this living God. So he worshipped at the altar again. Genesis 13, verse 12, ¹² **So Abram settled in the land of Canaan, and Lot moved his tents to a place near Sodom and settled among the cities of the plain. But the people of this area were extremely wicked and constantly sinned against the Lord (Genesis 13:12 NLT).** Tell me why you would take your tents and go and pitch them near the cities where so much sin was prevailing? It can only be because - this happened between Lot

and Abram - Lot saw the land. He looked at all the land and he said, "Oh this is like desert, that looks all green, that's where the cities are, that's where the trade happens, that's where success is, where all the people are." So he moved there but they were extremely sinful and wicked people and in time to come because he wasn't worshipping the same God that Abram was worshipping. He was just tagging along with Abram. That's a big thing about Christians in church today, they tag along in church. They tag along in church but they're not there to worship the God that they hear from and press into the God that they hear from themselves.

Now, I'm still talking about touch. This is a very significant moment. ¹⁴ **After Lot had gone**, so Lot moves out. Now, God has got to deal with, He's only dealing with Abram because he spoke to Abram. He didn't speak to Abram and Lot and everybody else, He only spoke to Abram. So all these people came along with Abram, now they are gone. When they are gone, there is a place that you have to reach in your life where there's a lot of people hanging around you, a lot of relationships and in some times they've got to get away from you or you've got to get away from them, you've got to be away from them, so that the next thing can happen in your touch relationship with God. ¹⁴ **After Lot had gone, the Lord said to Abram**, the Lord said to Abram. He speaks to him again. "**Look, as far as you can see in every direction - north and south, east and west,** ¹⁵ **I'm giving all this land, I'm giving all this land as far as you can see, to you and your descendants, as a permanent possession**, a permanent possession, ¹⁶ **and I will give you so many descendants that, like the dust of the earth, they cannot be counted,** ¹⁷ **go and walk through the land in every direction, for I'm giving it to you"** (Genesis 13:14-17 NLT).

I mean, it's not clear how far he walked and what he did exactly but what was clear was that God wanted him to move and He wanted him to physically act out the blessing. He wanted him to walk in different directions, He wanted him to, He wanted to act out the blessing. So amazing. Verse 18, says ¹⁸ **So Abram moved his camp to Hebron and settled near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. And there he built another altar to the Lord** (Genesis 13:18 NLT). Wow, this is at least the third time that Abram is worshipping the Lord by building an altar and coming to worship at the altar for this Lord, this God that speaks to him.

Genesis 15 verse one, ¹ **Some time later, the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision.** Now the Lord has been speaking to him so that he can hear him, now he's speaking to him in a vision, now he see him. Even if it's in a vision, he can see Him. Speaks to him in a vision **and said to him, "Do not be afraid, Abram, for I will protect you and your reward will be great"** (Genesis 15:1 NLT). This is amazing stuff. This is all about touch. ² **But Abram replied, "Oh, Sovereign Lord, what good are all your blessings when I don't have a son? Since you've given me no children, Eliezer of Damascus, a servant of Damascus, a servant in my household, will inherit my wealth** (Genesis 15:2 NLT). Because he was a bondservant. ³ **"You have given me no descendants of my own, so one of my servants will be my heir."** ⁴ **Then the Lord said to him**, so the Lord appeared to him in a vision, and he's speaking to the Lord in a vision.

If you listen to Brother Hagin, there are different kinds of visions. There are visions that you can have in prayer, there are visions that are visions that you can see but

