

UBUNTU UMUNTU

OR:

**GLADLY AND JOYFULLY GIVING
AS TO OUR GOD AND FATHER**

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Fatherhood Prison Ministries Fellowship

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1. INTRODUCTION

In most of Africa life was very harsh in olden times. It was a world where no one was ever safe when alone. Life was dangerous, and near to impossible to survive on your own. Large animals of pray were everywhere. You had to have strong fences, kraals, in which to stick closely together as smaller or larger families and tribes. You also had to sleep closely together to protect each other. In the center of the kraal a fire was likely kept going at night as well. The good thing about this all was however that people stuck closely together in search for food or in working their fields, in hunting, in playing and in sleeping. A benefit was that people could find all the meat, and often also fish, without having to work too much for it, but it took skilled hunting in always dangerous forests or savannahs. You had to stick closely together. A whole community was just like one family. All the older folks were your father, mother, uncle or ant

A negative side of this lifestyle was that a man and woman who would like to live and sleep together and have their own family, could not easily be close knit as they were part of the whole clan, and the clan's needs were more important than individual needs. And that made it not easy to remain faithful to each other. But God, our Father who created us, wants us to be faithful our entire lives to the one we began sleeping with.

We read that in Genesis 2:23:

“Therefore, a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

Jesus added to this scripture: **“and what God has put together let no man separate.”**

This shows us more clearly our biggest problem. Because in a community where the clan, or village is more important than its closely knit together families of a father, mother and their children, life will become very difficult. There will be too much fighting, too many deeply wounded hearts; and people with wounded hearts cannot come close to God.

Only God knows how we should live, because He is our Creator, and our ultimate Father. But as so many African peoples did not know their God anymore, the clan, or extended family became more important than its families. Father God created families of one man and one woman with their own children to be the building blocks of any nation, so that we could live happily, in harmony with each other.

The clan became people’s family; a relationship between a man and woman had to be subjected to the life of the clan. But God wants marriage and family to be subject to His will, not to what the clan demands.

We find that this is today often still so, with people of the same clan calling each other their fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters. And if you need something to eat, you just take what you want without asking anyone. And if you don’t need to ask, you also do not need to say thank you to anyone. But if you cannot take what you want or need, because people keep it from you, they become your

enemies. This is something that I, seemingly an outsider, have discovered often during my years in Africa; and even with some of my very best friends.

Though the pastor was a poor man, he gave the many guests to my surprise a little cake and a soft-drink, but I soon forgot all about it. A few weeks later however, he came to me and said that I owed him a certain amount of money. I answered "Why?" "Well", he said, "I could not send the people away without a little to eat and drink?" I then explained that if he would have asked me for some help, I might have given him a little, "but you cannot just spend my money and then demand that I give it to you?" And as I refused to contribute, he became furious. Later I discovered that he then had begun stealing from me, and a lot. See, he still lived in the old clan structure, and felt that what he did was normal. And if a clan runs out of food before the new harvest can be brought in, and your headman knows that another clan up on the mountain had much more rain, and therefore more food, he goes there and demands assistance, but if he does not get any food from that clan, they become their enemy. It has in the past been a major cause of tribal warfare. I heard even of a similar experience of missionaries in isolated villages high up in the mountains of the Philippines. Local people had helped the missionaries to plant a field for food, and the missionaries had paid them for it, but they never got to eat from it, because the locals felt that they owned the food because they had planted it.

In ancient cultural settings, villagers do not understand the concept of ownership very much, nor the concepts of

giving and being thankful, because what you take is your right; just the way children feel about their parent's house: it is their house.

But in a family with parents who live by God's rules, the father and mother can keep a close eye on their children, and help them become responsible by making them do daily chores. And when children have tasks to do within their family, they do not become lazy, but learn to be helpful.

When Israel was just in the beginning of its travels from Egypt to their promised land, God made them rest for some time at a high mountain, called Sinai; it is located in today's country Saudi Arabia. He began giving them there His rules to live by if they wanted Him to be their God. It began with a very powerful display of Father God's might so that the people became scared and did not want to listen anymore, saying to Moses: "Let God talk to you, we are afraid of Him."

Here follow God's most basic rules in what is called the "Ten Commandments" as recorded in God's Word, the Holy Bible, in Exodus20:1-17 as written by Moses:

"And God spoke all these words:

I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

You shall have no other gods before me.

You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous

God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.

