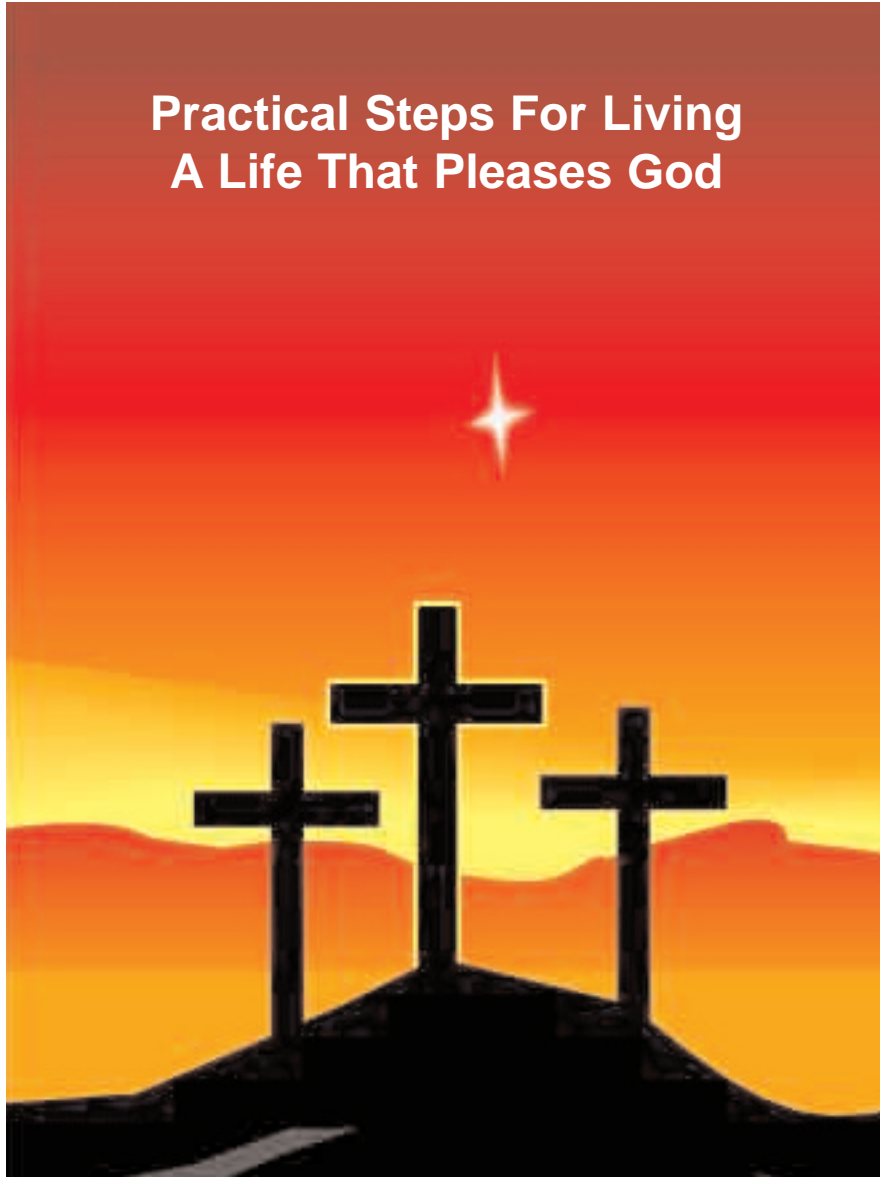


Lifebytes:

24. What's The PROBLEM?

**Practical Steps For Living
A Life That Pleases God**



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Identifying the REAL Problem

Yesterday we watched a TV ad about a medical website. If you were facing a medical situation in which you felt you might need to see a doctor, the website offered a questionnaire you could fill in before your appointment.

The questions were designed to help you *prepare in advance* to share with the doctor the full extent of your medical problem. After you completed the questionnaire, you could print it out and bring it with you for your doctor's visit. We were intrigued that someone had developed such a useful tool.

