

Fire Ministries
and
The Women of Fire Present:
**God Loves The
Barren**

By Kelly Koshatka

About This Book

This book came from a time of sharing during a women's retreat in Ireland in 2005. During that time the Lord washed us and spoke deeply into our hearts concerning His care and love for His Bride. Since that time the material has been transcribed and formed into booklets that have been compiled to make this book.

The purpose behind this book is to encourage the heart and faith of the Bride of Christ. Our prayer is that people everywhere who feel barren and beyond hope will see and embrace the wonder of God's love and covenant, and begin rejoicing in true faith! Our desire is that Christians will more deeply know how Jesus loves His Church and become established in the relationship of oneness His Cross has brought us into.

Following each chapter are group discussion topics and questions that can be used in Bible studies or other gatherings. We hope that these questions will help to ignite group discussion and fellowship over the heart issues that are brought up in each chapter. Searching the heart of Jesus together as His one Bride and speaking His heart and words to one another can be life-changing. Reading through the book in a group setting and discussing the questions afterwards may be a blessing for women's meetings and other group studies. Please know that putting together this study manual has been a labor of love to bless you.

If you are interested in obtaining additional copies of this book or organizing a women's retreat or gathering, please email Fire Ministries at:

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God Loves The Barren

Part One

Introduction

God loves the barren, God chose the barren, and God is for the barren. In fact, there is a scripture that says, “Sing O’ barren, rejoice (Isaiah 54:1, Galatians 4:27)!” In the Old Testament we find that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's wives were all barren. These are the three men from whom a nation was BIRTHED! Without these “once barren” women, there would be no nation of Israel, and ultimately no Messiah. In fact, barrenness is a requirement for true fruitfulness! God chose wives for these men who had no ability in themselves to bear children. They were hopelessly barren, yet in the hearts of their husbands, they were completely accepted and loved. In the heart of God, they were in line to bring forth Christ.

Though Barren... His Wife!

“Now Sarai Abram’s wife bare him no children” (Genesis 16:1).

Sarah was Abram’s wife but she was barren. Her barrenness did not change the fact that she was his wife. That is very important! Abram's love and their union was not something Sarah earned through her "fruitfulness". Consider that in the midst of her barrenness, Sarah was fully acknowledged as Abram’s wife. That fact was settled and secure no matter what condition Sarah was in! She was joined to Abram, and that oneness was settled in his heart.

Yet the second half of Genesis 16:1 can cause some of us confusion when it states that she “bore him no children.” It is not the fruit that proves she is joined to Abram, it is the reality that she is his wife that is all-important. Fruit is the result of union, not the substance of it. As Christians, we can tend to measure our relationship with Jesus based on our level of fruitfulness. We can find our stature based on our works rather than His work. Christ, our Husband, measures our relationship with Him on the basis of His death, burial and resurrection. Regardless of how we feel or how much fruit we bear, God's reality through the work of Christ's Cross is that we are now joined to Jesus. In other words, now we are His wife!

Therefore our barrenness does not prove that we are not joined to Jesus in resurrection oneness.

Some of us believe that fruitfulness ensures that we are loved and accepted in the eyes and heart of God. This will cause us to work to produce fruit so that we can feel secure in our relationship with the Lord. This attitude of heart results in a lifestyle of constant striving to gain something that we already have! Contrary to this way of thinking, fruitfulness is the result of a union that is already secure and established in the heart of God. Through the Cross of Christ, we have been brought into a union that will ultimately burst forth in fruit, but that is simply the manifestation of a glorious marriage where Christ has already received us as His own Body!

Incredible Increase

"And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly. And I will make thee exceedingly fruitful and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee"
(Genesis 17:2,6).

When Abram was still a young man, God told him that He would "make of him a great nation" (Genesis 12:2). And then again, years later, God told Abram that He would make his seed as the dust of the earth, so that if a man can number the dust of the earth, then shall thy seed be numbered (Genesis 13:16). Many years after those promises were made, when Abram was ninety nine years old and desperate to bring forth offspring, God made a covenant with Him. At this time in his life Abram's body is described in Romans chapter four as "now dead". Abram had died to the possibility of bringing forth in his own strength. He had no hope of fruitfulness in himself. Abram was too old and his wife was still barren and past the age of conceiving. If you think about Abram's condition and then listen to the wording of God's covenant promise at this time, you will find it quite amazing. God did not tell Abram that he would father a son, but that he would be the father of MANY NATIONS. God could have said, "I will make you fruitful. You will bring forth a child." But God said that He would multiply him exceedingly. This man was not just going to be fruitful, but exceedingly fruitful. Look at these words: will, multiply you, exceedingly. Every word is full of the incredible increase that God would bring and His dedication to bring it forth! God can do exceedingly and abundantly above and beyond all we would ever hope for or think to ask, but only by the work of His Spirit and not our flesh! We must deeply realize our barrenness before the time of fruitfulness can come!

Throughout these scriptures, God continues to build a case to conquer our carnal minds and unbelief! It is important to remember that God does not flatter and

He does not exaggerate. God does not say things just to make us feel better when we are depressed. God did not come to Abram and speak these words to give him a false sense of hope. God does not just say something He is not going to perform. With that in mind, we can begin to open our hearts to the reality that God knew something that Abram did not know, even things that we possibly do not yet fully comprehend. Although they sounded too incredible to be true at the time, what God spoke to Abram in these scriptures were fulfilled even as the promises that God has made to His Seed in us can be fulfilled also.

We have discussed that God said He would make Abram exceedingly fruitful, but He does not stop there. God goes on to say that He will make nations of him and even kings would come from him. Kings represent the coming forth of the governmental increase of Christ where God rules and reigns in His people. This kind of increase of the Seed signifies more than just nations of saved people, but speaks of the actual maturing of God's Seed in His people, otherwise known as "Christ being formed in us" (Galatians 4:19). This Seed will be so fruitful that the kingdoms of this earth will become the kingdoms of our God and of His Christ. This increase comes through a covenant God made with a man and his Seed. This is not just a little seed put into the ground that produces one plant, or a little baby coming forth to make Mom and Dad happy. Rather this Seed (which is Christ) will contain the potential for such an increase of life that "nations and kingdoms will come out of you."

"Between Me and Thee and Thy Seed"

"And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. And I will give unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, the land wherein thou art a stranger, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession" (Genesis 17:7-8).

Before anything manifests in the earth God gives Abram a new name, Abraham, and begins to establish a whole new relationship with him. God began to establish something between Himself and Abraham AND Abraham's seed. God told Abraham, "I will establish my covenant with you, between me and thee and thy seed." How many people want something established between them and God? How many want a relationship that is established? We know things about God. We have heard His Word and yet still wonder about what is really going on, if God remembers us and if His Word is still true. In other words, our relationship with God is not established. Abraham had been walking with God and looking towards His promises for years, but now something was going to be established in His heart, and it was going to be established during the time of his barrenness. In essence, God had

never faltered once concerning all that was spoken to Abraham in his younger years, but now He wants to establish the basis upon which these promises will be fulfilled. Once again, God is saying all this to Abraham and Sarah while they are barren. In barrenness He speaks this to them and not in fruitfulness, victory, or in the time of life. It was in the time of waiting, even past the time of waiting (for Abraham's body was as dead) that God began to establish a covenant of fruitfulness. Notice that God did not tell Abraham that He would establish this covenant between Himself, Abraham, and God's Seed. God did not say, "My Seed" although He could have. God knows that His Seed is going to be coming out of Abraham so that now, even before anything has happened, He calls it Abraham's seed. God could have told Abraham that the Seed was not his yet because he was still barren. But God saw Abraham and the Seed as one even before the Seed sprang forth in fruitfulness. God stated that the covenant He was going to set forth with Abraham included the Seed that was going to be in and through Abraham. It is the same for us today. At new birth, the Seed which is Christ was placed in us. Whether that Seed has come forth in fruitfulness yet or not, God's covenant is not just with us but with His Seed that is in us. In that sense it is "our Seed", for it is established in God's heart that Christ is in us and we are one with Him. Through faith in this Seed which is Christ, we have become the children of promise (Galatians 3:29). That Seed which is Christ has all hope of coming out of us and establishing His increase in governmental ways. The potential for Christ's increase through us is not dependent upon our birthing abilities but upon the Seed's innate Life.

God's reality in this situation was so far above what Abraham and Sarah were even considering that the basis of this relationship finally needed to be established. Abraham is called the father of faith in the scriptures (Romans 4:16). He is the one that teaches us how to believe in the Seed before it has sprung forth. He can be a father in the faith to us now because God "fathered" him when he had to walk through his own barrenness. Abraham knew the Lord in the process of bringing forth the Seed. He came to know God and became established in the way God brings the barren into fruitfulness. This man walked through all of it! He went through the excitement, the despair, the striving in the flesh, the years of silent barrenness, and the time of finally being established in God's relationship with himself and his Seed. Just look at how God related to him and his barren wife. He came and spoke these precious promises that are exceedingly great to two old, barren and somewhat hopeless people.

