

The Christian home and family

Part 1

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[00:00:01] I'm sure it's true of most of us that in a weekend like this, day by day, certain impressions are being made upon our spirits. Certain threads of divine truth become collected together in our minds. We need all to continue to pray now that the Lord will bring out and bring into right focus the right impressions we've received so far, and as we try and pull some of the threads together, that they will come out in a way that makes spiritual sense. I would start with one or two immediate propositions. This is the first. We shall not meet the obligations implicit [00:01:16] in our natural and assembly relationships unless as individuals we are making real spiritual progress for ourselves. Second is similar. We shall know nothing in real terms in the appreciation of the dignity of sonship unless in our own souls we are making real spiritual progress. The third is similar again. In the ultimate, we shall know little about the enjoyment and [00:02:07] the appreciation of the ultimate in sublime relationships, the Father and the Son, unless in our own souls we are making real spiritual progress. For that reason, it is right that we should look at the chapter that outlines for us the principles that need to be followed if we are to make real spiritual progress. John, in general, writes about family matters. So towards the close of a weekend spent on family matters, it is not surprising that we turn and find ourselves turning to the writings of John, at least. In chapter 2, and we read the verse, [00:03:05] verse 12, I write unto you children. He's not here speaking only to the little children. He's writing to the whole of the family. We believers, we belong to the most sublime, the best family that has ever been brought into existence. Do we believe it? Do we act upon the truth of it? I read two verses at the beginning and the end of the outline of the principles of spiritual progress. Verse 12, I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you [00:04:03] for his name's sake. If our sins have been forgiven, God has incorporated us, he's brought us into his wonderful family, the family of God. We as individuals are children of God. The only possible start. It is possible in a company of this size and this variety that there may be some who may be querying in your minds, am I really one of the children of God? Am I a member of this wonderful family? John says, if your sin is forgiven, you're in the family. If your sins are not forgiven, you are not in the family. It is not out of place in a company of this size to [00:05:09] say to any who feel to be outsiders, don't feel included as one of the children of God. It is right that the challenge should come to you. Are your sins forgiven? There's no, belonging to the family of God includes no others than those whose sins have been forgiven. If your sins have not yet been forgiven, trust the Saviour now. Believe that he died for your sins according to the Scripture, and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scripture. I do know that there are one or two here who haven't been trusting the Saviour for long, but if your sins [00:06:04] are forgiven, you are one of the children of God. Verse 28, a caution, a reminder. Those of us who've been built into this wonderful family, we are responsible to the Lord for how we live, and the time will come when we have to answer to the Lord for the whole of our responsible lives. Another

statement that implies the need for real, personal, spiritual progress. Now this is a matter that must be pressed upon all of us, men and women, boys and girls. As to the teaching, it is the male of [00:07:07] the species that is referred to. Don't be confused by that. The stages of spiritual growth are put into three sectors. Now, growth is continuous. I enjoyed the fact that we ended this afternoon's meeting with one statement like this, where there is life, there will be growth, and growth is evidence of the existence of life. Now, it is a continuum. It begins, and it goes on, and it matures. But for simplicity, for our finite minds, the Holy Spirit divides this concept of growth into three stages [00:08:04] of growth. Babes, young men, and fathers. Now this is spiritual growth. This is not a matter of physical age, although Scripture also says that there are things that take time, and there are things that can be more expected of those who are a little older in the faith than those who are younger in the faith. So we look at these three sectors. Before we do, let me remind you of this. Verses 13 to 27 give us the detail about spiritual growth. But the first verse of that gives us, verse 13, gives us a summary, under three headings, about fathers, young men, and little children, the babes. And then after that, there are other [00:09:09] verses, and we find, well, how much is it? Half a verse on the fathers, three and a half verses about young men, and then ten verses about the babes. How does our rating of priorities reflect that? Perhaps that confirms some of the conclusions that we've been coming to over the weekend, that we need to spend a large proportion of our time in taking care of those who are in their early, formative years of Christian growth. We need to spend much time with [00:10:01] those who might, in their soul's history, be in parallel with this term, young man, which we look at. And then eventually, we'll need to take account, as Scripture takes account, of those who might be deemed to be fathers. Everybody loves a baby. Bring a baby into the room, everybody says, ah, isn't he lovely? Isn't she lovely?