For my appointments at the Veterans Administration leading up to my shoulder surgery last fall, Sue joined me as I talked to the doctor. As he asked questions, she'd often have things to share that I'd overlooked. Her input greatly assisted him in his evaluation.

When it came time for the actual procedure, the surgeon had gathered a host of information, including x-rays, MRI's and data from my charts so that he could operate correctly. Would any of us want any less preparation?

During our many years of ministry we've been approached in person or by phone or e-mail for advice and counsel on baffling situations people were facing. The problems usually concerned interpersonal conflict, or family members or friends who were in trouble.

We deeply encourage you to instill the truths of this Lifebyte into your own spiritual arsenal because people with quandaries may come to *you* as well! And key to uncovering the root of the situation in most instances is this:

The person who is relating a problem is most often the hindrance to dealing with the REAL problem.

Why do we say this? Because when people seek advice about a problem that concerns others, they present the situation with the *wrong person in focus*. Their misplaced focus often keeps you from helping them with the real underlying cause to the problem.

Before we come back to this, let's do a little review of human nature. Each of us has inherited from Adam and Eve our sin nature, which prompts us to *rationalize* our attitudes and actions. If you've read our book **Demolishing Strongholds** then you know that rationalization is a symptom of **deceit**.

Have you ever walked into a room where two children have been fighting over something? When you question them, each immediately tells you what the *other* did wrong. When a couple with marriage problems seeks help, each immediately starts off by telling you what the *spouse* has done.

With the incursion of *psychology* into Christendom, many well-meaning Christians have been deterred from effectively relying on God's ways to bring about resolution. How often have concerned listeners violated God's Word by allowing a person to share *one-sided information* so he or she could feel better because they "got it into the open"? If this is your custom, you have no idea how much trouble you're getting into with God by listening to **slander** and **gossip**, the daughters of rationalization.

To break through rationalization, a wise person will always ask, "**Forget what HE (or SHE) did! What did YOU do?**" If the parent or counselor doesn't do this, they'll never get to the root of the true problem. If the rationalization of casting blame or guilt on someone else isn't confronted, the most the listen-

er will accomplish is *counterfeit* assistance: helping the sharer feel better by empathizing with him or her.

Adam blamed Eve for the sin in the Garden, and she in turn blamed the snake. But God refused to accept the *wrong focus of blame* from either one of them! If He didn't excuse the wrong focus of our original parents from whom all humanity inherited rationalization, neither can we who want to help others *God's way* allow it to be put forth.

Anchor this truth if you're going to be effective in your counsel:

People are pre-programmed at birth to rationalize and focus blame on others.

Rationalization must be confronted if you are going to help others as God's servant!

Remember,

The person who is relating a problem is most often the hindrance to dealing with the REAL problem.

**How To Be God's Solution:
Go VERTICAL First, Then Horizontal**

Please try to picture this from our vantage point: Most of the people who've come to us for counsel or who seek others for advice spend too little time *first seeking God* for His revelation and direction. We refer to seeking Him first as "**Going Vertical**". Because of human sin nature, it's much easier for people with problems to "**Go Horizontal**"—to *turn to others* before they turn to God, and rationalize that these people will have the answer they want.

A person who turns immediately to other people for help when facing problems may not realize that he or she is, in fact, turning away from God:

This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD (Jeremiah 17:5).

The proliferation of Christian counseling has provoked so many to become more *man-dependent* as they've turned to **Hellenist-based psychology** rather than to God and His Word *first*. And therein lies the crux to effectively helping people so that **God's grace, power and blessing** are released in the process of solving the problem.

The person who turns too quickly to *share* a problem is also a problem themselves. And almost unconsciously, they'll veil the *real* problem. In their quest to tell you what the *other* parties to the problem are doing, they only compound the problem through **slander** and **gossip**. They rationalize their revelation of privileged details by telling you that you need to know *everything* in order to help.

Like the helpful medical website we saw on TV, we want to equip you to get the *root* of the problem so that our Father may be glorified in the solution. What we'll share can help you with your *own* interpersonal problems as well as with those of people who seek your assistance. In fact, we hope these truths will reduce your own perceived need to contact anyone for help!