"She Will Be a Mother of Nations"

"And I will bless her and I will give her a son also. Yes I will bless her and she will be a mother of nations, kings of people shall be of her"

(Genesis 17:16).

Sarah is going to have something to do with this because the offspring comes out of the woman. Therefore, when God is saying these things to Abraham, He is also saying them to Sarah, and did actually make these promises to Sarah also (Genesis 17:16). Not only was Abraham going to be a father of nations, but his wife Sarah was going to be a mother of nations. Not only was she going to be a mother of nations but "kings of people shall be of her"! Oh how Sarah's heart must have wanted to believe such incredible words when she heard God speak them to her! She probably felt that these words came too late in her life to really mean anything to her.

It was not that she did not want to believe them; she had just been through so much trying in her own strength for so many years that she may not even have known how to believe any more.

Surely this dear woman longed to fulfill her husband's destiny to bring forth a son. Quite possibly she felt the weight of this need every day of her married life and bore the sense of her failure also. She probably felt that she was messing up the whole plan of God because of her inability to have a child. If only Abraham had a different wife that was fertile and could produce his offspring. She may have felt that Abraham married the wrong woman, or that she was cursed in some way because of her sins and failures. In her desperation she even opened up to allowing her bondmaid Hagar to bear Abraham's child. Try to consider the desperation she was feeling to do such a thing. She must have been so ashamed of her barrenness and overwhelmed with her failure to be a fruitful wife. And yet, she was the woman God chose for Abraham and even her barrenness was a part of God's plan for their lives! It all worked together for the eternal testimony of how God would bring forth His son in all believers throughout all the ages!!! They have stood as an example to millions of believers over countless generations! May we be encouraged in our own lives and find our hearts refreshed even as Sarah's eventually was to "through faith be strengthened to conceive" that Christ might come forth through us and bring abundant increase (Hebrews 11:11).

We can look at ourselves and our circumstances and feel imprisoned in impossible situations with no hope of Christ coming forth in them. After years of struggling and failing, eventually we can feel like our faith has died. Yet it is at this point that we must question what we are putting our faith in. Is our faith in ourselves and how much we feel we can do for God and bring forth in our own strength and goodness? Is our faith in the people around us and the potential that we see in them to fulfill God's plan for their lives? Sadly enough, many people's faith is built upon everything but God. When people fail and manifest that they

are completely barren in themselves, then our faith fails also. But true faith is based upon God and His Seed in us. Our hope of bringing God glory and fruit comes through Christ in us (Colossians 1:27). This is the truth of the Gospel and it will strengthen us to receive in faith that we are vessels that carry the Seed of Christ in us. All our hope is in that Seed and God's ability to bring Him forth by His Spirit.

The Father of Faith Loses It!

"Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is "Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear"

(Genesis 17:17)?

After Abraham heard God speak these incredible promises to his barren wife, he really lost it. "And then Abraham fell upon his face and laughed." Before we look more closely at this reaction, let us consider in a practical way what this must have felt like to Abraham. If there was anything Abraham was familiar with, it was himself and his wife. Day in and day out, Abraham and Sarah lived with their own barrenness. Year after year they had seen each other's weaknesses, patterns, and behaviors. They probably felt stuck in a rut that defined their relationship. When we really know someone, even as well as we know ourselves, it is so easy to be aware of all their shortcomings and lack. We may believe that some great Bible patriarch can be powerfully fruitful, but not me and my wife in our ordinary, fleshly lives. We intimately know all the hang-ups that a lifetime of living with someone produces, and we can probably see the lack more clearly in our spouse than in ourselves. At ninety-nine years old, Abraham and Sarah had established who they were and what they were going to produce, which amounted to Ishmael. And then all of a sudden God comes on the scene to establish a whole new relationship that will bring forth tremendous fruit THROUGH THEM! At this point the father of faith could not hold back his feelings concerning how ridiculous and impossible all of this sounded to him! Just the irony of God's timing should clue us in that God has been waiting for us to lose hope in ourselves for a long time.

We can feel the same way Abraham and Sarah felt when we hear God share these things with us. At a certain point we may feel that we can no longer maintain our religious stance. We may nod our head "yes" in a church service when we hear God's Word preached, but in our hearts we are saying, "There is no way that can apply to me and my family. We are too messed up!" Abraham may have thought, "Knowing me and my wife and where we are at, the contrast is too great, Lord!" To Abraham, the whole thing was so unfeasible that it was moving into the realm of comedy. Think about it, Abraham literally fell on his face and laughed after God said these

things about Sarah. Can you imagine somebody falling on their face and laughing after God appeared and spoke directly to them? Interestingly, Abraham did not fall on his face and laugh after God said these same promises to him. Abraham had less faith for Sarah than for himself. Sometimes we can see the barrenness in those closest to us even more than we can see it in ourselves. But barrenness is the part of the path to fruitfulness, and both Abraham and Sarah qualified.

Looking at Our Flesh

When we are looking at our flesh or someone else's flesh, we will probably start laughing or crying, but we will not begin believing in God's Word. In Abraham's mind, the only factors in the equation were his and his wife's old and barren flesh. He forgot about God and the Seed. When God began speaking about a glorious future full of life and increase, Abraham fell upon his face in a fit of laughter. He said, "Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old and Sarah is ninety-nine years old?" He was looking at their flesh and the flesh's inability to produce. How many times in our lives have we said, "I have been so many years in the Lord and tried so many different things, and still I am barren. Now God is asking me to open my heart in faith again to believe for an exceedingly great increase of Christ, and all I see is the same old me with the same old problems and tendencies that have been there for years. Maybe if God told these things to me many years ago, in the prime of my life when I was zealous for the things of God, I could have believed it. I cannot bear to hear these things now when I am as good as dead. I am unable. I am barren and destitute; I have been weakened on every front. How could now be the time that God wants to establish in me the things that I have been waiting for my whole Christian life?" Yet this is the time to consider that God allows us to see our own weakness so that we will not put confidence in ourselves. God always knew our flesh was barren, but it can take a lifetime to convince us that we cannot produce the Seed that the Father has promised. Only God can bring forth His Son in us. In the middle of hopeless thoughts, we must remember that God loves the barren and will lead us and establish us in the path of life.

"Well Stricken"

"Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of woman. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, after I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?" (Genesis 18:11-12).

It is one thing to be old, and it is another thing to be well stricken in age. Abraham and Sarah had been 'beaten' with the reality of how old they were. They were 'well stricken' with their age. We, too, can come to a point in our Christian walk where we feel 'well stricken' with our age. This feeling may come after many

years of following Jesus with a heart that still feels like an empty womb. How many times have you sat in a church service feeling that you have failed God for so long that you are completely useless? Maybe the preacher started sharing Christ and you tried to respond by getting your faith up, but it would not “rise” so instead you just sat there and laughed inside of yourself with sarcasm? Deep inside you felt that what the preacher was saying did not apply to you because something was wrong with you and you were too messed up. You could not receive the Word because, just like Sarah, you were sarcastic and discouraged. In your heart you were saying, “I am well stricken with age. It is too late for me.”

We may be struggling with the same old tendencies and problems that have been there for years. Sarcasm and depression can begin to replace our ability to believe God’s Word to us. Thoughts may come to us such as, “I am worn out and discouraged with striving to produce that which I cannot bring forth. Let us just be real, God. No more of this hyper-faith stuff. Look at who you are dealing with and what You are promising. Let us stop being so optimistic and get practical about the reality of this situation. Do not get my hopes up when you know there is no hope for me. Let me just remain content in my barren life. Some people are destined for greatness, and I am destined for a normal but fruitless existence. Quit trying to make me believe that the Seed of God is going to come out of me.” If you have ever had those thoughts you can know that you are not alone for both Abraham and Sarah had them also! Both Abraham and Sarah laughed right as the presence of God Himself was appearing to them and speaking directly to them. That is even greater than sarcastic thoughts in the middle of a sermon. In other words, you are not alone! You are not the only one to struggle with hopelessness. Maybe now we can more deeply appreciate our mother and father in the faith! They truly could understand what we are going through. God knows that we need examples who have gone before us and experienced what we experience, and can show us that truly there is still hope!

Impossible for God?

“And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. And Sarah heard it in the tent door, which was behind him. Now Abraham and Sarah were old and well stricken in age; and it ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also. And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child, which am old? Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son”
(Genesis 18:10-14).