Fresh, defenceless, new, vulnerable, full of potential. How well that describes not only a physical, natural baby being brought into the family, how much it is right about a spiritual babe. I pose the question, are there any here who are not even [00:11:12] in the family, because your sins have not yet been forgiven? If not, confess Christ now as Saviour and Lord, and you'll be built in to this wonderful family. Some of you are very conscious that you are spiritual babes. This is not mock modesty. It is right to feel that, having recently trusted the Lord, that you have it all to learn. Everyone around you knows so much more than you do, and you think, I'll never make the sort of progress that is evident in the people who are roundabout. Maybe you've got as far as [00:12:07] this. You can say, I'm glad I'm a Christian. I'm trusting the Lord. I rest on his promise, believing his word. The past is forgiven, and now I am free. A mansion in heaven is waiting for me. If that's your present state of progress, praise the Lord for that. I do remember meeting a Christian of 40 years, Christian experience, who said to me, I'm saved, and I know it, and that's as far as I've got.

How tragic. If it is right, it shouldn't be so. Every provision has been made by the Lord that we can make real spiritual progress. A baby born into a natural [00:13:08] family. Oh, we want you to do well. We want you to do well in your general subjects at school. We'd like you to specialize and learn one or two special things. We'd like you to learn music so that you can sing well. We really would like Brother Coe to enjoy the singing, wouldn't we? How much more so in spiritual things. We want you to do well. No question of talking down, but those who've been on the road for longer than the spiritual babes, our hearts ache for you in being here for Christ in such a blatantly hostile world. We pray for you.

[00:14:13] But the chapter tells us about better things. Now, I'm going to read the words that apply to the spiritual babes. Please follow the words and see the resources that are available, and the warnings against possible dangers as we read these ten verses about the babes. Verse 18.

[00:15:10] Who is a liar, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?

He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son. Whoso denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father, but he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have [00:16:01] heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise, that he hath promised us even eternal life. These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you. But as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him. Oh, if any recognize that you are still a spiritual babe, you haven't yet made much spiritual progress, read this section again and again. It's included in the Bible especially for you. [00:17:03] It tells us that from the beginning, as soon as your sins are forgiven, and you are part of God's wonderful family, God puts a power within you that you never had before, the Holy Spirit of God. God puts a power within you that you never had before, the Holy Spirit of God. And that's described in a special way in this little section, especially for the spiritual babes. God says by the Spirit you will have a spiritual instinct. Long before you can put chapter and verse for why you do things, you'll be able to discern by a spiritual unction, a spiritual instinct, I'm going to keep away from that, it's not right. I'm going to follow that because it is right. [00:18:09] If you follow your delicate conscience and your spiritual instinct in your early Christian years, you will keep that delicate conscience for the rest of your life. If you ignore it, if you defy it, your conscience will become seared and the Word of God will lose its effect upon you. Now what does the Holy Spirit use in giving you this spiritual instinct? Yes, we have the Word of God included in this valuable section. We have expressed dependence in prayer, we've had much of that. This is the epistle 2 which tells us so much about the fellowship, [00:19:05] the sharing, the communion, first of all with divine persons, the Father and the Son, and then also day by day with like-minded Christian believers. This is why as a spiritual babe, it is essential that as soon as possible that you find out, seek out with the Lord's help, a company of believers, fellow members of the family of God, where you can be there and you can say, I'm at home. I suppose like many others in my late teens, I did a bit of shopping around, trying this and that, seeing things that appealed to me and seeing things that didn't appeal to me [00:20:02] one little bit. But I can still remember finding myself amongst a company of the Lord's people where I felt immediately at home. It was the right place for me. I cannot say it would have been the right place for you or anyone else, but I do know from the Lord it was the spiritual home to which the Lord was directing me. Happy are we when we settle down in a local assembly, where we feel at home, where the principles that are put into practice are right according to scripture and not the whim of fashion. How happy we are when there are those who act in mutual submission, as we read from Ephesians chapter 5. In addition to that which some of us can enjoy [00:21:03] within the precincts of a happy Christian home and family, in addition to the local assembly atmosphere which will be most helpful, let us take every opportunity too of meeting together like this in conference, whether on bank holidays, whether in the annual conferences like Kilkeel, like the St Andrew's conference this year held at Hull, like the conference at Findockty. I'm unashamedly one of those who would like to seek out every opportunity of being together with my brethren to enjoy their company and to look at the word with them together. I'm deliberately spending time on this matter of the babes because scripture does. [00:22:04] There will be problems.

