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Spirit Formed

The Book of Acts, written by Luke, a Greek convert to Christ as well as an adept historian and much loved doctor, may at first seem to be just an interesting journal documenting the work of those first century apostles.

It is much more than that. Quite simply, the Book of Acts is a testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit. As such, it's story is ongoing. Written as a letter some 2000 years ago, Acts gives us amazing insights into those apostolic times, introduced with the ascension of Jesus to heaven and the beginning of the church era with the coming of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost.

Faithful men and women were suddenly transformed and empowered from on High. They boldly proclaimed their faith in different languages. The sick were healed. Thousands were baptised. And deceitful intent revealed. Their new hope and resulting message simply centred on Christ. Thus dawned the church era as we understand it.

The first time, however, where we encounter the work of the Holy Spirit in the scriptures is in the opening verses of Genesis. We read in Genesis chapter 1 and verse 2 that the *"Spirit of God was moving..."*

Something powerful happened at creation, resulting in all we know and experience today! Out of that which is not visible, by the power and word of God, time, matter and space were brought into existence. *"In the beginning [time] God created the heavens [space] and the earth [matter]"* (Genesis 1:1).

Central to creation was the presence and work of the Holy Spirit.

Throughout the scriptures we gain additional glimpses of the Holy Spirit in the anointing and equipping of faithful people throughout history, especially in the priests and kingly leadership of ancient Israel. One of Israel's greatest leaders, King David, at a time of sore repentance and reconciliation, cried out in prayer, *"Take not your Holy Spirit from me!"* (Psalm 51:11)

Confronted by his shortcomings against the Holiness of God, at that moment David knew what mattered most. From that point onwards, we see a man further shaped into the righteousness and heart of God.



Perhaps the most intriguing account of the Holy Spirit was in the extraordinary announcement made by the angel Gabriel to the young Jewish woman Mary. *"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God."* (Luke 1:35)

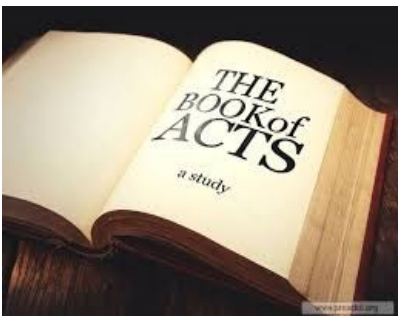
Joseph, her betrothed, was similarly told the same: *"Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."* (Matthew 1:20)

Thus, the Holy Spirit, introduced to us at creation and existing outside of time, space and matter, entered the created and earthly (our domain framed by time, space and matter), and in the birth of Jesus Christ we witness the two natures of divine and human united. In Christ alone we find heaven and earth intersecting!

No wonder Jesus during his ministry often repeated, *“The Kingdom of God is near!”* And therein lies our hope—in Jesus—and the transformational journey we experience today. It is this very Holy Spirit, given to those who believe upon repentance and baptism that begins in earnest the work of the Kingdom of God, that is, the daily forming of Christ in us.

The apostle Paul expressed his desire for the Holy Spirit’s work in his letter to the faithful in Galatia, when he penned, *“until Christ is formed in you!”* (Galatians 4:19)

The Holy Spirit illuminates, guides, leads, comforts, and teaches. The Holy Spirit also regenerates, prompts, discerns and empowers. Thus, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, God’s good work as the “Master Potter” is being wrought in each of our lives. As a result, the gifts, talents and resources He’s given us are not for our own glory. Rather, in the context of living this dynamic within Church community, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for the benefit of everyone.



The work of the Holy Spirit in the book of Acts (chapter 10) perhaps illustrates no better than elsewhere God’s reconciling work between heaven and earth as experienced in the lives of Peter and

Cornelius. Peter was a Jew, and Cornelius a Roman, regarded by the Jews as an “unclean” Gentile and therefore treated with contempt. Thus, the two contemporaries lived in a society that regarded them as totally irreconcilable; one represented the promises of God to His people, the other those excluded on the outside.