First, we've developed a rule-of-thumb over our years of helping people. You may recognize it because we've addressed it before.

The person who brings you the problem may be part of the problem or the solution to the problem.

Don't lose sight of this truth. Keep your focus on the person who is *presenting* the problem, not on the people about whom they're speaking. If there is to be a God-based solution, the person sharing the problem with you is either part of the problem *or* the path to the solution. Do you see that?

- Intentionally or unintentionally, the person who approaches you may be covering up their *own* contribution to the problem by getting you to focus on the other person. Remember this maxim: "*The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him*" (Proverbs 18:17).
- The one bringing you the problem may be the cause of the *ongoing nature* of the problem because they've failed to *first seek God* and His solution.
- If the individual has come to you for counsel because they're trying to help a third party, they may have already gotten caught up in the *rationalized slander/gossip about others* which they're passing along to you.
- Be discerning! Their coming to you may indicate that any of the above has *already* occurred. **The person who relates the problem is most often the hindrance to dealing with the real problem.**
- And finally, if you do get committed to this situation, be absolutely certain that you "go vertical" so that you can give the parties involved **God's solution to the problem.** If you don't, *you've* become part of the problem.

Going Vertical: Preparing In Advance To Be An Effective Problem Solver

Logos, Rhema, and Halakhah

So many who consider themselves "Christian" lose sight of the fact that

each day we live on earth, our Lord puts us into situations with people in which He expects us to fully represent *Him*. Part of that privilege and responsibility includes revealing *His way of life* to those who are unaware of what righteousness and obedient trust look like, whether they're believers or not.

Most often you can be Jesus's representative when people *approach you with problems*. Sometimes being His representative just entails praying for them right on the spot. Isn't this what Jesus did? And what better witness can you be than by walking in the steps of our Master? We've seen Him readily respond to those prayers over the years as a testimony to the needy person that He hears and He cares!

In other instances, you have the opportunity to convey the wise counsel of His Word to those who ask. This is the intent of Jesus's command as He assures His own that He is with them as they share according to His Word:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19,20).

This passage has often been called the "Great Commission" in the misguided sense of propelling many into *hard-core evangelism of strangers*. The true understanding of these verses delves far deeper into relational responsibility:

- "*Therefore go*" is not an injunction to pack your bags immediately and head for far-off places (although He may indeed call you through His Spirit to a particular distant destination!). Rather,

the present ongoing tense of that word indicates “*as you are going.*”

In other words, wherever He has you situated, in whatever circumstance, be about His business of making disciples. *Going* is a very active word, and if there’s any adjective that describes busy Americans, it’s “going”.

Jesus wants your focus to be *not* on the task you think you need to do, but on *His purposes* for the *encounters you may have* in the course of accomplishing your task.

- ***Discipling and baptizing all the nations***—all the “people groups” both here in your own backyard as well as along longitudes you never dreamed existed. Don’t allow yourself to be isolated among those who are “like you” in cultural background or ethnicity.

For example: Perhaps our Lord has brought those whose heritage lies elsewhere to this country so they might encounter someone who can introduce them to the Lord of the true Gospel! And remember, discipling is a *relational commitment*, not a drive-by content-dump of Bible facts.

- ***“Teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”*** calls you to come alongside these individuals and families so you can show them the wisdom of God’s teachings and how it applies to everyday problems. In the pattern of Jesus, this teaching needs to be practical and clear, not theoretical or idealized.

The teachings that Jesus shared with His disciples were drawn from the well of *Torah*, the Hebrew word that means “teaching” or “instruction”. God commands His children today to apply His truths even as He

commanded the Israelites to walk in His ways:

Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations [unbelievers], who will hear about all these decrees and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people (Deuteronomy 4:6).

As we’ll discuss shortly, establishing and living by *halakhahs*—prayerfully determined biblical decisions—and helping others do likewise is our Lord’s way for you to convey His teachings to others.

Let’s look at an analogy of what life is like for people who don’t prepare themselves by “going vertical” *before* problems arise. When Mike was in the Navy a few decades ago, a poster was displayed to encourage people to both *adequately prepare for* and *to finish* what they started. So many battles are lost by individuals who are ill-prepared or who fail to complete their assignment.