they're not interactive. But it's clear this vision that he's having, he can speak in the vision. Kenneth Hagin had a vision like that where Jesus came to speak to him. There was a demon spirit that looked like a monkey kind of thing and he was jumping up and down between Jesus and Kenneth Hagin. Kenneth Hagin could see Jesus and they were trying to talk and this demon was making a big noise and he couldn't hear everything. He waited for Jesus to do something and Jesus never did anything. Then he said to the demon, "Shut up and get away" paraphrasing what he said. "Shut up and stop, stop it and go." And so the demon whimpered and off he ran. And then Jesus said to Kenneth Hagin, he said, "I'm glad you did that." And so he kind of said, "Well, why, why? Why didn't You do something about it?" He said, "I couldn't." He said, "No, surely it can't be You couldn't." He said, "... you wouldn't?" He said, "No, I couldn't," because the authority had been passed to Kenneth Hagin because he was the human on the earth. He had the authority over the devil. Jesus is in the spirit realm. He's done whatever He needed to do. The authority had been given to Kenneth Hagin. So the authority belongs to us. He had a vision like that and this is a vision like that where Abram is seeing God speaking and he's having this conversation with Him in a vision. **4Then the Lord said to him, "No, your servant will not be your heir, for you will have a son of your own who will be your heir." (Genesis 15:4 NLT).** Now I'm going to go to chapter 16, verse one and two. **1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. 2 So Sarai said to Abram, "The Lord has prevented me from having children. What did God just get through saying? "I will give you children." Right? So now she's having a conversation. God said, "I'll give you children." She says, "God's prevented me from having children. So if God's going to give you children, it's not going to be through me." She is interpreting God's will. She is not waiting for God's will. She is interpreting God's will. **The Lord is preventing me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I, Sarai, can have children through her. And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal (Genesis 16:1-2 NLT).****

"Abram, where's your walk with God, hey, dude?" You know, like, "Hey, has he not just spoken to you?" But the reason I spoke the way I spoke about Abram was because I wanted you to understand where he came from with lots of gods and how he's been introduced to the living God, but he's getting to know this God. He doesn't know this God the way we know this God yet. I mean, we know this God because He speaks to us through all things like Abram. He's learning who this God is and how He's operating and how He functions. So when we read the story from our mindset and we look back on it, it's like, "Abram, why didn't you wait, china?" It's like, "Hey, mistake." Well, they were learning about this God. Sarai made a suggestion interpreting the will of God. He kind of says, "I get to sleep with someone else. Maybe I can have a baby that I've been longing for. Sounds like a plan." So he agrees. So she has a child.

She falls pregnant and she has a child. I'm going to come back to the story. I'm going to move on from here. I'm going to come back to the story a little bit later. We're going to go to Genesis 17, **1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am El Shaddai - God Almighty." We all know that God, El Shaddai is your provider. "I am El Shaddai - God Almighty. Serve Me faithfully and live a blameless life."** God is beginning to interact with Abram now, and He's beginning to reveal Himself, not just as the God who is going to protect

him, and bless him, and give him children and be the God that establishes him. He's now beginning to explain to Abram and share with Abram who He is. He's saying, **“Serve Me faithfully, and live a blameless life.”** So when He says, “Serve Me faithfully,” He's actually making a statement to Abram, “I need you to serve Me as the only God in your life. All of the other gods that have impacted you till now, you may not even consider those. There is no indication that Abram did but God is making a statement, **“Serve Me faithfully, serve Me faithfully, and live a blameless life.”** (Genesis 17:1 NLT). So what's the blame about? Well, the blame is not about how morally right or wrong you are. The blame is serving Him faithfully. Do you understand that? There was no law then. There was also no particular way that you had to live because cultures were living in different parts and had different ways of living. So when we read the word blameless, we tend to read it through a Bible holiness perspective but actually what He was saying is, “Your blameless life will be to serve Me faithfully.” You got it? It's a very simple thing.

² I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants.” ³ At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, ⁴ “This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! (Genesis 17:1-4 NLT). I just want you to see what happens when God says, **“Serve Me faithfully, and walk before Me blameless.”** (Genesis 17:1 NLT). As God speaks to him, he falls down on his face before God. What does that tell you about what he's just heard from God? What's happening in him? “I hear you God. I've seen You in a vision. I've heard Your words and I know Your words. This is the way that I worship; I fall on my face and I worship You blamelessly, faithfully. I'm giving You my all.” Let me tell you, that is a posture. That is the position that you can take as a rest of your life. Inwardly and outwardly you can live a life of just bowing and worshipping the Most High God. It's an amazing place to live. It's a wonderful place to be. ⁴ **“... I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! ⁵ What's more, I am changing your name.”** Because he bowed to worship, God changed His name because He says, “You're going to live with Me. You're going to be blameless, you're going to be faithful. I'm going to give you the children. I'm going to call your name Abraham which means father of nations. ⁵ **Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. ⁶ I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them! ⁷ I will confirm My covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. ⁸ And I will give you the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.”** (Genesis 17:4-8 NLT).