Then, both separately experienced a vision from God. Both initially were perplexed, but expectant. When they met, Cornelius was overwhelmed, but Peter instantly elevated him as his own. Just like heaven and earth intersecting and uniting in Jesus because of the Holy Spirit, the reconciling work of the Holy Spirit brought these two men, although regarded as opposites in their society, not only to meet, but also embrace each other as brothers.

Where before there was division, now there was peace. Prior to Christ coming, a vast chasm caused by evil and sin existed between heaven and earth. But Jesus, conceived of the Holy Spirit and formed in Mary’s womb, set in motion the bridging of that chasm.

That which was beyond time, space and matter, entered in a visible way—the express image of the Father as seen and witnessed in Jesus Christ. Thus in Jesus and Jesus alone, we are reconciled to our Heavenly Father.

The power and personal presence of God via the Holy Spirit not only reconciles us to God but also, importantly, to each other. The forming and gifting of the Holy Spirit then empowers and equips us in the context of com-

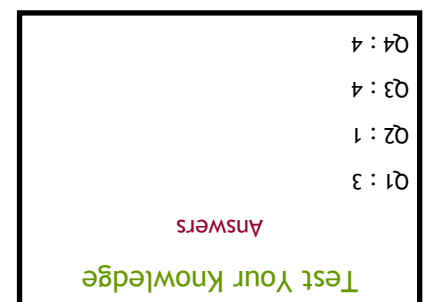
munity—the body of Christ.

The primary work of the Holy Spirit is to form in us the very image and stature of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. For all humanity, this was typified in Peter and Cornelius’ experience. The irreconcilable became reconciled. The broken became healed. And the Kingdom of God established in the hearts of men. In the words of scripture, we thus become “a new creation”. To this Paul says, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

To be Spirit-formed is to be part of the ongoing work of creation. Without the Holy Spirit, we’re subject to sin, decay and death. But to live in the Spirit, as scripture says, is life and joy. May the good work of the Holy Spirit continue to transform our lives until that day of resurrection and glory, for which all of creation yearns.

And, although our names are written in the “Book of Life”, the account as told in the Book of Acts will, at that day of glory, also have written our story of being Spirit-formed and reconciled to God and to each other into its final chapter.

Written by John Klassek



Love, Desire and Lust.

Is there any difference between love, desire and lust? If we're listening to the conversation in today's circles, not much! Tolerance and equality, it seems, can also be reported to mean acceptance and legitimising that which isn't moral or good.

Allow me to explain. A friend, we'll call him George, dearly loved three young women. They too apparently loved him, and quickly became more than "good friends". That's when things got complicated. George's desire was torn between them all. Society dictated that he could only legally marry one. But, the foursome wasn't dissuaded by such morals. They assumed suburban "family life" and over time worked to legalise their relationships. In effect, he was "husband" to three women, which isn't uncommon in some countries. In terms of Western law, however, the merits of consent and love between a union of more than one man and one woman was not seen as eligible criteria for the historical, legal and widely accepted meaning of "marriage".

So, legally they weren't married. Civil law defines marriage as the monogamous, lifelong union between one man and one woman, the origins of which lie at the heart of Christianity. So, George and his wives sought a

compromise. A civil union of sort was attempted in order to give some legitimacy to their family status. By that time, several children had been born, and soon various government departments began investigating. The news media quickly picked up the story, and of course it made sensational weekend reading.

Were they not consenting adults who chose their relationships? Weren't they "in love"? They seemed happy! Isn't it all about love, and the freedom to choose? The vexing question is who dictates then how they should live their lives, or deny them their "equal rights"? It's an ongoing and topical narrative that seems to reverberate within today's media and politics.



There are those who uphold traditional marriage between a man and a woman, and those who espouse other models, such as homosexuality, lesbianism, union with under-age children, transgenderism, as well as polygamy.