You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, or your son or daughter, or your manservant or maidservant, or your animals, or the stranger within your gates. Because in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

You shall not desire to have your neighbor's house. You shall not desire your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

2. UBUNTU

In a society where the Creator of the Universe is not known anymore due to sin, our Father God cannot bless us by teaching us how we should live. I believe that this was God's reason why He called Abraham out of his family clan in Haran, so that He could reveal Himself to Abraham. It would not have been easy within that clan where many false gods were already worshipped. God wanted to give men rules by, how to live and become happy. There is no better way to become happy than through having a close relationship with God and obey Him always, so that He can bless us very much as He teaches us how to live. So, God told Abraham as we read in Genesis 12:1:

“Go out of your land, and out of your clan, out of your father's house, to the land that I will lead you to. I will make you to become a great people, and bless you, make your name famous, and you will become a blessing, and I will bless those who bless you, but curse those who curse you, and through you all the peoples of this earth and their following generations will become blessed. And Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran.”

Can you understand now what God's plan was for all the people of this world? It would require that Abraham wanted to be an intimate friend and son of God.

But Abraham's descendants would also need to be separated from other peoples who worshipped false gods, or they might go back to following the gods of those people. So, God promised Abraham that his descendants

would become a great people in the land of Egypt, in a very good part of the land, to raise their cattle, sheep and goats, and remain able to stay close to the God of Abraham. And after they became a big people, they would return to the land that God had shown to Abraham, about 350 years later.

And so, after that time Abraham's descendants had become a nation of more than two million people who grew up in Egypt; in Africa. And then God led them out of Egypt to the land that He had promised to Abraham, to give it to his descendants. And as they traveled to their own future land under the leadership of Moses, God first gave them all the laws, rules that they should follow to stay close to Him, and that would make them happy and blessed by God, if they would choose to indeed obey God's laws. And so, God is now still using that same kind of plan for us to come and stay close to Him, to bless us, and make us a happy people.

But as God sent many missionaries into Africa, they never finished the task God gave them, and few are still willing to come, while the task is still so big. So many people have still not heard the Good News, the Gospel of our King Jesus Christ, who is a descendant of Abraham. You know, this problem will happen over and over again, because all people have a natural desire to love themselves more than God because of our sin nature. But we want you to learn and understand that there is only one way we can continue, and that is by making the Creator of the heavens and the earth our Father, and asking His Son Jesus to be also our savior, and let them be more

important than ourselves. God created us because He needs our love; so, we need to be very thankful to Him and seek and love Him in return with all our heart. And if we do that, He can teach us everything we should know and do to make Him happy, and so we become happy also; that is what a father wants for His children; right? So, He wants us to become just as loving as He is. But if we get treated painfully by someone, we just stop loving that person, become angry with him, and even bitter toward him. And that is how everything in our lives goes wrong, because how can we begin hating a person whom God keeps on loving, and for who God keeps on hoping that he in time will become more like God Himself? To God's great leader of Israel when they were on their way to their own country, Moses, God said: "Be holy because I am holy." If you want to be loved by others, you will need to be the first to love them. And that is what our God and Father is teaching us; by doing it Himself. He loves us so very much that He is willing to show that love is the only answer for us to be happy. He was willing to die for us. He was willing to humble himself completely before us. But then, love for someone is only love if we are also willing to be completely humble. It is just what Jesus said about God's laws: that we love our neighbors just as much as ourself. If we want to be free? Well, then we must also want other people to become free. We want to be happy? Well, then we must also want others to be happy. We want Father God to love us, well, then we must also want Father God to love everyone else. We want to eat and sleep well? Then we must also want that for all others.

But let us now look at how things are today in rural villages.

In many societies people are hindered in the reaching of their goals by a lack of a clear understanding of the concept of ownership. When people lived in their natural world, it had so many dangers that a single family just could not survive for very long; a tribal structure was necessary, in which individual desires had to be sacrificed for the good of all, the extended family. That way personal ownership became sacrificed for the good of the whole clan; and it can still be noticed to be a part of many people's feelings. I have sensed in rural areas however also that people still live so close with each other, that they do have special godly graces of gentleness, helping each other when needed, yes, they can so noticeably and beautifully be kind for one another within the clan. But I have also noticed that there are a lot of lazy people. As Western cultures penetrate here today, smaller family units can survive and privacy and individual desires can be met. But the old feelings of being able to take anything you wish are still present, and you do not have to say "Thank you" either; many do not yet easily feel the concept of personal ownership, asking your parents for something to give to you, and express thankfulness for something that was given to you. But communities that are still living isolated from city influences do much better as village people take care of the poor, the needy, and the bereaved. But lack of a sense of ownership leads also to problems. A lazy person will just sit in the shade and eat what others have worked for. By our sinful nature we are

selfish and easily jealous of others, greedy and taking from others whatever we can. Why would a person with a servant's heart work all day to see other people just take from the things they made or worked for, without even getting a "Thank you!"? Does this also lead to a person's feeling of not being important? To our all-powerful Father God each one of us is very important.