Those of you who've had a family will know what I mean when I say that having babies can be messy, inconvenient, embarrassing, and time-taking. I could use other adjectives as well.

How sad it would be if a couple are either sterile or for some other reason [00:23:01] they find

themselves childless and would really desire a family before the Lord. How happily they would enjoy the apparently difficult things of raising a family. Of course, some people will never understand babies at all. I remember my father in the faith, father in the faith, wonderful Christian gentleman, at a time when our number one was beginning to express herself by charging around the house with all the apparent naked aggression of a disturbed pit bull terrier, and my father in the faith, when he saw me, he said, how is the little one? The little smile, the look of recognition. You see, that wasn't his line. Oh, he did an immense, a tremendous job [00:24:05] with young men. Thankfully, there are many others who are very good with babies. We've seen them this weekend. The aunts, the uncles, the adoptive foster parents, looking after the little ones to give the parents the opportunity for adult fellowship. It needs to be the same spiritually. It tends to be the babes that are neglected. Let us make sure that none of the babes drift away for lack of attention. Let us make sure those of us who are a little older in the faith, that every opportunity is given to encourage. Brother said to me a year ago, I was amazed I hadn't heard it before. He said, [00:25:01] discouragement is the devil's work. Encouragement is the Lord's work. Let us see that we do everything to encourage the babes in Christ. The young men, let us turn again to the Word.

Middle of verse 14. I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong and the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one. Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof. [00:26:04] But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. Babies moving on to their next stage of development. This is where the trouble starts, isn't it?

Have you ever thought how difficult it is to be a baby? For months, you take the little one, sitting on the floor, you turn them over, you put the knee in the right place, and the ankle in the right place, and you give them a little nudge, and you encourage them to crawl. Having got over that hurdle, which you immediately regret, crawl. Having got over that hurdle, which you immediately regret, you get hold of the hands, and you try and stand them up so they get used to taking their own [00:27:05] weight, and eventually they do it. And then taking them by the hand, you encourage them step by step, just to do a little walking. And then as soon as they walk, you say, sit still. You spend months mouthing little words, mummy, daddy, cat, dog.

Soon as they can talk, you say, sit still, keep quiet, shut up. We don't mean it, of course. We mean there's a right time and place for everything. There's a danger that in preying over our spiritual babes, as we must, that when they begin to take the strain in the muscles, which are just beginning to build up their strength, the grave danger is that we say, well, you've got the right intention, but that's not the way to do [00:28:07] it. We'll tell you when you can start and how to do it. We'll tell you when you can start and how to do it. Think of the natural analogy and learn this spiritual lesson.

Every opportunity must be taken, mustn't it, to give those who are emerging from spiritual babyhood, giving them the opportunity to stretch themselves. I've always been a firm believer in the principle, in any sphere, that responsibility should be passed on from one generation to the next generation as soon as the next generation is able to take it on, sooner rather than later. [00:29:04] It is terribly sad when those who are more mature hang on to responsibilities until they are physically and mentally incapable of carrying on. That's not God's way. It's a challenge, isn't it, that those who functioned in the priesthood in the Old Testament didn't start. Well, they began their apprenticeship at 25 and then they were fully trained by the time they were 30. Now, many of us would say, oh, that's good, don't

start before you're 30. How many of the same would say, we should lay down the reins of responsibility at 50, responsibility at 50, as the priests did? Or then we say, oh, it's the spiritual age that counts. [00:30:04] I heard a brother say, I'm 74 years of age, but I thank God I'm not yet 50. The brethren might have thought he was 102. Let us, while we are in our relatively youthful vigour, commit ourselves that before it becomes physically necessary, we will be looking to those who are in the next generation to take on the responsibility as soon as they are ready for it and they will not then feel frustrated. Young men, and when I say young men, I mean Christian believers whose sins are forgiven, who've made a little bit progress in their Christian life and have grown a little spiritually. [00:31:06] You might be male or female, you might be old or young, but having trusted the Lord, you've made a measure of spiritual progress. Try this one for size. I guess, no I don't, I judge, I judge.