The poster showed a frantic man in a boat as an alligator is scrambling in with its teeth around his leg. The caption read: **“When you’re knee-deep in alligators, that’s not the time to remember to drain the swamp.”**

The *need for preparation* calls to mind the parable of the five wise virgins and the five foolish virgins (see Matthew 25:1-13), as well as the cost of following Jesus without reservation (see Luke 14:27-33). In the first passage, when the wedding starts is not the time to realize your lamp oil is insufficient. The wise five prepared themselves with an adequate supply and were ready. The unwise, however, were unprepared and missed their opportunity to join the feast.

The second passage also exhorts readiness. Before you attempt to build a tower, make sure you can complete it. When you go to war, make sure you can win it. Our Lord uses these scenarios to stir you to *seriously weigh* what following Him entails:

Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple; In the same way, any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:27,33).

Each of the above examples is our Lord's way to stress that His followers must *consider and prepare* before they take action. And, this is the nature of "going vertical". You can be prepared in advance before people come to you with problems.

It's true that with the Holy Spirit's input you can give wise counsel in the face of an unexpected situation. As we'll discuss shortly, this is called *rhema*. But, *preparing* yourself to bring His wise solutions to those who come to you means *living* in the "Vertical" as your customary practice.

There are three aspects to "going vertical" that are integral to your effectiveness as one who shares His counsel. More than that, they must become a way of life for every true follower of Jesus. For anyone who would truly represent our Lord and His teachings to others on earth, these three vertical dimensions are essential: **Logos**, **Rhema**, and **Halakhah**.

In the Bible two Greek words when translated into English mean "word." These terms are **logos** and **rhema**.

- **Logos** [LAH-goss] represents God's ways and thoughts, forever unchangeable. The Bible is a part of God's **logos**

written down for man. It conveys His general requirements in order for people to live righteously.

- **Rhema** (RAY-muh) is specific revelation given directly and individually by the Holy Spirit to a follower of Jesus. Without the indwelling Holy Spirit, there can be no *rhema*.

Through *rhema* the Holy Spirit discloses a particular revelation to you. It may be a portion of Scripture that He quickens as guidance. Or, it may be insight through prophecy or a word of knowledge or wisdom that the Spirit imparts as specific direction.

Our human capacity to understand God is so minute, and His wisdom so surpasses our comprehension: "*For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord. 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts'*" (Isaiah 55:8,9). Because of our limitations, God needs to break His general truths down to bite-size guidance for us to apply.

Knowing and applying the logos of God and obeying each rhema His Spirit reveals are the guidance which is vital to our ability to obey God's will. "*Rhema*," writes Derek Prince, "is like each of the broken pieces of bread with which Jesus fed the multitudes; it is suited to each person's need and capacity; often it comes to us through another's hands. Thus, we can see the need for connectedness in the body of Christ, our need for one another."¹

Our Father is still revealing His will. That's why the Holy Spirit indwells His children. Matthew 4:4 tells us, "*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.*" The

word “comes” is in the continuous present tense; it’s ongoing. Another way to phrase this is, “*We must live on every piece of guidance as it comes out of the mouth of God.*”

Waiting for guidance from the Holy Spirit by the *rhema* of God is humbling to our innate, quick-to-rationalize sin nature. Seeking the *rhema* of God is to us today what gathering manna was for the Israelites during the Exodus: “*He gave you manna to eat in the desert...to humble and to test you so that in the end it might go well with you*” (Deuteronomy 8:16).

The Hebraic early Church realized how important it was to seek ***God’s specific guidance***. With obedience came victory. From the Hebrew Bible they appreciated the examples of their forefathers who pursued their Lord’s specific way for His specific purpose to be accomplished.

King David, for instance, often sought God’s specific guidance for his battles. When the Philistines attacked Israel, “*David inquired of the Lord, ‘Shall I go and attack the Philistines? Will you hand them over to me?’ The Lord answered him, ‘Go, for I will surely hand the Philistines over to you’*” (2 Samuel 5:19).

