

*Psalm 122:1-4 KJS*

*I was glad when they said unto me, "Let us go into the house of the LORD." [2] Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. [3] Jerusalem is built as a city that is united together, [4] whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, according to the testimony of Israel to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.*

In the church, which is a physical community, you have families, relationships and covenant relationships within the church. The church is not just a spiritual body, it is also a physical community. Galatians 4:26 says that Jerusalem is the mother of us all. We have been redeemed from the traditions of men, true, but we are different people. We need to learn to deal with people. When we speak of Jerusalem, we are speaking of relationships. This scripture says Jerusalem is built in such a way that it is compact together. This means there is no space, or the space within the city is very little. It means they are closely knitted. Beyond physical Israel is a picture of how God built Jerusalem. The houses within or the people within the city become closer and closer beyond superficial relationships. The true proof that the church is going from strength to strength is that relationships are getting deeper.

*Acts 4:32-33 KJS*

*And the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any one of them that any of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. [33] And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.*

When we speak of the first church and the amount of power they displayed, it was the unity among them that determined this. How "all" is "all". The scripture said that in all things they were in common. This is the template that God put now for how the church should function, it is not just a prophetic reality. The church is a spiritual body, but it is also a compact group of people who, over time, by reason of interaction and the work of grace in their lives and also by reason of understanding of needs, they work together in unfeigned love. Unfeigned love means that the love is not fake. There is a place God is taking his church. It is a place that is void of hypocrisy. First, within the small relationships, but even within the corporate church. God is interested in a group of people who are compact together. This is how God intended it. How do we walk, seeing that we want to move towards a place where we can genuinely say that we are compact together? What is the effect of not being in this order? It is very possible for people to live within the church community and only have "hi and hello" relationships.

**What does the opposite of being compact together look like?**

*Nehemiah 4:19 KJS*

*And I said unto the nobles and to the rulers and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and large, and we are separated upon the wall, one far from another."*

The reason this is important is because this is a story of building. The children of Israel had just come out of captivity and Nehemiah was heading a project to build the wall of Jerusalem. In many walks and in many churches, there are different phases of building and a level of building that is needed for each phase. However, one phrase sticks out. It said, "We are separate upon the walls, one far from one another". It is possible to serve God fervently, but at heart, you are far from one another. It is a dangerous place to be, because the strength of the church is in oneness. When God said "I will build, the intent was that the church will be compact. This does not happen overnight. God has helped us and will continue to help us, but we are in an interesting phase that demands of a greater depth. This is not just on a corporate level, but from individual to individual and from relationship to relationship. When Jesus set up the church, he spent time talking about love. There is this phrase people say "I love you and there is nothing you can do about it". This is good, but there is more to it.

There are several relationships that happen within the church: Marriage, parent and sibling relationship, sibling relationship, brotherhood, and sisterhood. Somethings that can bring a rift in these relationship are miscommunication, misunderstanding, betrayal, mistrust, bias, narrow mindedness, lack of communication, etc. All these attack the bond. The concept of having a bond with someone is so unique such that when I have a bond with that individual there is a unique relationship. Within the context of the church, there is something called the bond of peace. It is an endeavour to keep this. Because of the humanness of each person, there is something called offence that is a threat to the bond of peace. This is a bond that only occurs in peace. Keeping it will be an intentional thing.

*Proverbs 18:19 KJS*

*An offended brother is harder to be won back than a stronghold city, and his contentions are like the bars of a castle.*

*Proverbs 18:19 NLT*

*An offended friend is harder to win back than a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with bars.*

God is very intentional about the thing called offence. It is bitter within a relationship. The bible describes offence as being behind a bar. This can happen between people who are of a strong covenant relationship. This happened between Paul and Barnabas. Acts 15:39 said that the

offence was sharp. If you are going to have a relationship with someone, there is no such thing as an offence-free relationship, unless it is superficial.

*1 Corinthians 5:8 KJVS*

*Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*

The bond of peace is crucial for depth in Christian relationships. The bond of peace must be kept with intentionality and in alignment with the wisdom given by the Holy Spirit. When offence creeps in, it is an opportunity for the relationship to grow stronger or weaker. If we are looking to grow one on now with each other, it will take a wisdom or deal with offence.

### **Why is the Bond of Peace Important?**

- A closely knitted people are unstoppable in the Spirit. Genesis 11:6 shows that God himself acknowledged the fact that when a people are one, in the spirit, it is dangerous. Even Him cannot stop such people. There are cults that are more closely knitted than some christian community. It is a very powerful thing for people to be closely knitted. When a people are one, it is a very loud voice in the spirit. It is true that you may not be very close with everyone, but everyone must come to the point where they are standing on a sea of glass. When they stand and agree on one thing, it will stand. Imagine the power in the spirit when two are knit as one. The bible said Saul killed a thousand and David ten thousand. David speaks of Christ as one man (head of body).
- It leaves no room for the enemy to creep in. Ephesians 4:27, Ecclesiastes 10:8-11. Give satan no place. This is why the city is built compact together, give him no space. That gap is too costly in any relationship. It takes a people who are understanding of the spiritual nature of offence to spot when offence is creeping in. The bible says love suffers long and is kind. Imagine waiting for years to marry the "love of your life" and then you get married and start to suffer.