Listen to Proverbs 6:6-11

"Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise, ... how long will you slumber, oh lazy one? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, so shall your poverty come on you like a prowler."

Proverbs 14:23

***"In all labor there is profit,
But idle chatter leads only to poverty."***

Proverbs 21:25-26

"The desire of the lazy man kills him, because his hands refuse to work. He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare."

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. Do you know in your family people who are faithful workers and others who are just idle, lazy?
2. Do you feel good about yourself when you have produced something?
3. Do you think that a lazy person will be satisfied with himself and happy?

4. Does giving to needed people from what you have worked for make you happy?
5. Is giving then an expression of loving a person?

In the laws that God gave to Israel through Moses, He forbids stealing; does that not mean that God tells us that ownership is a good thing. Let us listen once more to the Ten Commandments from which also Islam's Sharia law comes, and stop the audio after each commandment for a moment to think about it.

Ex 20:1-17:

"And God spoke all these words:

"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery."

1. ***"You shall have no other gods before me."***
2. ***"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."***
3. ***"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."***

4. ***“Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, or your son or daughter, or your manservant or maidservant, or your animals, or the stranger within your gates. Because in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.”***

5. ***“Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you.”***

6. ***“You shall not murder.”***

7. ***“You shall not commit adultery.”***

8. ***“You shall not steal.”***

9. ***“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”***

10. ***“You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”***

Do you want to talk about this for a little while? Then listen again, but stop the audio for discussion after every

command. At the end of the commandments are also questions. Please listen carefully:

1. ***"You shall have no other gods before me."***
5 seconds silence
2. ***"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; because I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."*** 5 sec. silence
3. ***"You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name."***
4. ***"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, or your son or daughter, or your manservant or maidservant, or your animals, or the stranger within your gates. Because in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but He rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy."***

5. ***"Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the Lord your God is giving you."***
6. ***"You shall not murder."***
7. ***"You shall not commit adultery."***
8. ***"You shall not steal."***
9. ***"You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."***
10. ***"You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."***

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. Israel was not to have any other Gods than the God of Abraham. But can drinking alcohol become a God? Or smoking? Or regularly eating too much? Or loving your wife more than God? Or putting your heart on having a nice house or car?
2. Do you notice that Israel had to rest on the seventh day, but also that they were called to work diligently for six days?
3. Do you notice that we are called to honor our parents even if they are not very nice to us? Will that prevent us from judging them bitterly and thus protect our heart?

4. Do you notice that murder and adultery are mentioned following each other? Does that make adultery a sin that God hates?
5. Do you notice that stealing is forbidden and that God so protects ownership?
6. Is coveting not also a form of worshipping other Gods?
7. Is coveting what belongs to others not how stealing starts in our heart?

GROWING YOUR OWN BUSINESS

You cannot plan any business if you have no control over the money you have earned, or over the things you have worked for. Dare to plan your future with hard work, and protect what you have earned: don't let anyone take it because you feel that you have to let them take what they want, because they might say that you are not social. Father God does not want you to give because you have to, but because you want to from a loving heart. God wants you to plan for a good future with more income than you need so that you live well, but also have extra things or food to give to the needy or to God because you love them and want to give. Giving is a way to prove that you love God or someone else. Father God wants to bless you that way. And if your family and friends get upset with you because you keep control over what you have earned or produced, and they call you greedy, not communal, not social, let it be so, you cannot change others, only yourself. Dare to show them God's way of living by working on a plan for your future; that is what our God wants. Father wants you to bless others, just like He blesses you, and you can only do that when you have earned more things than you need for yourself and your family.

God even said to His people: ***“For I know what PLANS I have for you, not to harm you, but to give you a FUTURE and HOPE,”***. Without ownership, or control over what you have produced, you cannot make plans for the future.

If you love someone, you want to be able to make him or her happy through giving what they like.

I believe that God has another good reason why He wants us to own things: it gives us a choice to love things very much and become greedy for more, or to realize that we own things only to serve our Father God with, so that we can be His managers over what He allows us to have on this earth. And that means that what we own belongs to Him, and we manage and use it wisely to glorify our God:

We use money to live well. This is God's way of blessing our life and that of our family. Ecclesiastes 5:18-19 says: ***"Here is what I have seen: It is good and fitting for one to eat and drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labor in which he toils under the sun all the days of his life which God gives him; for it is his heritage."***

We use money to invest in good tools to be able to produce more. Proverbs 13:11 ***"Wealth gained by dishonesty will diminish, but he who gathers by labor will increase."***

GENEROUSLY AND JOYFULLY GIVING

We use money to give to the needy as unto God.