Governed by higher law, civil

laws generally adopted and accepted what was understood to form the basis for strong, peaceful and enduring societies based on the healthy, stable family unit constituting a paternal father and a maternal mother, united for life, and including the nurture of any children born to that union. After all, that's a foundational premise which Christianity espouses to be the God-ordained mandate for human life – as reflected in the pages of its Constitution, the Holy Bible as well as in many marriage vows: "A natural union but a Divine institution".

Today, unfortunately, we're hearing a vocal minority attempting to redefine the family unit without knowing or assessing what future complications and consequences might be – legally or societally. The Christo-centric values that Western society grew from have all but it seems been abandoned. Recognised historically, as is woven throughout our legal system, is the understanding that a loving and responsible father and mother together provide the best environment for a stable, nurturing home for the next generation. Marriage also provides that children have a right to life, a right to be protected, as well as a right to know who their biological father and mother are, and benefit from that nurture. Traditional marriage preserves the family as no other unit can, and therefore society. The covenant relationship within marriage between a man and woman

reflects a higher relationship of what God desires of us – of holiness, fidelity and covenant. Interestingly, most gays don't want "traditional marriage" for the sanctity, holiness and Godliness it represents; it's said that their desire is to malign and ultimately destroy marriage. It is widely known that unions such as those generally outside of marriage contribute to higher than normal rates of depression, dysfunction as well as suicide. Homosexual cultures historically are recorded as being more violent, and generally short-lived.

In terms of defining what healthy desire is, there's a vastly big chasm between love and lust. It is here that society seems to have blurred the lines. Genuine love leads to covenant, life-long union between a man and a woman. This nurture in turn is extended to the children which in turn benefits society as a whole. Lust, as a base desire, is a powerful and dangerous agent, parading as love but seeking unhealthy sexual fulfilment as it chooses. Lust is not love. It's an aberration, a fanciful, unfettered and unhealthy selfish orientation. It may parade as virtue. But it isn't love – not historically, legally or morally. Lust, a lack of self-control, is the very opposite of what God intended in the tenth commandment when he said, *"You shall not covet"*. If not remediated, this kind of self-centredness can be also

diagnosed as a form of mental illness.

The conversation we're currently having regarding the "definition of marriage" is one of foundational challenges that we face today. Like a ship without a compass, blown with every uneasy wind, a noisy minority is actively and avidly working to simultaneously erase history's other virtues and bastions beyond traditional marriage, especially those with Christian origins.



An example of this might help. We no longer count the years as from AD, a Latin term meaning "Year of our Lord" (a reference to Christ's birth), in recent times having subtly changed AD for CE (meaning "Common Era"). Why the change? Perhaps it's a subtle assault on faith history! Another example: Today we call babies in utero as "foetuses or embryos" which seems to be an additional attempt to further de-humanise them, and thus giving abortion greater legitimacy. Family and faith values seem to have been progressively eroded in more ways than one.

Of course, although traditional

marriage is generally upheld within the faith community as it ought, the virtues and blessing of marriage are generally poorly argued. The Christian community has failed to connect marriage to Jesus Christ, the "Lamb and His Bride", and it is on this platform that the Christian voice must be united. Ordained at creation, traditional marriage has proven its value. Sadly, the assault today on traditional marriage is accompanied by concerted efforts to remove it from its past faith history, and repaint it within the context of a purely secularist and evolutionary-modelled society – a model too many have blindly accepted.