### **They Had the Mind to Work.**

*Nehemiah 4:6 KJVS*

*So built we the wall; and all the wall was joined together unto the half thereof: for the people had a mind to work.*

This speaks of coming to a place where people are of the same mind. The worst place a relationship can be in is where everyone just reclines. We learn to manage each other. A covenant relationship is birthed in the spirit. There are two key personals that you must have in keeping a

covenant relationship: The child and the man. 1 Corinthians 14:20. One of the main root of sourness in a christian relationship is the man aspect. You don't just wish it away. Paul said in understanding be men and in malice be babes. There are bad aspect of being a child. E.g foolishness, tantrums, stubbornness, selfishness, etc. What are some good one: Trust, simplicity, innocence, forgiveness, dependence. The hallmark of a childish character is the selfish side : Me, myself and I. On the positive side, a child is very malleable. In growing in the things of God and in our relationship, God describes one who will enter the Kingdom as being converted.

*Matthew 18:4 KJVS*

*Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

In maturing, there are elements of the child that God wants us to keep. The simplicity and the malleability of a child is very important. If you offend a child, they will not try to be "mature" about it. They will ask why?. In growing, there is a conversion God is doing and it is to make you more childlike. Just because something is justified and does you wrong, from God's perspective, He does not really care. He demands forgiveness regardless. Now thinking about the understanding be men. There is wisdom and intentionality, self control. One of the ways we can deal with understanding with people is to spot when the enemy is on the back end of an offence. It is not natural, having received the spirit of God to be contentious. Now there are intense conversations sometimes, but it should be every time. A brother was in a regular conversation and it suddenly became contentious. We must be people of understanding. It is not pious to loose yourself in an argument. It is important to know that the wrath of man does not bring out the righteousness of God.

When it says "they had the mind to work". This means you are working on yourself. John 5:17 says the father works and we partner with Him. If you want to build deep relationship, you have to look inward. What are somethings you can work on? Communication skills, listening, intentionalty, selflessness, giving the benefit of the doubt, ability to receive feedback.

### **Communication - Isaiah 1:18.**

*Isaiah 1:18 KJVS*

*Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.*

This is a very important thing when it comes to dealing with relationships. We must have honest conversations with no fear of a negative effect. Honest and uncomfortable conversations. Sometimes you have to have uncomfortable conversations to have comfortable relationships. James 5:16. The element of honesty is a very important thing and it should be without fear. If you

cannot take honest feedback and you flare up, it means you need to mature even more emotionally. It does not kill you to say sorry. What kills is the pride that you cannot swallow and will choke you to death. Saying sorry allows you to win a brother. Matthew 5:23-24 shows a very interesting perspective. If God brings to your attention that your brother has hurt against them, the noble thing to do is to go to your brother. Have a conversation.

### **Forgiveness - Proverbs 19:11.**

*Proverbs 19:11 KJVS*

*The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression.*

God is saying, it is a glorious thing to let go of an offence. Forgiveness does not guarantee healing. However, it is a first step for any chance of healing. Even in our interaction with God, the first basis for any relationship is forgiveness. Let go in your heart. Forgiveness is a divine thing. It is not natural.

*Luke 6:36-38 KJVS*

*Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. [37] Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: [38] Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

The principle shown here is regarding what the Lord said in Mark 11:24. Giving here is not money, but the measure to which you show people mercy is the measure to which you receive mercy. Without mercy, you will always get what you deserve. There is no room for retaliating in the Kingdom. God deals with us on the basis of mercy and expects us to be merciful to one another.

### **Kindness - Romans 12:10.**

Malice means a desire to inflict injury or suffering. The opposite of being kind is malicious. Once the enemy finds a reason to justify something, you have opened the door to maliciousness. Malice can cause a person ministering to think they are coming like Phineas, but in reality, they are functioning like Saul. Wickedness and malice walk hand in hand. Whenever there is strife, malice and wickedness find expression. Yet the Lord is saying be kind to one another.

### **Show Genuine care. Acts 15:36.**

Showing genuine care means rejoicing with them that rejoices and weeping with someone who weeps. Romans 12:15.

### **Respect and Honour. Romans 12:10, 1 Peter 2:17.**

Romans 12:10 KJVS

Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another;

Honour one another. Whether it be in marriage, the context of one-to-one relationships or within the physical community.

**Build, manage and restore trust.**

The scripture is actually against putting your trust in man. In fact, it says “woe” to him that put their trust in man. However, trust is crucial because you are not a natural man. David and Jonathan were vulnerable with one another. If you find yourself in a place where anyone chooses to be vulnerable with you, take it like your life depends on it. Once you take away the element of trust and vulnerability, you are destroying the bond. This is crucial for any kind of relationship. The element of trust must be built and managed - the bond of peace, being kept.