When Sarah heard the Lord say that she would have a son, she laughed within herself saying, “After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my husband being old

also?” After Sarah laughed, the Lord asked Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh, saying, Shall I of a surety bear a child who am old?” When Sarah laughed, God took it personally. To God, it was as if she was saying that HE could not perform this. So much of the time our laughter and inner sarcasm is based on OUR inability to bring forth, as seen in Sarah’s emphasis on herself being old. But to God our unbelief has to do with HIS inability to bring forth Christ in us. Therefore, rather than discussing Sarah’s age, God asked them, “Is there is anything too hard for the Lord?” He wanted to know if, somewhere in the midst of their laughter, they really believed that their situation was too hard for God.

Something touched the Lord deeply when Sarah laughed. God understands that He is able to perform what He has promised. He never put the pressure on Abraham and Sarah to perform that; they put that on themselves. They were simply meant to be with Him and trust Him to accomplish what He promised. After this the Lord continues to say that, not only is the whole thing God’s work, but it will happen in His appointed time; the time of life. In other words, God has been in control this whole time. His silence to Abraham for the past thirteen years was not because of His lack of oversight or impotency to bring forth. It was not the time of life yet. In God’s time, God would bring it forth. He had never changed His mind or missed a beat concerning His promises to Abraham. God’s focus and hope had always been in the Seed.

“I Laughed Not”

*“Then Sarah denied, saying, I laughed not; for she was afraid. And he said, Nay; but thou didst laugh”
(Genesis 18:15).*

When Sarah saw that she had personally challenged and offended God with her laughter, she quickly denied that she had laughed. Basically that means Sarah lied to God. She looked God right in the face and said, “I did not laugh.” If God was relating to us under the law and we got sarcastic, laughed at Him to His face, and then lied about it, then we would probably be in big trouble. God could have gotten angry with Sarah and broke His promise to her, refusing to remove her barrenness and bring forth her son. But God did not respond that way. He knew that Sarah would respond by the flesh until the time of life when the Seed came. He already knew that she had done much more than lie, she had connived and manipulated with a bondwoman and developed an attitude of sarcasm and unbelief. It is the same with us. Until Jesus comes forth, God is not overwhelmed and distracted from His purpose by all our fleshly fruit. He understands what we are like apart from Jesus, and that until the Seed of Christ comes forth, we are going to manifest the fruit of the flesh.

The Heart of God While We Are in Unbelief

“And He said, Nay; but thou didst laugh. And the men rose up from thence, and looked toward Sodom: and Abraham went with them to bring them on the way” (Genesis 18:15b-16).

After Sarah lied to God about laughing His response was, “No, you did laugh”. After He said this, He changed the subject and started talking about Sodom and Gomorrah. God did not harshly rebuke her and He did not condemn her. God did not disqualify all that was true about her because she lied and failed. He did not say, “You are not married to Abraham and you are not a great woman of God. You are not going to become an exceedingly great nation because you are sitting here laughing in my face and then denying that you did it while you do not even believe the Word I am telling you.” Although God did not say that to her, quite possibly we would have because we have not fully seen God’s heart concerning these things. The fact remained true in God’s heart that in the appointed time, Sarah was going to have a son regardless of her lack and failures. Our faith can be greatly strengthened by this! How many times have we sat and stewed in our sin and lack, believing that God was not going to perform His promise and bring forth His Son in us because of our failures before Jesus comes forth? These scriptures prove that God is not that way. He did not get mad at her or punish her. He just said, “Nay, but you did laugh. Let us talk about Sodom and Gomorrah now.” This is a really important point.

God is patient, merciful and longsuffering until the unveiling of His Seed in Life. He is not accounting our sins and iniquities unto us, in that sense, because of the Cross. There is a great longsuffering mercy that covers over us in oneness until the Seed of Christ comes forth. God is not concerned about our attitudes, sins and faults as much as He is concerned that one day we are going to bring forth His Son and be a mother or father of nations and people that have the Life of Christ. God sees that potential in us because we are one with Jesus and His Seed is in us. The flesh that yet manifests does not change the potential for life. Our failures do not affect the potential for Christ to be formed and come forth through us. If we can see through God’s eyes and heart, then we will not be so hard on ourselves in the sense of losing our faith when we see our barrenness and our sin. We can hold onto God’s Word just like Abraham did.

The Time of Life

*“At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son”
(Genesis 18:14).*

If you look at Sarah and Abraham's history up to the day when God came and spoke to them, they were not yet in the time of life. They were still in the time of trying to bring forth after the flesh. Sarah had given Abraham her bondmaid, Hagar. They were raising Ishmael like he was the Seed; and they were hoping God would accept him. They were thinking, "We could not do plan "A" because we are barren, so maybe God will accept plan "B", which is Ishmael." They were still very much in the flesh striving to produce. Yet God came and told them that He would bring forth the son that He had promised in the time of life. From these scriptures we can see that there is an appointed time for this babe to come. It is the time of life and it is only by the Spirit.

A lot of times we may think that we are in the time of life when we are still in the time of the flesh. During this season we may try to replace the true manifestation of Christ with other things. We all have probably experienced times where the Spirit of God was moving all around us, and the Word of God was being shared in powerful ways that caused us to feel refreshed and alive by the washing of God's word and presence. At such a time we may have thought, "Certainly this is the time of life! I will not be barren anymore. Jesus is going to come forth." Yet in the back of our minds we may have been thinking, "I have really earned favor with God by being in the Spirit so much today. This feeling of the presence of the Lord is going to empower me to do something for God." To put it plainly, that is still the time of the flesh. We are still trying to produce Jesus by the works of the law, even if those works are coming from a feeling of closeness to God that causes us to not feel barren anymore. The Holy Spirit is not trying to encourage and strengthen our flesh to bring forth something for God. The Holy Spirit wants to bring forth Christ through us. ALL our hope has to be in God and the Seed of Christ that He has put in us. The Spirit is going to overshadow the Seed of Christ to come forth so that it will be His Life that does the works! Let us look at this principle again. We may be in an atmosphere of the Holy Spirit where we sense the movement of God all around us. Deep within, our hearts may be bearing witness that Christ is truly in us as the hope of glory. But if something in our heart begins to credit even knowing these things as us earning something that will make us better, then we still have hidden confidence in our flesh.

The time of life that was appointed for Abraham and Sarah was when they were really, totally and completely unable to do anything. It may seem funny that God would call it the time of life when we feel like we are dead and hopeless! Yet this complete loss of hope in ourselves should cause us to put ALL of our faith in God and His Life in us. At such a time we may begin to find the Lord in a more deep and real way than ever before in our life. Our hearts become turned towards the Lord alone because we are completely desperate and destitute in ourselves. We are

no longer leaning upon our own strength, wisdom, or resources; and that is when God shows up ready to fulfill everything we have been trying to do for Him for years. We finally see our need for Him as the life-giver and the Life. He is no longer our helper, and the things of the Spirit no longer strengthen us to serve God. It is finally the time of Life! We are ready for Christ to be all in all! We are ready for the Father to reveal His Son in us by grace! We have died to ourselves as source and have been made ready for the Vine to flood us with His Life, the only Life that will produce fruit that remains!

The Joy of Knowing Your Own Barrenness

There can come a joyful release in knowing our own barrenness. Once we become fully convinced that we are completely hopeless apart from Christ, we will finally be ready to stop striving all of the time and turn our hearts towards the Lord in a new way. To really see how awful and selfish even our righteousness is would probably cause anyone to fall on their face and start laughing because there is no way we could earn this! Something other than our own goodness and obedience has to bring this forth. Man's righteousness is completely barren. If we look to ourselves, eventually we will either call God a liar or laugh Him to scorn. Our hope and confidence must be in something "higher than I". We all have to go through the process of "losing hope in ourselves", and we even have to go through the process of losing hope in one another. All our hope is to be in the God and His Seed in us.

The scriptures show us that Abraham finally stopped laughing and started believing. Even so, may our sarcastic pessimism turn to heart felt faith as we embrace the reality that God Himself will make the barren rejoice!

*“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform”
(Romans 4:18-21).*

Group Discussion Questions

Chapter One

- God choose barren women to be the wives of the three Patriarchs; Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. These women were hopelessly barren, yet in the hearts of their husbands they were completely accepted and loved. How can these relationships show us how Jesus feels towards His wife, the Church?
- Did the reality that these women were barren when they got married change the fact that they were joined to their husbands? How can this help us to understand our settled union into Christ and the steadfastness of His love towards His Church?
- Discuss this statement, “As Christians we tend to measure our relationship with Jesus based on our level of fruitfulness rather than the work of His Cross”.
- God spoke incredible things to Abram while his body was “yet dead”. Did God speak these words to give Abram a false sense of hope, or was there true and eternal reality behind every word?
- We can become depressed, fearful and unbelieving when we feel like we have to produce fruit apart from the Life of Christ in us. How does understanding our union with Jesus begin to change these attitudes?