Now God is speaking prophetically because he bowed down and he worshipped God, he received the words of God. God is now saying, “This is what's going to happen.” I want to just show you something that God is still touching Abraham. He's touching him with a prophetic word about his future. He's not yet expecting Abraham to do anything other than to serve Him faithfully and be blameless in his serving. Right? He hasn't given him a chance to live it yet. He's just proclaimed it. Now He's still making a proclamation, a prophetic declaration over Abraham's life. It's still touch. You all with me? And like I've ministered previously - a couple of weeks ago - touch is an incredibly and essential part of every relationship. And so if you can't

touch people, you have to close the gap so that you can touch. I've spoken about that.

I want to show you what happens next. God is touching him, He's declaring to him everything that's going to happen to him. Now He starts to say, "Because I've given you My word that you must serve Me faithfully and live before Me blameless, now I'm going to give you the next level of relationship; integration of ways." I told you I'm going to spend most of my time talking about touch, so the rest will move along a lot quicker now. Verse nine. ⁹ **Then God said to Abraham, this is our part in integrating ways, "Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility." (Genesis 17:9 NLT).** In other words, "Serve Me faithfully and blamelessly." Up to you to serve the terms of the covenant. Integration. Right? God's putting the requirement on Abraham. He went from talking to Abraham, touching Abraham, prophesying over him, telling him, blessing him, everything he's going to become. Now He's putting the requirement on Abraham. "Abraham, ⁹... **your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility.** ¹⁰**This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised.** ¹¹ **You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you.** ¹² **From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased.** ¹³ **All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant.** ¹⁴ **Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant."** (Genesis 17:9-14 NLT). Okay, so I'm wanting to just show you that actually, the integration of ways here is a very simple act. This is not complicated. Right? He's not giving him ten rules. He's not giving him ten commandments. It's a very simple singular act that must happen to every male. How old was Abraham? Ninety nine.

I want to just talk as plainly as I can, but tastefully as I can. The most vulnerable part of a male's body is his reproductive organs and one that he uses to clear waste out of his body. This most vulnerable part of his body – God is saying, "Every male child, starting with you Abraham, must be circumcised on the eighth day. Abraham, sorry, bud, you don't have a choice. You're 99 and you have 130 plus male servants in your world. Circumcise them, Abraham." [Pastor John whistling]. I mean, there's no doctor's room, hey? There's no theatre. There's no anything going on here. It's, "Come here, boy." Pants off, knife in hand. "Show me what you've got, let's do it." I'm trying to be careful with my words here. Hundred-and-something plus men – all at the same time. It's a mark of covenant. It costs something. It cost pain, it cost dignity, it cost vulnerability, it cost a whole lot of things that when you are ready to give God your heart and be circumcised in your heart, it leaves the same mark. It's an everlasting covenant that if you have children, you must teach your children and your children's children to have a circumcised heart. It's a mark of a blood covenant in the heart. Integration of ways. Does it matter how painful it is? Does it matter how undignified it might be? Does it matter what everybody else says about it? Does it matter that no other cultures were doing it and only they were doing it? It doesn't matter. The thing about it is that it was God. They obeyed God with this.

Genesis 17, verse 15, ¹⁵ **Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife – her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. ¹⁶ And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.” ¹⁷ Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” ¹⁸ So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael,” which is now, I’m getting back. “May Ishmael that I had with Hagar, may Ishmael...” “I will bless him also.” As for Ishmael, this is God now talking to Abraham, “I will bless him also. Just as you have asked.” Because there was an interaction between Abraham where God said, “I will bless you”. And, he said, “Well, You’re talking about Ishmael?” And He said, “No, she’ll have her own son.” And then he said, “What about Ishmael?” So he asked God. Abraham asked God to bless him. So, ²⁰ **As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked... Now there is this integration of ways. Abraham’s circumcised. There’s men involved. Now he’s going to have a child, and he asks God to bless the son of his servant, or his wife’s servant. ²⁰ ... I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. ²¹ But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” ²² When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham (Genesis 17:15-22 NLT).** So many people believe that actually - because the servant was an Egyptian - many people believe that Ishmael became the beginning of what is now known as the Muslim faith or those people because of the way that they are very kingdom and prince-orientated. Right? You always hear about sheik so-and-so, the high prince of this, in their kingdoms. Whether that’s true or not, I can’t say. I mean, there’s no... anybody can have an opinion about it – it’s quite possible. But certainly they are very fruitful people, they’re very blessed people, they’re very powerful people. And this is what God said Ishmael would be.**

So, ²³ **On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. ²⁴ Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, ²⁵ and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. ²⁶ Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, ²⁷ along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him (Genesis 17:23-27 NLT).** Circumcision happens. God has spoken to him. He left him. You all with me? Integration of ways is established. Touch, integration of ways.