From when you trust the Saviour for yourself, from the time your sins are forgiven, unless you are a child in physical terms, if you're anywhere near approaching say your mid-teens or later, probably younger, I judge.

After two years, it'll be obvious to those in your local assembly whether you're going to be any use [00:32:08] or no use at all. That's a strong statement. I would say within the first two years, you make it obvious whether or not you are going to enter into that full once and for all commitment that we read about in Romans 12. I'm not laying down a stricture, I'm not saying that must happen within two years of conversion, far be the thought, but I am saying this, there will be such evidence of early spiritual growth and development over the first two years, which means someone has either set their course in the right direction or not. Read the history of Timothy from the first mention in the middle of the book of Acts. Notice how he applied himself in such a way as a young or [00:33:08] youngish man, that within a few years, it became obvious to the local brethren, here was a young man who was going to be useful in the work of the Lord. We're always challenging the old, that's easy. Let me give a challenge to those of you brothers and sisters who recognize you've made a little spiritual progress. Wouldn't regard yourselves as fully developed in the spiritual sense, but you recognize as before God, you're beginning to feel your way. Have you set your course? Have you committed yourself that whatever the cost, [00:34:03] in personal terms, you are determined to be faithful to your Lord and Saviour, and follow the Word, and not your personal inclinations? Let me say this to you, you still don't know it all.

You still have a lot to learn. Just a minute on that.

One thing that staggers me, young people go to school, further education, university, polytech, college, whatever.

They're introduced to a new subject. They get the textbooks, they get the lectures, [00:35:07] they say, oh this is difficult, I'll have to work at it, I don't understand it, I'll have to learn the terms, I'll have to keep at this, and over a period, I will get to grips with the subject. Why do we allow the devil to deceive us into acting in exactly the opposite way in spiritual things, where the temptation for me, if I'm a young believer, is to say, I can't understand it, I'm not coming back. I can't read, I can't understand the language of the books, I'm going to give up and go I'm going to give up and go somewhere where it's easier. You wouldn't dream of doing that in your secular studies. Why do it in spiritual studies? Oh, the young man has the word of God. He and she [00:36:05] have the spirit of God. You have the help of the local assembly and you have the opportunity of getting to conferences. I was present once at a big conference where a young man asked a question. I had a feeling he was trying just to be a little smart. I'm sure no one here would do that. He put a question in the Bible

reading to the brother that had been speaking about spiritual experience, and the young man said to the mature one, would you tell us, Mr. So-and-so, to what you owe your success? The older person didn't say the words, but the way he looked at the young man, [00:37:11] obviously what he had in mind was, I have been young, you have not been old. He was able to speak from experience. He said, let's not speak about success. He said, the Lord will settle that. He said, but let me say this, if there is any way in which I have been enabled to be helpful in the Lord's service to myself or anyone else, it was because at the age of 15 or 16, I committed myself before the Lord that unless I was out of town or ill or busy with something I couldn't leave, I would be at the local prayer meeting and the local Bible reading every week. [00:38:03] I don't think that was the answer the young man expected. We are people of fashion. How sad it has become fashionable for younger people in many parts of the country never to go to the prayer meeting and Bible reading. It's not the way of making spiritual progress. Suffer a word of exhortation. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, the pride of life. Let us bear in mind that when the Holy Spirit speaks to those who have arrived at this stage of development called young men, young men because that's the kind of person we think about as giving the idea of youthful vigor, [00:39:05] an abundant supply of energy, a determination to finish the job that's been started and not to be stumbled by trivialities. That's what we think about when we think of a normal healthy young man. Now that spiritual attitude has to be present in young men and young women who are committed to serve the Lord. But here it's not even a matter of serving, it's a matter of personal spiritual progress. Now the Satan is out to stumble you. He will appeal to every part of you, spirit and soul and body. Came in with the reference to Adam and Eve in our Bible reading in Ephesians 5. Comes in here again. Satan will appeal to the body [00:40:04] He will appeal to the body with the lusts of the flesh. He will appeal to your soul with that which your eyes see and your heart sets its object upon. The pride of life, that which Satan would present before your mind and spirit to deflect you from being fully committed to your Lord and Master. But the lessons are cumulative. What has been said to the babes continues to be available to the young men, spiritually speaking. You still have a spiritual instinct if it hasn't been seared by neglect. You have the Word of God. You have the helpful support available, if you use it, [00:41:06] of those who've gone the road before you. I'd better leave this matter of young men with a recommendation. I want to mention to you five matters which I consider to be lifelong commitments. First of all, soul salvation. Oh, you say, of course. Once saved, always saved. Thank God for that. Scripture says, as he is completely clear of judgment, so are we, even while we're in this So are we, even while we're in this present evil world. Salvation of the soul is forever. [00:42:08] The commitment, total commitment, in Romans 12 is also for life. We say, if that's what God has done for me, there's nothing more and nothing less that I can do in response to what God has done for me in his wonderful compassion than hand myself unreservedly over to him, hook, line and sinker, total, complete. Yes, you say, my sins are forgiven and it's forever. Have we got to the point where we say, I'm determined, God helping me, to be set here for God. If we've come to that, [00:43:01] perhaps we are beginning to get towards the edge of what is meant by the vigor and spiritual energy of those who are termed here a young man. Thirdly, marriage. If you are making true spiritual progress, the norm for Christians is to be married and raise a family. The Lord knows, for reasons of his own, he might prevent it. I know of one family, one couple in particular, who as young people committed themselves together before the Lord to remain childless in order that without distraction they could serve the Lord. As Paul says, that's a hard thing to do. The norm is to enter into a marriage as before the Lord [00:44:05] for life. That is the spiritual norm. That agrees of course with what we had this afternoon. The fourth thing, serving the Lord. If we decide, as we must decide, that if the Lord has left us here a little while longer, there's something that we should be doing for him, that kind of commitment to serving the Lord is for life. The form of the service might change, might change, the location of the service may change, but like those we read of in the scripture, the first thing to do is to hand ourselves over to him. Then as to detail, he will give us the right channel of