God Loves The Barren

Chapter Two **“The Wives”**

Introduction

In chapter one, we looked closely at Abraham and Sarah's journey from barrenness into fruitfulness. We saw them struggling, laughing and finally believing. The reality of what this couple went through hopefully brought us an encouragement that refreshed our faith in God and His Seed in us. Yet the story does not end with Abraham and Sarah. The promises were made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Just like Abraham, both Isaac and Jacob married barren women that they were desperately in love with! These men all remained with their barren wives until God brought forth through them. There is so much we can learn from these couples, and so we will continue on to discuss Isaac and Jacob's situations! It is important to remember that every born-again believer is joined to Christ in a oneness of which marriage is just a shadow. Therefore our relationship with Christ can grow and mature as we allow our forefathers and mothers to share their wisdom with us!

As we look at these Patriarch couples, we can learn of the great mystery that Christ is now one with His Church (Ephesians 5:32). Not only is this a reality, but it is also a relationship. We can dwell in oneness with the Lord our husband through all seasons, even the dry and barren times. This glorious union is to be cherished and honored no matter what state we find ourselves in, for He abides faithful to His own Body. He loves and cherishes us, washing us with His Word and preparing us as that which is His own. We are not foreigners who are out there on our own until we prove our place in Him through fruitfulness. By God's

immeasurable grace and through His Cross, we are accepted in the Beloved. May the heart of Jesus comfort the barren as we turn our eyes away from ourselves unto Him Who captivates us with His great love and performs that which He has promised.

It is important to remember that the reality of the Cross is all throughout these things we are speaking of. The Cross crucified the old creation, and what is loved and received in oneness with the Son is a new creation that has become bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. Our flesh the old nature is not embraced and accepted; it is crucified and rejected. Yet God is seeing us and relating to us in His Son, and in this risen viewpoint we find all these things fulfilled!

Isaac and Rebekah

Genesis chapter 24 tells us the history of Abraham sending his chief servant, Eliezer, to find a wife for his son Isaac. Eliezer finds the woman that he is looking for in Rebekah when she was at a well drawing water. Eliezer asked her for some water and she gave him and his camels to drink. After Eliezer invited her to leave father and mother to join with Isaac, she willingly forsook everything she had known to journey on camels with Eliezer back to Isaac. One evening, as Isaac was out meditating in a field, he lifted up his eyes and saw the camels coming towards him carrying the woman that would be his bride. Rebekah also lifted up her eyes and saw Isaac. Genesis 24:67 tells us what happened next; *“And Isaac brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebecca, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.”* Now at this time Rebekah was barren, yet notice the way Isaac felt towards her. He immediately brought her into His mother's tent. He took her and received her in the greatest measures he could possibly show. Isaac loved her and found comfort in her after his mother's death. Isaac found all of this in Rebekah when she had yet to bring forth.

If we could only see that the way Isaac was with Rebekah is just a shadow of how the heart of Jesus is towards His bride. The fact that we are with Him as His bride and coming to know Him in that relationship comforts His heart. Through His Cross and in His resurrection, we have been joined to Jesus as one spirit. He has made us His body, the place where He dwells. He loves us as bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh. What man has yet hated his own body? Rather he nourishes and cherishes it just as Christ does the church. Christ is the one washing and tending to His Bride. He is the one bringing her into fruitfulness. He loves and cherishes her. He nourishes her as that which is one with Him as His very own body (Ephesians 5:28-29). He loves her and calls her His wife even before the fruit comes. Fruit is the result of union, and the fruit which is Christ comes as a result of abiding in that

relationship of oneness (John 15). Rejoice O Barren, your husband loves you and will make you the place where His fruit is found!

The Process of Being Brought into Life

The process of being brought into fruitfulness does not begin with our good works and efforts, but by comprehending our union into Christ. He has gone through death and burial to raise up a new creation in Himself that is now His own Body. His method is not condemnation and disappointment with what we are apart from Him, but a nurturing that begins to awaken us to who we now are in Him. This process is all about the care of Jesus. It is a time of the intimate tending of the Lord God Himself to that which is His own flesh and bone. Knowing the Lord's heart will begin to comfort our hearts so that we can be with the Lord in this process. The way Isaac was towards Rebekah in these scriptures really shows us the beauty of the heart of Jesus towards His Bride.

Isaac Entreated the Lord for His Barren Wife

"And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren, and the Lord was entreated by him and she conceived." "Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"
(Genesis 25:21, Romans 8:34)

Rebekah traveled on camels to get to Isaac so that she could see him and know him as a bride. Isaac received her as his wife and found comfort in her even though she was yet barren. Isaac began to care for Rebekah as his wife, and part of that care was to entreat the Lord on her behalf. Genesis 25:21 says, *"And Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, because she was barren, and the Lord was entreated by him and she conceived."* Abraham is a type and shadow of God the Father, and Isaac is a type of Christ the risen Son. Isaac entreating the Lord for his wife is a beautiful picture of the risen Son interceding before God on our behalf. He is not just praying for sinners but entreating His Father on the behalf on His own risen body. Romans 8:34 says, *"Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us?"* The context of this scripture in Romans bears out that this intercession is for those who are in Christ and already raised with and joined into Him. Let us also look at the first part of this verse, *"Who is He that condemneth? Shall Christ who died"*. Christ, our risen Head and Husband, is not condemning us, He is interceding for us. He is praying that we might be conformed to His image, that we might receive the Spirit of adoption and bring forth the Spirit of the Son (*Galatians 4:6 Romans 8:15,29*). This is the heart of Jesus for His bride. He

is for her and not against her. He is loving her through this process of maturing into fruitfulness, and nothing shall separate her from the love of God which is securely hers because she is in union with the Son.

Isaac entreated the Lord for his wife, and Jesus is at the right hand of God interceding for us. May this reality speak to our hearts concerning God's loving care towards His barren wife. God Himself is entreating for us that we might bring forth the Son. In like manner, the Apostle Paul said, "*I travail in birth that Christ might formed in you.*" Can you see the heart of God in Paul? It is the same heart and love that flows from Christ as He intercedes at the right hand of the Father for us. If God is for us, who can condemn us? If we feel condemned and rejected because of our barrenness, then we can know that those thoughts and feelings are not coming from God. We must turn our eyes of faith to look and see that Christ, the risen head of the body, is at the right hand of the Father entreating Him that we would bring forth Christ and His nature in the earth. God is not upset with us or condemning us. He is travailing and pouring out that we might be fruitful, for that is His heart.

Knowing the heart of the Lord in this way should lift us up from our own flesh and problems right into the heart of God where we see that God is for us. He has been for us from before the world was made. Who can separate us from the love of God in Christ? Christ has died for us and is risen with a Body that He is interceding for. He is entreating the Father for us, representing us to the Father, and bearing us to the Father. The Lord is representing us as those who are already joined, already loved, and already found in His heart. He wants to bring forth His life in those He has brought into Himself in oneness. This is the heart of Jesus for us. If we learn to approach our own barrenness on His ground, then His Word will get in us and eventually bring forth much fruit. But those tares of fear, unbelief and condemnation are the tares of the flesh that try to earn the love of Jesus by good works. These tares hinder our faith to simply receive God's promise by the Spirit.

Limitless Abundance for the Bride

"And they blessed Rebekah, and said unto her, Thou art our sister, be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those who hate them" (Genesis 24:60).

Listen to the blessing spoken over Rebekah while she was yet barren, "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions". What an expression of bringing forth exceedingly abundantly, even as God promised Abraham. It should become obvious that these great words are spoken about the Seed and not about special people. The fact that all these people were barren should help us understand that the abundance is in the Seed and not the person. Galatians 3:16 says, "*Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to*

thy seed, which is Christ." Whether it is old Abraham or barren Rebekah, the exceedingly great promises of fruitfulness came to them because of their seed, which represented Christ in a believer. It was not to many seeds of different people, but the One Seed which is Christ to whom the promises were made. Rebekah's blessing goes on to say, *"And let thy seed possess the gate of those who hate them."* Once again, it is the Seed of Christ in us that will possess the gate of the enemy, even as it was once spoken to Eve that the seed of a woman would bruise the serpent's head. Our hope is Christ in us, the Seed of God planted into the soil of earthen and barren vessels! When God brings forth His Son through us, there is no limit to the abundance and victory that His endless Life can bring forth. The greatest honor a human could ever know is to simply be a vessel through whom the Seed of Christ can come forth.

The Story of Jacob and Rachel

"Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept"
(Genesis 29:11).