Chapter 18, verse 16. There’s men that come to visit Abraham. ¹⁶ **Then the men got up from their meal and looked out toward Sodom. As they left, Abraham went with them to send them on their way.** These men that just showed up. ¹⁷ **“Should I hide my plan from Abraham?” the Lord asked. ¹⁸ “For Abraham will certainly become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. ¹⁹ I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just. Then I will do for Abraham all that I have promised.” ²⁰ So the Lord told Abraham, “I have heard a great outcry from Sodom and Gomorrah, because**

their sin is so flagrant. ²¹ **I am going down to see if their actions are as wicked as I have heard. If not, I want to know.** So, ²² **The other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the Lord remained...** The Lord remained. So, the men came to visit, and then they were leaving. So was the Lord among them? [Pastor John nodding.] So now He remained. Now He's going to talk to Abraham. He's saying, **...other men turned and headed toward Sodom, but the Lord remained with Abraham.** ²³ **Abraham approached him and said, "Will you sweep away both the righteous and the wicked?"** ²⁴ **Suppose you find fifty righteous people living there in the city (Genesis 18:16-24 NLT).** And so, this conversation begins between God, the Lord and Abraham. So what happened is that God, because of touch and integration of ways, now God is telling him His strategic intentions, and He's giving Abraham a chance to interact and to change the possible course of actions.

This is an amazing thing that God will come and approach you and say, even today, I believe this with all my heart. The Holy Spirit will say, "My strategic intention is to go and do this. But what do you say? But what do you say?" But that's a level of relationship where you can only get to that place with God when you've already integrated ways. Amen. And because of the way Abraham takes on the responsibility to intercede on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah, and eventually God and he agreed that if there's ten righteous, He will not destroy the cities. And so, when God gets there He finds out there are not even ten. There is only Lot's family, and even Lot's family was compromised. How do I know? Because when they fled the city, Lot's wife turned back and she turned into a pillar of salt, which means unrighteousness was in her because she longed back for the city that was unrighteous. So I mean, even Lot's family wasn't that.

Strategic intentions lead to divine productivity. Genesis 21, verse one, ¹ **The LORD kept his word and did for Sarah exactly what he had promised.** ² **She became pregnant, and she gave birth to a son for Abraham in his old age. This happened at just the time God had said it would.** ³ **And Abraham named their son Isaac.** ⁴ **Eight days after Isaac was born, Abraham circumcised him as God had commanded (Genesis 21:1-4 NLT).** Divine productivity, integration of ways, strategic intentions, divine productivity's kicked in. A thing that was impossible for 90 years of Sarah's life, 100 years of Abraham's life with Sarah, suddenly it's possible. Divine productivity is something where you've got to the place where God intervenes and only God can make it happen. I truly, truly believe that God wants us to live this way, as a lifestyle in relationships with Him and with each other. Because the Word of God says one can put a thousand to flight, two can put ten thousand to flight. If that's not divine productivity, I don't know.

It is divine productivity because we get into agreement with each other in the name of Jesus, in God. We can have a ten-time productivity, divine productivity increase. It's amazing that God has this picture of how we can live in relationship with Him and with each other. And so, when divine productivity is established, then God can sometimes ask us to enter into covenant. Genesis 22, verse one, ¹ **Some time later, God tested Abraham's faith.** Listen, Abraham has done everything God told him to this point. Why would He have to test Abraham's faith? Well, I believe He was testing his, "If you will remain faithful and be blameless then all the nations will be blessed. Then." Now, this is that faithful and blameless test. Many people have lots of say

about Abraham's faith. This is about the original thing that God said, "Faithful and blameless in the way that you live with Me."