service. We won't be stumbled by the difficulties of the task, [00:45:09] the apparent lack of full support by those that we know and appreciate the most, but if our commitment is to stand or fall before our Lord and Master in the service and our desire to serve him, that will be for as long as the Lord leaves us here. I would say once we have discerned before the Lord where our spiritual home should be, utter tragedies apart, rather than going back and forward as our interest or our brethren's interest waxes and wanes, let us accept that the Lord has brought to us as to a spiritual home, a local assembly, [00:46:03] where we might worship him and serve the Lord until the Lord shall come. Let us make these lifelong commitments as early in life as we can. Last touch on the young men. It is put to the credit of the spiritual young man, you are strong in the word. It is a feature, isn't it, that those who've been trusting the Lord for a few years, that they can, you can quote scripture far better than I can, word perfect. But you'll only be strong in the word if you read it, if you study it, if you study it personally and with your brethren, if you ask the Lord to make it real to you, [00:47:05] and if you respond to the challenges that the word brings. Never be strong in the word if you're expecting some miraculous revelation every time there's a problem. We need to be saturated in the word of God if the Lord is able to use us in applying his word in any particular situation. Fathers, not a lot said. Let us bear in mind again that what is said about the fathers takes into account of the fact that what they learned as children, spiritual babes, continues to be true and lived out by them. What they learned as spiritual young men continues to be true and acted upon in their years of maturity. [00:48:03] There isn't time to read them, let me just refer you to one or two scriptures about fathers. In the overall sense of the term, Ephesians 4 verse 6 tells us that in a creatorial way there is one God and Father of all. And we have other verses which tell us plainly about the use plainly about the use of the term in one way or another. 1 Corinthians 4, Paul says to the Corinthians, you have not many fathers. Now this is often misquoted or misrepresented.

It may be true as the fact that there are not many shepherds, not many elders, not many with [00:49:01] spiritual judgment among us. But to shake the head and say not many fathers is a misapplication of the scripture. Paul says to the Corinthians, as to spiritual biological generation, try and make that simpler. Paul says the Lord used me to give you spiritual birth.