The final couple we will look at is Jacob and Rachel, and of course Rachel was barren. *"It came to pass when Jacob saw Rachel...that Jacob went near and rolled the stone from the well's mouth...and Jacob kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept."* Try and think about what that would really look like. Jacob comes up, rolls a stone from the well's mouth, waters her flock and then he kissed Rachel and lifted up his voice and wept. If you were walking down the street and saw a guy kiss a girl and then lift up his voice and start crying, you would think, "That man is really in love with that woman." Or, "He's insane!" It's one or the other and it is apparent that Jacob was in love with Rachel. Jacob did all this before Rachel had a chance to do anything to earn his love. Jacob just loved her and knew that this was the one that was going to be his wife.

Before the foundation of the world, God determined in Himself to bring forth a Body and a Bride for His Son (Ephesians 1:4,9). This desire was in God's heart before we were born or had the chance to earn God's favor and love. God's deep desire for Christ to have a bride is foreshadowed through out much of the Old Testament. With passion and even jealousy, God sought out a people for Himself. And in the New Testament we see that through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ we have been raised up together in Him as that Body. Once again, this is something that has been deep in the heart of God from before the foundation of the world. Jesus spoke to His disciples at their last Passover meal together and told them that with desire He desired to be with them in resurrection. There is a passion in the heart of the Bridegroom that emanates from something that has been in His heart long before we even existed. Therefore, when God begins to move in our lives to gather us into

Christ according to His eternal desire, the greatness of His heart can manifest in ways that we may not fully comprehend at the time. This is what was happening in Jacob when he finally saw Rachel face to face. He saw her and knew she was going to become his wife. You can see the release of his heart in the fact that he kissed her immediately and began weeping.

It may seem overwhelming to be brought into such a union of love purely by grace, but this is truly what God has done by accepting us in His Beloved Son through His Cross. Just like Rachel may have been overwhelmed by Jacob's display of love and heart-felt passion, Christ our Husband wants us to realize the way He loves us and the measures that He has gone to that we might be joined to Him in oneness. Rachel may have been confused with the way Jacob so freely and fully loved her before she could even do anything to elicit such love. In much the same way, we can become confused by the amazing grace God shows us in that we are accepted in His Beloved Son. But if we have to earn God's love, then we will also have to earn His fruit, and that is just not the way that God works.

God has been holding this secret longing for a Body and a Bride from before time, and now is the time of revealing His mystery and fulfilling His desire as we are gathered into Christ, the fulfillment of those pictures and types. The time of receiving His Bride has come. It is the time of life, the time of drawing us unto the Son and bringing us unto "Isaac". Having planned so dearly and died so deeply, consider God's heart to now bring us from barrenness into fruitfulness. He will freely reveal to us that this happens by union and not by works. It is through and in oneness and not by separation that we (Christ's branches) will begin to bear the fruit of Him (the True Vine). God longs to break forth the beauty of His grace by showing us that He accepts us in the Beloved and the richness of His care towards us there. When Sarah got a glimpse of the grace of this whole thing she said, "Anyone who sees us will laugh because of the glory of the greatness and the grace of it all" (Genesis 21:6). The barren truly can rejoice when they begin to comprehend the mystery of their union with Christ and the way He is towards His Bride.

The Heart of Jesus for His Bride Seen in Jacob

*"And Jacob loved Rachel; and said, I will serve thee seven years
for Rachel, thy younger daughter" (Genesis 29: 18).*

Jacob continues to show the heart of Jesus towards His Bride. Jacob loved Rachel so much that he told her father that he would serve him seven years so that he might have her. *"And Jacob loved Rachel and said, I will serve seven years for Rachel."* When Jacob's seven years were finished, they seemed unto him like a few days

because of the love he had for her (Genesis 29:20). Yet when it came time for Rachel's father to give her to Jacob, he gave him the older daughter named Leah instead. And so Jacob had to serve seven more years to get Rachel. The fact that Jacob was willing to go through seven more years continues to demonstrate his great love for her.

There may be times in our lives where we have thoughts such as, "Lord, I have failed You so much and I have disappointed You for so long, don't You want to get rid of me and find someone else who is easier to deal with?" But consider the heart of Jacob, which only testifies to the heart of Christ for His Church. If fourteen years was only like a few days to Jacob that he might receive His bride and bring her unto himself, then how much more with Christ and His Church? Consider that great commitment Christ has made through His death and in the reality of His resurrection to have His bride with Him and to bring her into fruitfulness and the fullness of what He has purposed in His love. The heart of Jesus is for us, whether it be for seven years, fourteen years, or a hundred years; nothing has changed. He has not changed in His heart. His love has not faltered at all. He has waited thousands of years to bring us into that place of knowing Him through union. He is not as man; time is not as earth time to God. One day is as a thousand years and a thousand years is as one day. So it doesn't matter how long. God has something in His heart that is bigger than time and bigger than failure. There was something in His heart that could wait a hundred years for Abraham to weaken. To God, that was just a pause. His heart can easily abide the time. When you love someone these things are as nothing. God loves us as that which is the Body of His Son now. He knows the Seed which is Christ is in us, and He will work and wait, nurturing and caring for His Bride, knowing that the Seed will come forth in the time of Life.

Group Discussion Questions

Chapter Two

- Discuss this statement and how it can help us to focus on relationship rather than works as our method for fruitfulness: *"Fruit is the result of union, and the fruit which is Christ comes as a result of abiding in that relationship of oneness."*
- God's method to bring us into fruitful union is not condemnation and disappointment with what we are apart from Him but a nurturing that

begins to awaken us to who we now are in Him. How does God's method begin to heal us and prepare our hearts to open up to faith and belief in Him and His Word?

- How does Isaac entreating the Lord for his wife and Jesus at the right hand of God interceding for us speak to our hearts concerning God's loving care towards His barren wife?
- Discuss how the tares of fear, unbelief and condemnation are the tares of the flesh that try to earn the love of Jesus by good works rather than receiving His heart by faith.
- Do you believe that God has something in His heart that is bigger than time and bigger than our failures? Can you share scriptures to support your belief?

God Loves The Barren

Chapter Three

“The Struggle To Bring Forth”

Introduction

Throughout this book we have been seeking to more deeply know and embrace the love and relationship that is in Christ's heart for His Church, His Bride. Becoming settled and established in His love will calm our strife and fears and keep us relating to one another in love. But during the seasons of unsettledness and strife there is a constant pressure to perform and prove our worth and value. This creates an attitude of competition to earn the status of “loved and special”. If we could only see into the heart of the Father and the heart of Jesus we would know that the relationship we fight for and desire to earn is already ours! We can rest in His love, opening our hearts as branches ready to receive all that is in Christ Who is our Life by virtue of union. This abiding in Christ is not a work of the flesh but an acceptance by faith that cleaves to the reality that God has made us one with Jesus. As we simply receive His heart we will experience sweet communion in the Lord and fellowship with the Body. Our real need is to know and embrace the heart of Jesus.

Perfect Love Casts Out Fear and Striving

"And when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die" (Genesis 30:1).

The third wife that we will continue to look at is Rachel. Like all the other wives we have discussed, Rachel was barren. She envied her sister Leah because she was having so many babies. Rachel was so deeply upset about this that she finally said to Jacob, *"Give me children, or else I die."* There is so much we can learn from this! Rachel did not comprehend the fullness of Jacob's love for her. Rachel was unaware of the promise of God to her through her union with Jacob, for God promised Abraham and his seed after him in their generations that He would establish His covenant (Genesis 17:7). This blessing and promise was upon her. Her life was purposed unto this end. But Rachel did not see these great realities. All she saw was herself and her barrenness. She looked at Jacob and thought, "He loves Leah more than me because she has more children." This condition became so severe in her heart that she said, "If I do not produce some fruit soon, then just kill me." Our minds can take us into that same dark place if we do not see the heart of God and His promise to the Seed, which is Christ in us (Galatians 3:16). If we do not embrace the ability of God to perform what He has promised and bring forth His Son in us, then we will become tormented. We will become obsessed with proving that we are loved and begin doing everything we can to become fruitful. Yet God does not torment. Rather, knowing His perfect love will cast out our tormenting fears. God loved us first, and in His love has made us one with His Son through His Cross. The acceptance we seek is already ours in our union with the Beloved. Fruit comes from this place of rest in our acceptance and oneness in the risen Christ and not from our places of separation and striving. Knowing God's perfect love will replace our fear and striving with peace, rest and assurance that God is going to bring forth that which He said He would.