On another occasion when the Philistines attacked, David again prayed. This time God gave him a *different* strategy: “*So David inquired of the Lord, and he answered, ‘Do not go straight up, but circle around behind them and attack them in front of the balsam trees. As soon as you hear the sound of marching in the tops of the balsam trees, move quickly, because that will mean the Lord has gone out in front of you to strike the Philistine army’*” (2 Samuel 5:23,24).

Seeking God’s specific will in order to accomplish His purposes always finds His response and His provision!

Another example of a model for the

Hebraic pattern of seeking specific *rhema* was Joshua. The Israelite leader and his people were given specific guidance to march around Jericho seven times to gain the victory (see Joshua 6). Yet God revealed different strategies for subsequent battles.

Just because God has provided specific guidance for a particular circumstance in your life or in someone else’s doesn’t mean that that direction will apply for *all* situations you encounter. He wants you to go vertical with each problem you face. That trust reveals your loving dependence on our Father.

Again drawing from the wisdom of their Hebraic ancestors, the followers of Jesus in the early Church did not want to “*lean on their own understanding.*” That is, they wanted *revelation*, not man’s reason, to guide them. We see in Acts 13:1-3 this pattern of *seeking God’s plan* rather than analyzing and evaluating qualifications:

In the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers...While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work which I have called them.’ So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Just before He ascended, Jesus had revealed *general* guidance of what His people could expect when the Holy Spirit came: “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). But it was the *rhema* from the Holy Spirit—God’s specific revealed will—which set apart Saul and Barnabas to fulfill His purposes.

When God reveals a *rhema* for a specific purpose, He also empowers the person to whom He gives it to fulfill that purpose. The angel Gabriel informed Mary, “*You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High*” (Luke 1:31).

When Mary asked how a virgin could conceive, the angel replied, “**Nothing is impossible with God**” (v. 37). In other words, every word (*rhema*) that comes from God will bring with it the power to fulfill His purpose. Mary’s humble acceptance to willingly obey what had been told her was faith enough for God to act. “*May it be to me as you have said*” (v. 38).

We want to encourage you: You can be a far more effective instrument to solve problems by “going vertical” **long before** you experience the problem! Another way of receiving *rhema* is to establish *halakhahs* (hah-luh-KAHZ) for yourself, your family, your faith community or business. We’ve written our book ***Christian Halakhahs; Loving Jesus Through The Way You Apply His Word***, to guide you to address life problems by “going vertical” in advance.

The Hebrew word *halak* (huh-LAHK) means “to walk.” Thus, *halakhah* refers to walking out your life in a way that coincides with God’s Word. Establishing *halakhahs* calls for you to apply biblically-founded truths to all realms of your life, whether to education, finances, ethical decisions or religious practices.

Halakhahs are a type of *rhema* in which the Holy Spirit guides you to establish **biblical principles** that show you how to walk righteously in a specific area. For instance, if you establish a biblical basis for your children’s TV viewing, or the biblical basis for home

schooling them, these are *halakhahs*. You’ve instituted standards of God as a way of life.

In effect, through establishing *halakhahs* before you encounter a problem, you’re *already* living by God’s solution. Quite often, through prayerfully searching out God’s way as He reveals it through His Word, you can forestall a problem before it even arises. That’s a wonderful thing!

As you read the Epistles in the Newer Testament, note how often the Older Testament is cited, and the manner in which the writer gives a *halakhic rendering* for the believers to apply. For example, Paul instructs his protegee Timothy in the way followers of Jesus should treat the elders who lead and guide them: “**For the [Hebrew] Scripture says, ‘Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,’ and ‘The worker deserves his wages’**” (1 Timothy 5:18).

Halakhic applications of the Hebrew text abound in the Newer Testament. Be alert for these when you’re in the Word yourself!

Keep in mind your purpose in establishing *halakhahs*: to express to our Lord your yearning for a *dynamic love relationship* with Him that evidences your determination to trust Him and to put that trust into *obedient action*. Each *halakhah* you establish is a “*Thus says the Lord*” for you, and for your family, faith community, business, or whatever.