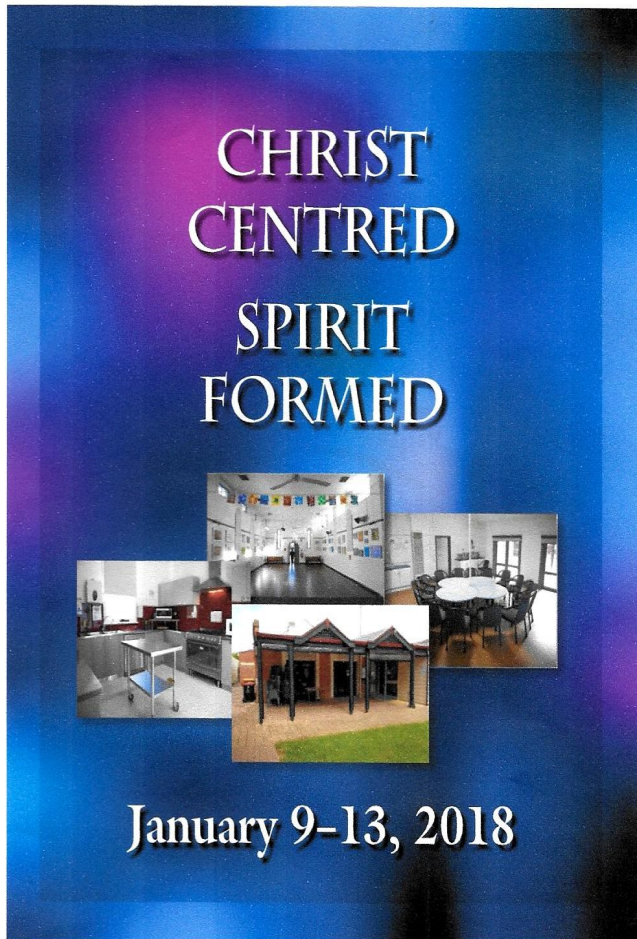
Western society, it seems, is progressively stripping away traditional and historical connections with the past, especially faith-oriented belief, in an overt but sometimes subtle attempt to promote its new, moral-less agenda. Changes to legislation are sometimes slow and subtle, other times vocal and condescending, but either way progressively swaying the morality and opinion of greater numbers of people.

Yet the fact remains that lust and uncontrolled desire is not love. It has no place in marriage. It has no place in relationships. It has no place in society.

For some it is an illness; for others it is an obsession and perversion.

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Concerned followers of Jesus need to know that now is the time to be accounted for. Now is the time to speak for Jesus. Our neighbours, friends, workmates, parents and grandparents, as well as the “George’s” of society, need to know of the healing and new life offered them in Christ alone, as well the consequences of any alternate legacy they’re leaving the next generation. It’s time for the church community not only to voice genuine concern in its reformist voice for the brokenness of society, but also to be able to articulate solid, immovable reasons in Jesus Christ as to why their belief in traditional family values as modelled over thousands of years and as ordained at creation, is the only way forward.

Written by John Klassek

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Signatories ranged from the Uniting Church, Anglican, Catholic, Salvation Army, Baptist, Quaker, Lutheran, Congregational, Pentecostal, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha’i, Muslim and Hindu communities.

In 1994 the Australian Quakers recognised the celebration of same-sex commitment ceremonies and saw them on an equal basis with other committed and loving relationships. (List of Christian denominations affirming LGBT aims and rights.) https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_Christian_denominations_affirming_LGBT

Twenty three countries (including New Zealand) have legalised same-sex marriage and it is very possible it will happen here in Australia. As Christians, we should accept the fact that we live in a secular and ungodly nation. No matter what governments and societies sanction, homosexual unions (perversion of God’s creation) will never replace or be equal with heterosexual marriages which God ordained. Whatever society does, it cannot change the fact that the true followers of Christ must stand firm and esteem the unchanging Word of God. “...let God be true but every man a liar”. (Romans 3:4b)

Written by Phil Kordahi

Marriage and



the Family Unit

The Bible clearly identifies marriage as being between a man and a woman. A state instituted and ordained by God for the lifelong relationship between one man as a husband and one woman as wife. *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."* (Genesis 2:24)

Jesus Christ also confirmed this understanding of that sacred bond between a man and a woman in Mark 10:6-8.

In Genesis 2:24, we also see the understanding of the family unit, a son leaving his father and mother and joining to a woman (wife) through the relationship of marriage. It flows from Scripture's assertion that God created one man and one woman, brought them together, and commanded them to *"be fruitful and multiply"* and by having children, they too will become a father and a mother in their own right.

The biblical viewpoint of marriage has been the universal understanding in every human civilization in world history. No another concept of marriage or the family unit which man (Satan) has devised, will ever replace the stability, security and happiness which God's covenant of marriage brings!