Rachel is tormented, but in reality she is Jacob's beloved Rachel! Jacob served fourteen years for her and they were as a few days to him. He loved her, crying out and weeping over her when he first met her. What more proof does she need? She needs the proof that something is coming out of her as much as Leah. At this point it does not matter what method she uses, just as long as she is no longer barren. Rachel's focus has left Jacob and fixed itself on fruitfulness. She has found her identity in her fruit and not in her husband. She has left abiding and begun working. Her mind is full of strife, competition and ambition to produce more than her sister. Can we see how ugly all of that is? Both of these women, Rachel and Leah, represent the woman who is the church, the one corporate Bride that is the Body of Christ yet still today they wrestle with each other. They wrestle in their own minds and they wrestle in their flesh to prove that God loves them. They strive to establish that they are worth something in the Kingdom. They want to know that they are something special based on their works rather than knowing God's heart for them. They have forgotten their union with Christ and the Seed of His Life that is in

them. They have turned their hearts to the wrestling of the flesh, which is the wrestling of our own desire to please God and be special in a way that exalts human flesh. This whole system lacks the knowledge that fruit only comes through union. This way of relating to God has not yet seen His heart and the way He loves and accepts us.

Ugly Competition

*“And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die. And Jacob's anger was kindled against Rachel: and he said, Am I in God's stead, who hath withheld from thee the fruit of the womb? And she said, Behold my maid Bilhah, go in unto her; and she shall bear upon my knees, that I may also have children by her. And she gave him Bilhah her handmaid to wife: and Jacob went in unto her. And Bilhah conceived, and bare Jacob a son. And Rachel said, God hath judged me, and hath also heard my voice, and hath given me a son: therefore called she his name Dan. And Bilhah Rachel's maid conceived again, and bare Jacob a second son. And Rachel said, With great wrestlings have I wrestled with my sister, and I have prevailed: and she called his name Naphtali. When Leah saw that she had left bearing, she took Zilpah her maid, and gave her Jacob to wife. And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a son. And Leah said, A troop cometh: and she called his name Gad. And Zilpah Leah's maid bare Jacob a second son. And Leah said, Happy am I, for the daughters will call me blessed: and she called his name Asher. And Reuben went in the days of wheat harvest, and found mandrakes in the field, and brought them unto his mother Leah. Then Rachel said to Leah, Give me, I pray thee, of thy son's mandrakes. And she said unto her, Is it a small matter that thou hast taken my husband? and wouldest thou take away my son's mandrakes also? And Rachel said, Therefore he shall lie with thee to night for thy son's mandrakes. And Jacob came out of the field in the evening, and Leah went out to meet him, and said, Thou must come in unto me; for surely I have hired thee with my son's mandrakes. And he lay with her that night. And God hearkened unto Leah, and she conceived, and bare Jacob the fifth son. And Leah said, God hath given me my hire, because I have given my maiden to my husband: and she called his name Issachar. And Leah conceived again, and bare Jacob the sixth son. And Leah said, God hath endued me with a good dowry; now will my husband dwell with me, because I have born him six sons: and she called his name Zebulun. And afterwards she bare a daughter, and called her name Dinah. And God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb
(Genesis 30:1-22).*

Rachel began to set forth to earn Jacob's love by having babies. Because she was yet barren, Rachel made Bilhah, her maid, have babies for her. The race was on between Rachel and Leah, and Rachel was using her maid to give her a competitive edge. Both Rachel and Leah were trying to earn Jacob's love through producing fruit. Both believed the more babies they had, the more loved they would be. Rachel had complained to Jacob and even threatened suicide, so she was taking matters into her own hands by forcing this thing to happen. During this time, both Leah, Leah's maid and Rachel's maid had many children. In fact, most of the sons who formed the twelve tribes of Israel were born during this time! The whole atmosphere of such an episode must have been one of contention, competition and envy between women who were sisters and were meant to love one another.

Then the scriptures tell us that *"God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bore a son"* (Genesis 30:22-23). Despite all her striving, God had not forgotten Rachel. He remembered her, and in His own time opened her womb so that she might conceive. All the striving and manipulating did not stop Him from bringing forth a son in His time. God opened her womb by His Spirit according to His promise. He was not moved by Rachel's works, neither was He manipulated by her schemes. It did not happen through the efforts of the flesh, but God Himself brought forth according to His eternal plan and covenant. God had not forgotten her or the promise that was upon Abraham and his descendants. God did not withhold His grace to bring forth a son through her because of her terrible attitudes and fleshly methods. His promise remained with her, for His promise remains with His Seed (which Seed is Christ). We can strive, manipulate and try to earn a relationship with God that is already established in His heart. Yet the time must come when we discover the basis upon which God desires to move in our lives.

Beautiful Grace

God loved Rachel in her barrenness and brought forth a son through her by His Spirit. All of this represents how God brings forth His Son through us. Christ coming forth through us is not the work of our flesh. It comes by the Spirit of God opening our eyes to see that Christ is our life and that through us He will now live. We can rejoice in hope, knowing that we will not be ashamed, for even the barren shall rejoice in fruit bearing! Rachel is our third witness concerning God's way with the barren, for we have seen this same pattern already with Sarah and Rebekah. We can see that God loves the barren, abides in oneness with the barren, and brings forth Christ through the barren by the work of His Spirit. May these examples given to us in God's Word speak to our hearts and strengthen our relationship and trust in God.

The Flesh Persecutes the Spirit

"But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now" (Galatians 4:29).

We have just looked at Rachel and discovered that the carnal flesh wants to bring forth fruit by works of striving, but God wants us to bring forth by His Spirit according to His promise. The way of the Spirit is peaceful, whereas the way of the flesh is full of strife (Romans 8:6). We will now see that the fruit of the flesh persecutes the fruit of the Spirit.

Jacob's mother, Rebekah, had two sons, (Jacob and Esau) that wrestled with each other in her womb. Just like Rachel and Leah fought, Rebekah's babies wrestled in her belly (Genesis 25:22). One child (Esau) was going to function by the works of the flesh, and the other (Jacob) would manipulate for a long time but eventually come to fruitfulness by promise. In this same manner, Rebekah's husband Isaac had a brother named Ishmael who persecuted him because he came by promise and not through the striving of the flesh (Galatians 4:28-30). This striving between the flesh and the Spirit is a theme that is throughout the whole bible. The Seed (which is Christ Himself in us) can only come forth by the Spirit of God. The Seed of Christ in us is the fruit that God was for-shadowing through Abraham and his seed: *"And if you be Christ's then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Galatians 3:29). The fruit produced through the work of the flesh is not the coming forth of Christ and therefore has no acceptance with God. The works of the flesh are manifest in hatred, strife, jealousy wrath, sedition and the like (Galatians 5:19-20). The Spirit and the flesh are contrary, the one to the other.

Two Relationships

"You who desire to be under the law, do you not know that it is written that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, and the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh, but he who was of the freewoman was by promise"
(Galatians 4:21-23).

The New Testament scriptures quoted above address Abraham, his two sons and the women who brought them forth. One woman was a bondmaid and the other was a freewoman. One woman was a household servant and the other was his wife. **The relationships these women had with Abraham and the way they brought forth their fruit shows us the two different approaches to fruit-bearing.** These things are an allegory for us, and they represent two covenants or relationships. One way of relating comes from Mt. Sinai, where the law was given. Hagar represents this relationship because the method in which she brought forth Ishmael was done through the efforts of the flesh trying to produce the seed that was meant to come forth by the Spirit. The scriptures say that Hagar "bore her children for bondage". Once again, Hagar represents a whole covenant that functions by the law through the works of the flesh. However, there is another relationship that comes from above, from the realm where-in we are risen and in union with Christ. The place of this covenant is the Jerusalem which is above, the risen Body who is the wife of the Lamb. She is the mother of us all, and brings forth her fruit through union with Christ by the work of the Spirit.

“For Hagar is Mt. Sinai where the law was given and answers to Jerusalem and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem is the mother of us all” (Galatians 4:25-26). These scriptures go on to say that Hagar answers to Jerusalem. Even though we may appear desolate now, we shall have many more children than those who have joined with the law through their flesh to produce fruit. Our Husband will cause us to bring forth, for He has travailed for us in His death and bore us in His resurrection that by His Spirit His Life might come through us. Once again, it was HIS travail through His Cross that bore us into union with His Life, and therefore it is His work in us that brings that Life to fruition. Once again, the fruit which is Christ is by promise through the Spirit and not by the works of the flesh.

Your Maker Is Your Husband

“For thy Maker is thy husband” (Isaiah 54:5).

The God Who makes us fruitful is not some far away Sovereign that we are separate from; rather, He is Who we are in union with! This makes sense, for fruit only comes through union; therefore the One Who makes us fruitful must also be our Husband. Your Maker is the one that you are married to! There is no need to fear rejection or worry about earning love. We have no need to cry because of barrenness, for the One who will make us fruitful already loves and accepts us in Himself! Who is going to make us fruitful? The One that we are already accepted by, the One who already loves us, and the One who we are joined to in resurrection stability. He is going to do it, for through His death, burial and resurrection, He has already done it. This scripture comes from Isaiah chapter 54, but if you look back just one chapter to 53 you will read about the labor and travail that the Lamb of God went through to bring forth a Body, a Bride. We are the wife of that Lamb who travailed, and through Him alone can we bear fruit. His Life is our fruitfulness.