Proverbs 22:9

“He who has a generous eye will be blessed, because he gives of his bread to the poor.” (Having a generous eye means being a happy giver.)

Jesus spoke in Mathew 6:22-23

“The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good (and that means that you gladly give), your whole body will be full of light.”

Proverbs 25:21-22

“If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink; because so you will heap coals of fire on his head, and the Lord will reward you.”

I am now thinking of a beautiful bible story of how you may be blessed by even feeding your hungry and thirsty enemies. The King of the Syrian city Damascus often invaded Israel to steal food and riches from the people, but God showed the prophet Elisha every time they invaded, where he would attack next to steal. And when the Damascus King found out that the prophet gave timely warnings, he came to take the prophet prisoner. But God blinded the enemy's eyes so that the prophet could lead them into the city of Samaria in Israel, where they were locked up. Israel's King wanted then to kill them all, but the prophet said, “No, feed them well and gave them

enough to drink, and then let them go home.” And as Israel’s King did as the prophet had advised him, these invaders were so embarrassed that they never came back anymore to raid and rob from Israel. We MUST learn to love even our biggest enemies, because our heavenly Father is also their Father.

James 1:27only

“Pure and undefiled religion before God our Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble.”

Galatians 2:10: ***“The apostles desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing I, Paul, was also eager to do.”***

QUESTIONS TO DISCUSS:

1. Do you feel that not having been able to keep what you worked for, has made your life difficult?
2. Does it make you feel good when you have given to a needy person?
3. Is it good to pay offerings in a church that has a greedy pastor? Can such a pastor teach you about love?
4. Do you give to God when you give to a poor widow and orphans?

SOME BIBLE VERSES

You see, God wants us to be like Him, and take good care of His creation for Him. It is good that we work hard every day except for a time to rest. In the Ten Commandments we read just a moment ago it says:

“Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work on that day.”

Ask God what He would like you to do and then serve Him diligently.

Proverbs 10:16only

“The labor of the righteous leads to life, the wages of the wicked leads to sin.”

Proverbs 12:24only

“The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor.”

Proverbs 14:23only

“In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter leads only to poverty.”

Proverbs 21:25-26

“The desire of the lazy man kills him because his hands refuse to work. He covets greedily all day long, but the righteous gives and does not spare.”

So many people look around for someone to beg from, but that will never please our heavenly Father. We must work diligently for Him, so that He can bless us, and so

that we can bless Him in return with our giving to the needed and our loved ones. And we just cannot give if we do not produce more than what we need for our family, and to make our business grow. Love does not truly exist unless it is expressed through obedience to God, and through giving from a happy and joyful heart. Loving God and others becomes visible as we give to people in need. The amount of our giving measures how much we love God and men.

2 Corinthians 9:7-9 says:

***“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or forced, because God loves a happy, cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, and at all times, you have all that you need, and you will abound in every good work.*”**

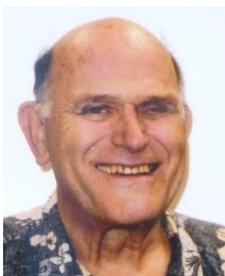
In Ephesians 4:28-29 we read:

***“Let him who stole, steal no longer, but rather let him work, working with his hands that is good, so that he may have something to give to him who is in need.”*”**

Happiness is just not possible without being loved, and we cannot receive love without choosing to love and obey our God and Father, our King Jesus, and love all the people God puts in our life. The best way to learn this is by growing up in a loving and caring family that images the Family of God.

In a dangerous world of lions, rhinos, snakes etc. a family could only be protected within the limited safety of a larger clan community and a family could not survive but in subjection to the rules of the clan, rather than function per God's design for a family.

Today is God's time to restore to Sub-Sahara African peoples' family as His building block for a caring and loving society. This teaching has in some form already been available on FPMF's audio bible teacher (ABT).



The writer Kees Hoek grew up in The Netherlands, moving in 1969 with his wife Els and four children to the USA to gain an American business experience. As they joined an Assembly of God church in Bellevue WA, they came so much closer to their Father God and Jesus Christ that they decided to remain and became US citizens. He was for 32 years a commercial contractor, selling the business after his wife went home to be with her heavenly Father in 1998. It was then that God called him in amazing ways to become a father to many young men who grew up without an attentive father of their own.

Kees says: "Living among African peoples since 2003 has been of immeasurable value to me in understanding the Healing of Wounds of the Heart."