I'm your father in the faith. It was through my preaching that you trusted the Lord. But happy are we if we have been used for the salvation of a precious soul. We have more spiritual riches than the world with its material wealth could ever have to offer. One soul is more valuable than all the wealth of all the world. [00:50:09] There is a special bond between those who are used of the Lord for the conversion of others and their converts, to use a term. And that is right. Paul spoke of Timothy and Titus as a true child of the faith. As to pastoral care in 1 Thessalonians 2, Paul speaks of himself both as a father to provide the right kind of care. He also speaks of himself as a nursing mother, one who in the early stages of development is there looking upon every movement and providing every kind of momentary detailed care. Morally, there are those who are spoken of as sons and [00:51:05] daughters. And because it is moral, perhaps that's why the term daughters is used in 2 Corinthians and chapter 6. Speaking of God, we read of him as the father of mercies, the father of lights, the father of spirits, and the father of glory. Well, these are happy studies in themselves. But we must turn first of all to Romans chapter 8. I want to read for further meditation a few verses here and there. As you find this place, read again what is said about the fathers. What is said about the fathers in two brief statements is their knowledge of God, their knowledge of the Lord, and that includes with it everything else that might be necessary. [00:52:02] Read again what is said about the spiritual fathers. Accepting this, full spiritual maturity is enjoined upon us as the Christian norm, babe, young man, and father. Romans chapter 8 verse 14.

As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God. Galatians 4. Verse 4. When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his son, made of a woman, [00:53:09] made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Let us learn to distinguish between what the Lord teaches us about being children, and on the other hand, being sons. Again, terms that refer to all Christians. As to being children, God has given us that nature and life, and brought us into that [00:54:04] relationship with him as children, bringing us into his family with a view to making true spiritual progress, on the lines of 1 John 2. But at whatever stage of spiritual development has been allowed of the Lord, at all times there is the enjoyment of the family relationship, there is the living out that nature which he has put within us, there is the expression of the life implanted within us. But Romans and Galatians say, you're not only children, you're sons. Not you will be, or you might be, you are sons. This is not now quite relationship or nature, this is dignity. God has conferred upon us [00:55:02] the dignity of sonship. Speaking as a provincial, I may not get my facts quite right, but I understand that if anyone is elected, if that's the term, to the office of Lord Mayor of London, it is such an important function that whoever is brought in to be the Lord Mayor for the year is granted, is bestowed with a knighthood. Why is that? It's because the office, the function has such dignity attached to it that there must be a dignity conferred upon the one filling the office which matches, which is commensurate with the job that's to be done. Whether that's true or not, it's certainly true in Christianity. God has conferred upon us sonship. What a dignity [00:56:07] that the Son, God the Son is absolutely unique and ever will be. But in order that we might function as we should in the presence of God and the Father, we've had this wonderful dignity conferred upon us that we have had sonship bestowed upon us. Not a stage of growth, stage of growth, but a dignity conferred. I'd like you to perhaps meditate a little more upon that. But let us, in closing almost, let us turn back to John's Gospel, chapter 4 and verses 23 and 24.

[00:57:06] The hour is coming and now is when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is spirit and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. And back to the first scripture we read, 1 John 1 verses 1 to 4.

For brevity, verse 4, that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you that ye may also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

[00:58:03] The most sublime of any declared relationship in the universe is this eternally subsisting relationship between the Father and the Son. Let us say again, natural relationships have their place. We must take our responsibility. But the natural relationships are secondary relationships. And when lived out to the full, in these natural relationships, they become the proper setting for the intelligent appreciation and enjoyment of the ultimate primary relationship, the Father and the Son. Many attempted definitions have been penned as to eternal life, some better than others.

[00:59:11] As far as our present meditation is concerned, turning away from natural, temporal relationships, we are brought to this. One way of saying what eternal life involves, not as a complete definition, think about this. Eternal life involves living in the appreciation of the enjoyment of the eternally subsisting relationship of the Father and the Son. Simple words in themselves, sublime in their meaning, and perhaps if we are beginning to enter into that kind of appreciation about the Father and the Son, we are beginning to get into the realm [01:00:07] that is enjoyed perhaps not by the babe or even the young men, but those who might rightly be termed fathers before God. Let us

commit ourselves to take every opportunity of making spiritual growth, that without any sense of self-will or vain glory, that the Lord's assessment will be when each of us stands before him, in that in making this progress and entering into the appreciation of what is involved in the Father and the Son, that the Lord is able to say to each of us, you have done what you could. Let us give expression to any appreciation of the concept we've already arrived at as we sing together hymn number 200. In other terms, we might have said [01:01:07] this is a hymn of the fellowship offering. There's that which God enjoys, there's that which the Son enjoys, there's that which the people of God enjoys.