What sweet consolation to the barren wife, knowing that her husband is the one who will bring her into fruitfulness. This fruitfulness surpasses individual fruit, for if you read further into Isaiah chapter 54, you will see that He is making her into a city, a corporate Bride that bears His increase together as one habitation for His Life. In other words, God is making both “Rachel and Leah” to bring forth as one in Himself. He is building all of us according to the one Bride that we are in His heart, for He desires that ultimately His fruit will come through a corporate Bride, the Jerusalem that is from above (Rev. 21, John 17). He will make us according to who we are in Him in resurrection. He will bring forth this tremendous increase through His Seed in us as His Body. May our eyes continue to turn from our barrenness to

behold the wonderful things that are in God's heart concerning those He loves in oneness.

Group Discussion Questions

Chapter Three

- Discuss these statements: God does not torment. Rather, knowing His perfect love will cast out our tormenting fears, (look at John 4:18). Fruit comes from this place of rest in our acceptance and oneness in the risen Christ and not from our places of separation and striving. Knowing God's perfect love will replace our fear and striving with peace, rest and assurance that God is going to bring forth that which He said He would.
- Rachel's focus at one point left Jacob and fixed itself on fruitfulness. She had found her identity in her fruit and not in her husband. Discuss how our focus can leave Jesus and turn to the earth and fixate on manifestation of fruit rather than abiding in oneness.
- Rachel set forth to earn Jacob's love by having babies. How does this mindset fall short of knowing the heart of the Lord?
- How can focusing on ourselves rather than the Lord create an atmosphere of contention, competition and envy among the brethren?
- Discuss how we can strive, manipulate and try to earn a relationship with God that is already established in His heart.

Chapter Four

“Rejoice Oh Barren and Spare Not!”

Introduction

Because of our love for Jesus, we can experience deep sorrow and even depression when we find that our walk is not as fruitful as we would desire for the Lord's sake. Constant failures can begin to rob us of our faith. But this is not the Lord's view or heart concerning us. He tells the barren to rejoice and shout for joy! He tells us to prepare for His increase by stretching and enlarging our hearts to contain His fullness. Rather than rejection and unbelief, God commands us to exult our hearts in His grace and receive that we are even now joined to Him in Life. You are fertile ground if you are joined to Jesus! No matter what your outward state, in Christ all is well and God is able to bring forth His Son through you. Good ground is a heart that receives God's Word concerning our condition, which is accepted in the Beloved. May the Lord Himself continue to cultivate faith in our hearts that we might receive the wonder of His love as He richly dwells and increases within us.

Let Your Faith Expand!

“Sing, O barren, thou that didst not bear; break forth into singing, and cry aloud, thou that didst not travail with child: for more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married wife, saith the Lord. Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited. Fear not; for thou shalt not be ashamed: neither be thou confounded; for thou shalt not be put to shame: for thou shalt forget the shame of thy youth,

*and shalt not remember the reproach of thy widowhood any more. **For thy Maker is thine husband**; the Lord of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth shall he be called". (Isaiah 54:1-5)*

In our last chapter we discussed the reality that our Husband is our Maker! The ramifications of that statement are radical and can completely liberate the heart that comprehends what it means. If the person making us was our Judge, then we would live in constant condemnation and rejection. If our maker was primarily a craftsman or builder, then we would live in fear of being cast away if not formed properly. But the scriptures declare that the One who is making us is our Husband. Even in a barren and unformed state, we are not to fear, be ashamed or be confounded. Think about this in realistic terms; when you are failing constantly, do you feel ashamed and fearful? Does your mind feel confused with thoughts that God is upset with you? How is it possible to cast out such overwhelming reactions to our own lack? The answer comes through knowing the heart of Jesus for His wife, the Church. Even when Sarah was barren, Abram called her his wife and received her as one with himself (Genesis 16:1). How much more will Christ who died for us and is now risen with us in Him not condemn us but hold us in the bonds of oneness through every stage of conformity? (Romans 8:34-39). Our Maker has already accepted us even before we are fully "made" in conformity! Our hope of being formed and fruitful is that through this settled union His fruit will flow! Our hope flourishes when we see that BECAUSE we are already joined into Christ, ALL His resources can now come through us. Our faith expands the more we comprehend the greatness of the marriage we have been brought into with Christ. His death and His resurrection has sealed the joining through which fruitfulness manifests. His travail on His Cross replaces our striving to bring forth through our own efforts. Our place now is to abide in the Vine and allow our faith to exult in the glorious reality of resurrection oneness in Christ. As we abide in Him, He will abide in us (John 15:4).

The more our ears hear this Good News and the more our eyes see Jesus in resurrection, the more our faith will have to readjust and expand. Spare not! Lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes for Christ Himself is going to tabernacle in and through you! The scriptures say, "*Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes.*" Wow! Let us really consider what this verse means. It is a whole-hearted response of liberating faith that truly knows Christ is going to come forth in abundance because a marriage has already taken place. This Bride is singing in her barrenness - literally breaking forth into joyful song! She KNOWS the path to fruitfulness is through a union that is already established through His travail. She is turning from her barrenness unto His fullness and preparing herself to receive abundance of grace that she might reign in Life through her Husband and Source,

Jesus Christ. *“They which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ”* (Romans 5:17). *“And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace”* (John 1:16).

As we have just shared, the One who loves us and has received us completely into Himself is the One Who is forming, filling and bringing forth through us! As we come to know this His perfect love will cast out fear and the need to earn His acceptance through works. In light of the glorious reality of all this, we are discovering that our place is to simply release our faith and join with the Lord in His desire to dwell in us and live through us.

Faith comes by hearing and hearing comes by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). We need to immerse ourselves into the Word of His heart and receive with open hearts that His Word is for His Bride. The Word of God must become a mirror that we look into and see Christ Who is our Life. We can let our new identity in Him wash away the old individual mentality that robs us of our faith and limits us to our own resources.

Not Our Limitations But His Abundance

We have been looking at scriptures that exhort us to “spare not”, but to enlarge, lengthen and strengthen every part of us that will contain His Life. We are to prepare ourselves as a Bride adorned for her Husband (Revelation 21:2). This adorning is not perfecting ourselves for him but rather preparing ourselves to be His habitation! Our focus is not on our limitations but His abundance. Once we realize that He has set His heart on dwelling in us as His Body, then we must respond in a like faith that determines to be the place where He can dwell! Our place is to realize that we are His place! Our part is not to do what only Christ can do; rather, it is to be the place from whence He lives. The truth is, we can do our part, for it is simply faith responding to His great love! What the Spirit can bring forth in us cannot even be contained by us. It is that overwhelming to be one with Jesus! He came to give us life, and life more abundantly (John 10:10).

The Word of God would not have used the words, “spare not” if there was not the potential for us to hold back and spare. The question then arises, “Why would we spare”? I believe the answer is simply a fear and unbelief that comes from looking at ourselves rather than Jesus. It is for this reason that we must press in to really see the Lord, His heart, and His travail for us on His Cross. We must determine to be a Bride that knows the Bridegroom and relates to Him in the covenant that He has established for us. If we choose to relate to Him under the law and according to our own

righteousness and works, then we will experience fear and unbelief. Strife will reign where joyful union should be thriving.

It is our part to open our hearts by faith and believe in God's ability to bring forth what He has promised. We can choose to be with Him as a Bride and acknowledge with an open and receiving heart that He has died to bring us into fruitful union. Our mind may say, "Do not allow your faith to grow so big. Do not lift up those everlasting doors so high for the King of Glory to come in (*Psalms 24:7*). Do not get your heart set on bringing forth the Son." But the Word of God says, "Let them lengthen and enlarge the place of their habitation. Spare not!" In essence, He is telling these barren women, "Do not spare or hold back but allow your faith to soar." These scriptures are exalting in the spirit of faith. They declare that God will bring forth through the barren and that we must receive that with jubilant hearts rejoicing! Paul even quoted scriptures from this passage in Isaiah 54 to the New Testament saints at Galatia because it is so important that the Church knows the way God wants to relate to her (Galatians 4:27). The question we must ask ourselves at this point is, "do we really know the heart of Christ concerning how He relates to His Bride?" Are we seeking after a method for fruitfulness, or are we hungering and thirsting to really see God and be in tune with His heart?

Glory Hallelujah!