¹ ... **"Abraham!" God called. "Yes," he replied. "Here I am."** ² **"Take your son, your only son—yes, Isaac, whom you love so much—and go to the land of Moriah. Go and sacrifice him as a burnt offering on one of the mountains, which I will show you."** ³ **The next morning Abraham got up early. He saddled his donkey and took two of his servants with him, along with his son, Isaac. Then he chopped wood (Genesis 22:1-3 NLT).** He went and he did what God told him. He didn't even wait. God spoke that night. Next morning, he's up, "I'm obeying."

I mean, this is a big thing. I mean, I'm going to say this as a matter of course - if God gives you an instruction to do something, the longer you wait, the harder it gets. Because if he had to start thinking about this, "My only son, the one I love, the one that God's going to bless. Why would He want me to sacrifice that?" He would not be faithful and he would not be committed to that. But he immediately obeyed God. Just as a matter of way, if God's already increasing divine productivity in your life, and He's asking you to do something, obey Him immediately.

Chapter 22, verse 10. We know what happens here. ¹⁰ **And Abraham picked up the knife to kill his son as a sacrifice.** ¹¹ **At that moment the angel of the LORD called to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Yes," Abraham replied. "Here I am!"** ¹² **"Don't lay a hand on the boy!" the angel said. "Do not hurt him in any way, for now I know that you truly fear God. You have not withheld from me even your son, your only son (Genesis 22:10-12 NLT)."** This is an incredible thing that he was ready, ready, ready to kill his only son. God says, "Now I know that you have taken what I said, you have integrated your ways. I've shared My strategic intentions with you. My divine productivity has been there for you to give you a son. Now I'm taking that divine productivity back. Give Me, give Me your grown up divine productivity. Give it to Me."

If I can put it this way, it's like God says He's going to bless you in business, bless you in business, bless you in business and it grows and grows and grows and it becomes something big and then God says, "Give Me back the money that comes out of your business." "But God, all these years it has taken me to do this?" "Give it back to Me. Because if you give it back to Me in covenant, you show Me that you fear Me. You don't distrust Me. You don't trust yourself more than you trust Me. Give it back to Me. Let Me show you what divine productivity and covenant can do together."

And He says, "Because you fear me, ¹⁶ **Because you have obeyed me and have not withheld even your son, your only son, I swear by my own name that** ¹⁷ **I will certainly bless you. I will multiply your descendants beyond number, like the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will conquer the cities of their enemies.** ¹⁸ **And through your descendants all the nations of the earth will be blessed—all because you have obeyed me (Genesis 22:16-18 NLT)."**

I want to show you something here finally that this is the first time that God says this to Abraham. There was a covenant thing that happened where God swore by

Himself to Himself but Abraham was asleep through that whole process. But this is the first time God is directly saying to Abraham, "I swear to you, I swear by My name that this will happen." There is no greater name that God could swear by than all that He is. He was basically saying, "I swear by all that I am that I will make this happen." Divine productivity and covenant. Wow.

I want to talk to you finally about dishonour. I want to end and I want to just remind you, and I said I was going to come back to it. I've got five more minutes, you guys on TV - five more minutes and I'll be done. Genesis 16, verse one. ¹ **Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar.** ² **So Sarai said to Abram, "The LORD has prevented me... Go and sleep with her... Perhaps... And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal.** I read that to you already. I'm trying to get back to this point so I can show you the difference between honor and dishonor. ⁴ **So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt (Genesis 16:1-4 NLT).** Why? Because, "I'm more of a woman than you are. Because I can have children, you can't." Anytime you see yourself as something more than anyone else, you are in a dangerous position because you categorise them as something less than you. The minute you do that, you're in a dangerous place. ⁵ **Then Sarai said to Abram, "This is all your fault! You shouldn't have slept with her. I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The Lord will show who's wrong—you or me!"** This is Sarah talking to Abraham. What's this about? Remember what I said earlier about this is what God said, "I will make you..." They try to interpret, she interpreted the will of God. They both agreed to it. Now she's pregnant. There's a child coming. ⁶ **Abram replied, "Look, she is your servant. It's not God doing this thing. She is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit."** Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away. ⁷ **The angel of the Lord found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur.** ⁸ **The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?"** There's a lot I can talk about but I haven't got time. ... **where have you come from, and where are you going?"** When you are pregnant with something ... **where have you come from, and where are you going?"** Why did you do that? Where are you going? "I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied. ⁹ **The angel of the Lord said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority."** ¹⁰ Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count." ¹¹ And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the Lord has heard your cry of distress. ¹² **This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone.** Is that the Muslim world? Just a question. ... **will raise his fist against everyone.** I'm not saying it is, I'm just pointing it out to you. ... **will raise his fist against everyone and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives."** ¹³ Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the Lord, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." [a] She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" ¹⁴ So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered. ¹⁵ So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him

Ishmael. ¹⁶ Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born (Genesis 16:5-16 NLT).