Today marriage and the family unit are under attack in Australia and around the world. There is nothing new about this hour's assault on marriage and the family. From the beginning this assault has been orchestrated behind the scenes by Satan because of his hatred for marriage. God's covenant of marriage depicts the gospel, the message concerning Christ and the church. *"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."* *This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.* (Ephesians 5:31-32)

Human marriage is the earthly image (a copy) of God's divine plan, the union (original) between His Son and the church. (2 Corinthians 11:2)

It is no small wonder that the Lord is passionate about the sanctity of marriage and the stability of the home. But on the other hand, it is no surprise that same-sex marriage is Satan's effort to pervert God's marriage covenant.

Satan has many strategies which seem to work well in destroying or weakening marriage and the family. In our society we are encouraged to spend much of our time pursuing after material wealth and careers which leaves little time for our family. We should never sacrifice that quality family time which God has given us, because it's the binding factor which creates a healthy marriage and stable loving family. I once read, *"The most treasured heirlooms are the sweet memories of family"*.

If this strategy doesn't work, Satan will use greed, lust, pornography, drugs, alcohol, and gambling addictions to drive a wedge in a marriage

and or family. Satan is a master of them all. But we also have a glorious promise from God, that Satan will flee from us if we will submit to God and draw near to God's righteousness through Christ Jesus. What a wonderful guarantee we have from God when we commit our marriage and our family into the loving hands of our Heavenly Father! *"Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will flee from you."* (James 4:7-8)

Currently in Australia the assault on God's covenant of marriage is by the Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender movement. (LGBT) They are pushing to legalise same-sex marriage on the pretext that homosexual behaviour is normal in nature and acceptable with God. It is no wonder they push this understanding with confidence, when Christian ministers and churches support their argument. According to a theologian from the United Church of Canada, *"human sexual orientations, whether heterosexual, bisexual or homosexual, are a gift from God."* (Equality Rights, United Church of Canada 2007.) Reverend William H. Carey stated, *"But if we take a closer look, reading the scripture in the original Hebrew and Greek, we discover that God never condemned homosexuality, and that same-sex marriage existed in Bible times."* (Gay and Christian? Yes!, pp. 1-70, 2006.)

In August 2017, 500 religious leaders and academics sent an open letter to the Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull urging the Parliament **to accept marriage equality as a matter of social justice.**

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Youth Vibe



God's Greatest Attribute — Holiness

God has many attributes. It is hard to describe all the things that God is. There is His love, His grace, His mercy, His longsuffering, but there is one single attribute which stands above all others and that is His **holiness**. There is no fault, no impurity, no imperfection...nothing but pure perfection and holiness.

Holy comes from a Greek word, "*hagios*," which means blameless, consecrated, sacred, one who is separate from sin and set apart unto righteousness. Most often Holiness refers to God Himself. God has been, is, and always will be separate from sin.

"No one is holy like the LORD, For there is none You, Nor is there any like our God." **1 Samuel 2:2**

"Who is like You, O LORD, the? Who is like You, in holiness, Fearful in praises, doing?" **Exodus 15:11**

And one cried to another and said: "Holy,, holy is the LORD of hosts; The whole is full of His glory!" **Isaiah 6:3**

Oh, the LORD in the of holiness! before Him, all the earth. **Psalms 96:9**

Jesus Christ also has this attribute of holiness. *".....that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God."* **Luke 1:35**

By Phil Kordahi



TEST YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Which of the following is **NOT** one of the 10 Commandments given in Exodus 20?

1. *Remember the Sabbath Day*
2. *You shall not murder*
3. *Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*
4. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house*

Who says: "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

1. Job
2. David
3. Ruth
4. Abraham

Why was the prostitute Rahab saved from the destruction of her city Jericho?

1. She promised to tithe
2. She scarified to God
3. She offered Joshua water from the village well
4. She hid the spies scouting out the land.

Which New Testament book has Jesus in the Last Supper saying, "Do this in remembrance of me"?

1. Matthew
2. John
3. Acts
4. 1 Corinthians



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