What the flesh brings forth requires hard work because we have to sustain it, keep it alive, and make it go. But that which the Spirit brings forth is like rivers of living water that are beyond our measure. Spare not, for what we are going to experience we cannot fully contain. What the Spirit can bring forth in us by faith is beyond what we even have the room for! That is how great this covenant is that God initiated with us and His Seed in us. The Seed of Christ in us will spring out from the fullness of the risen Son and that is so much greater than our capacity. This is the promise of the Spirit. This is the "kind" that we are of, for we are from above and not from beneath (John 8:23). We come from within Christ and are filled with His resources and not our own. We are of a Kingdom that has no end, for of His increase there is no end (Isaiah 9:7). Spare not, for when He comes He will fill, overflow and be unto us Life, richness and abundance beyond anything we have ever dreamed of. We are speaking of the coming forth of the Son, and it is Christ and not us.

Our souls will magnify the Lord as we discover the way He is in the bringing forth of His Son through weak vessels that have no strength in themselves. Listen to Hannah's heart as she rejoices in the Lord for bringing forth Samuel, "*And Hannah*

prayed, and said, My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, mine horn is exalted in the Lord: my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies; because I rejoice in thy salvation. There is none holy as the Lord: for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God. Talk no more so exceeding proudly; let not arrogancy come out of your mouth: for the Lord is a God of knowledge, and by him actions are weighed. The bows of the mighty men are broken, and they that stumbled are girded with strength. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; and they that were hungry ceased: so that the barren hath born seven; and she that hath many children is waxed feeble" (I Samuel 2:1-5). Depression and despair over our own condition can transform into glorious praise when we turn our hearts away from ourselves and unto the Lord Who we are one with.

Fruit Through the Spirit

Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Galatians 4:28-31, 5:1-5.)

Are you of those who "through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith"? Are you among the barren who are rejoicing? If not, then why don't you join us!!! There is true and deep joy to be found in waiting for Christ to come forth by life and through the Spirit, by faith and not works of the law. This is not a passive acceptance of our own lack, but a joyful embrace that we are in union with Christ in all His fullness and that He will flow through us in God's own time!

In the time of life, the Son will come forth. "*And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son.*" (Genesis 18:10). This "time of life" is when the bondwoman is not in control. This means that our relationship is not with law trying to bring forth through the works of the flesh. "Hagar" and the covenant that she represents is no longer our means to fruitfulness. This is also the time when Ishmael is not running around the house being treated as the true heir and fruit that was promised. This means that our fleshly fruit is not accepted as Christ. "The time of life" is when we have no faith in ourselves, but we trust God to do the impossible things that He said He could. At this time of coming to the end of faith in ourselves, God can finally start moving for our

confidence is now in Him. We may begin to start laughing because this seems too easy and we have been through so much! We may stand in awe of the grace of God as the Seed starts springing forth and Christ Himself, the hope of glory, the promise of the Spirit, comes forth in glorious grace! We will find life everlasting flowing out from Jesus, our Husband and Maker, through simple earthen vessels set apart for His fullness alone. The Seed of promise will begin to come out of us – mothers and vessels of Christ's Life. These vessels will pour out Jesus from their weakness and barrenness. This gift of Life came from Christ Who loved us when we did not deserve it and made us one with Himself when we could not earn it. All glory to God!

Cast Out the Bond Woman and Her Son

"Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman" (Galatians 4:30).

There comes the time when we must make a pointed decision to remain in the Spirit and not return to the flesh. The scriptures say, "Cast out the bond woman and her son" (Galatians 4:30). We must cast out that mind that says we have to produce something in order to be loved and accepted. We are to cast it out and the fruit that would come with that mind. Instead, we must choose to wait on the coming forth of Christ through faith just like faithful Abraham did. There is so much that can be said concerning what is required to raise and live with Ishmael. This one deep conclusion must eventually be accepted concerning the works of our flesh; they are not the fruit that God is after. We can become exhausted with the work involved in producing and maintaining a lifestyle of works for God. We become self-righteous and offended with those who receive fruit by grace through union. If we are not careful, our hearts can begin to persecute the sweet grace found in God's way with His Bride. Yet God is calling out to our hearts right now, asking us to cast out that old relationship and begin to relate to Him through oneness. It is time for our souls to enter into His rest and partake freely from the abundance of His Life. Instead of spending all of our time raising Ishmael and grooming him for ministry, we need to cast him out and set our hearts on Christ becoming our way and our life.

The Gospel Is Funny!

"And Sarah said God hath made me laugh so that all will hear will laugh with me" (Genesis 21:5).

The last scripture that relates to Sarah's bringing forth of an heir is Genesis 21:6, where she is found laughing as Isaac is born! She is laughing at the way this son came forth from her! Truly, this Gospel can be funny! *"And Sarah said God hath made me laugh so that all will hear will laugh with me."* If we really have ears to hear what the

Spirit is saying, we will laugh with Sarah! The barren will break out in joyful song and laughter because of the love and grace found in God's ways. When we begin to truly hear this Gospel, that God by His grace will bring forth the Son in us, then we will laugh with Sarah. Our laughter will not be mockery or unbelief, rather it will be the laughter that is reveling in the glorious grace of God's work in us. All the glory goes back to God. We were barren, and He brought forth.

It is not that we are confident in our abilities but rather that we are overcome with the greatness of the One we are joined to. The Spirit of God is here to unveil His beauty and overshadow us with His glorious fullness. May the riches of His grace and the wonder of His care rejoice our soul and refresh us in our inner man by the supply of His Life.

Be Encouraged!

The sum of what we have been sharing is that the Lord wants to encourage us in our faith. What can God not do? Is this thing too hard for Him? What used to be sarcasm in us will turn into that laughter of Sarah that is bursting with grace and can only be expressed in joyful noises! Whoever truly hears this is going to laugh for joy! The grace of God is speaking to our hearts. Let us prepare our hearts to receive His Word with a faith that accepts His desire and ability to bring forth Christ through us. It is time to finally stop our striving, take a breather and rest back into the fact that our Maker (the One Who is going to make this happen), is our husband Who has already accepted us. This thing is by a promise and a covenant that is going to be established between you and God and your Seed, which is Christ in you. God Himself is going to establish that covenant with you even before Christ comes out of you. We can remember that Abraham had no proof at the time when God's Word came to him besides an old body and lots of years gone by. Yet God desires to establish His covenant deep in our being so that we will trust the Lord with all of our hearts and not lean to anything but the Father's desire to bring forth His Son.

We must begin to comprehend the Son's desire to inhabit His Body, His Bride; and the love that is in His heart towards her. When condemnation creeps in or we start looking at our failures, then we must realize that those are as nothing to God. He is waiting for His Seed to come out of us, and seven years are as one day to Him. Love covers a multitude of sins, for God is truly longsuffering with us until that time of life comes when the Father brings forth His Son through us by His grace. It is time for the barren to rejoice and prepare for the coming of the Lord. Get your house ready! Open the doors and lengthen the cords! Do not spare or hold back for Jesus is going to flow out of you in ways that you never dreamed of! This will happen by grace

through faith and by a work of the Spirit and not of the flesh. The Lord will fill His temple which is His Body and Bride. The scriptures declare that “heaven and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain Him”, and yet this is the One Who wants to dwell in us; His temple (II Chronicles 2:6). For this reason we must “spare not”, for He could suffocate if we don’t! God wants to dwell in us, in all richness.

Final Exhortation

As we have been reading through this manual, we may have been receiving this word individually, but this is so much bigger than just individuals. Know that the Lord is dealing with us as His corporate Bride. In Him, we each make up a part of her, and throughout the verses we have been searching can be heard the words of the Lord’s heart to His Bride. At one point in this book we looked at the scriptures referring to Leah and Rachel. Each of these women were crying out individually to have children come forth. Like them, it can be easy to see ourselves only individually, but we are one Bride, and God’s promises concerning fruitfulness are to one corporate Bride. We must receive that the things we have been discussing are for us individually, but they are also solid and sure for the entire Bride. This is a corporate thing that God is doing across the world and in all generations. Know that this is something bigger than our individual lives. Allow the Holy Spirit to release into your heart that this is greater than just ourselves. We are mothers of His heart, ordained to bring forth an increase of Christ together. May Christ truly be glorified in and through His Church. Amen.***

Group Discussion Questions

Chapter Four

- Discuss this statement: “You are fertile ground if you are joined to Jesus.”
- How can understanding that our Husband is our Maker liberate our hearts from fear and condemnation?
- Discuss how our faith expands the more we comprehend the greatness of the marriage we have been brought into with Christ through His Cross.
- Why would we “spare” while preparing ourselves to be a habitation for Christ and vessels of His fullness?

- Are we seeking after a method for fruitfulness, or are we hungering and thirsting to really see God and be in tune with His heart?
- In what ways can we cast out our old ways of relating to God and begin to relate to Him through oneness?
- What made Sarah name her son “Isaac”, which means “laughter”?

How can our sarcastic laughter of unbelief turn into the joyful laughter of grace and faith? May we allow the Holy Spirit to overshadow us with the true nature of God’s care to His Body as He brings forth His Son through us!