I want to just show you the difference between honour and dishonour. Because there was dishonour of first of all, God's instruction. Secondly, there was dishonour between Sarai and Abram. Thirdly, there was dishonour in the way that Sarai treated Hagar. So, if you dishonour something, you chase it away from you. In this particular case because God had said to Abraham, I will bless your descendants - Ishmael was his descendant - it wasn't his covenant descendant but Ishmael was his descendant. So God had to send an angel to intervene because He had promised Abraham that He would bless his descendants. What a God. Even though there is dishonour, God still honours His own Word. This is amazing. So Genesis 17, verse 18. ¹⁸ **So Abraham said to God, "May Ishmael live under your special blessing!"** ¹⁹ **But God replied, "No."** Remember, so now God said to Abraham, "Because you asked for this ..." This is the asking, "May he live under a special blessing?" And then I read to you later on that God said, "Because you asked for the blessing, I will bless him, and he will have 12 princes, and he will be fruitful." Remember? I'm trying to bring the circle back here.

¹⁹ **But God replied, "No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac,[d] and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. ²⁰ As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation (Genesis 17:18-20 NLT).** I want to just finally say to you that I hope I've given you a picture through the life of Abraham of how the Word of God works from touch, to integration of ways, to strategic intentions, to divine productivity, to covenant. Come on. I mean, is this not a great and beautiful picture of how God ..? And you can see throughout the Bible, you can see all of these phases, or some of these phases at work in everything, the way that God deals with stuff. Praise the Lord. And so finally, my last words to you is to say that even if there is dishonour that you have created in your life, even if you have created an Ishmael, which means you've interpreted the will of God incorrectly. You've tried to solve a problem incorrectly that you yourself think you are the one to solve the problem that God is actually waiting for His divine productivity to come upon you. So even though you might make a mistake, you may have Ishmaels, God will still bless those but they will not be the mark of the covenant that God has with you.

God is such a great God and merciful that He will still keep His covenant with you. But I'm pressing at this moment in my life, I'm pressing and I'm saying to the Lord, "Lord, I want to live in the full circle of what You've provided." If there is something in covenant that You require of me, and You ask of me because I have touched You and continue, I've integrated my ways with You, You have shown me strategic intentions of many things that You've wanted to do in my life with me, through me and continue to do those things. I've experienced divine productivity by God and His divine engagement with me. I'm at a stage in my life where I'm asking the Lord, "If there's something that You need from me as a divine covenant or a covenant that You require? I trust that I will be faithful to serving You." I say to you, people, to those listening, I want to encourage you to touch God, integrate your ways with Him. Let Him show you His strategic intentions. Step into the realm of divine productivity. You

can pray this, you can make this a declaration that you have a full understanding of this and that you live like this in your life because the rewards are exceedingly great. He is your reward and there is no greater reward than Him and everything that He has becomes yours.

I trust that you have enjoyed this teaching. I trust that you have received the difference between dishonour and honour and how God will turn dishonour to honour even if you have done the wrong thing - if you will obey Him still and faithfully serve Him still.

You might have to make some corrections. If you've run away, you might have to come back. If you had contempt, you may actually come back and submit to authority. These things are real things that happen if dishonour has been in your life and in your heart. But for honour; let's give our lives to God. Let's press for it. Let's press for honour amongst ourselves and amongst the body of Christ and our honour for God.

I bless you. I pray that His peace rests upon you. I pray that no weapon formed against you prospers and that you're blessed going out and coming in. I pray that you will have visions and dreams because God promises that in the New Testament. And if you're a child of God that's pursuing Him, it's your right to claim it that you'll dream dreams and have visions. I pray that for you in the name of Jesus. Now may His peace rest upon you. Peace and may His joy flood your life in the week ahead. Thank you for listening and joining me on this digital service. God bless you