Esteem your *halakhahs* on the same level as a *rhema* from the Bible. They are *both* God’s commands! Your *halakhahs* and *rhema* are your specific application, while God’s Word itself is His general instruction for all people.

Jesus confers *halakhic authority* on you and the responsibility to *establish*

halakhahs for your life when He promises, “I tell you the truth, whatever you **bind on earth** will be bound in heaven, and whatever you **loose on earth** will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19; 18:18).

Applying God’s Word as a way of life is reinforced by our Lord to put into practice that which you learn in His Word:

*Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and **puts them into practice** is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.*

*But everyone who hears these words of mine and **does not put them into practice** is like a foolish man who built his house on sand* (Matthew 7:24,26).

Let’s examine a situation in the Book of Acts in which the disciples recognized the need for a twelfth apostle to be chosen. They could have selected a replacement using any number of means, but notice how they went about solving the problem:

*So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. Then **they prayed**, ‘Lord, you **know everyone’s heart**. Show us which of these two **you have chosen** to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs.’ Then they **cast lots**, and the lot fell to Matthias; so he was added to the eleven apostles* (Acts 1:23-26).

These men realized that *only God* could truly evaluate the heart condition of the two candidates, and they wanted to make sure that the man who was chosen aligned with God’s will and purpose. So they prayed and cast lots, leaving the choice up to God rather than according to man’s tendency to select the most popular or “successful”.

By casting lots, the disciples were halakhically applying God’s Word from the Hebrew Bible: “*The lot is cast into the lap, but its **every decision** is from the **LORD***” (Proverbs 16:33); “*Casting the lot **settles disputes** and keeps strong opponents apart*” (Proverbs 18:18).

These men weren’t relying on *chance* for a decision. They truly trusted that God would make plain His decision. There was no need to second-guess afterward, or try to rationalize which person might fill the position more effectively. God’s will was done! And, this is how “going vertical first” through establishing *halakhahs* operates in our lives today.

We were first introduced back in 1978 to the crucial importance of establishing *halakhahs*. Since that time we’ve instituted many that now guide our lives and are *our* expression of loving obedience to our Lord. Keep in mind that *halakhahs* He gives for *your* family may be quite different for other families!

Be assured that as you establish *halakhahs* for yourself, particularly if you’re diligent in this *before* you encounter a problem, you’ll see our Lord strengthening and encouraging your trust in His faithfulness:

A person who actively establishes halakhahs will readily turn to God and His Word when they face a problem before they lean on their own rationalization.

We’ll pursue this thought further, but first let’s explore the four distinct steps to take as you establish *halakhahs* in your own life (from our book, **Christian Halakhahs**):

Steps in Establishing *Halakhahs*

When you are prompted by a need or concern, begin to prayerfully seek God to determine *how* the Word would apply.

- 1 Prayer.** To establish a *halakhah* for your particular issue, pray. Ask for a spirit of wisdom and revelation (see Ephesians 1:17), entreating our Father to convey His will regarding your issue or concern.
- 2 Bible passages.** Next, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any verses or passages from the Bible that would apply to your situation. Don't try to apply anything to your situation *until* you are sure that you've compiled all possible biblical references. Some verses will be more pertinent than others. That is, you'll recognize one or more of the verses as *more applicable* to the issue. Other verses will add understanding to it. When you've made the extra effort to pursue *all* the biblical leads prompted by the Holy Spirit, a sense of peace will probably rest on you and anyone who may be sharing this investigation with you.
- 3 Biblical application.** Armed with the appropriate verses and passages, you can address your problem and concern. Be careful to not get into "if / then" reasoning as you try to apply the Word to the situation. The usual tendency after pondering the Bible application to the situation is to immediately draw conclusions and ask questions: "What will this decision cost me? How will this affect others? What changes will I need to go through if I decide to live by this new conviction?" No matter how strong the urge is to weigh the personal cost of your decision—don't! You must first determine in your heart that you *do* have the correct biblical

application for your situation. The Holy Spirit will again give you peace if this is what God wants for you.

- 4 Action to take.** Only after you're convinced in your heart that you've correctly applied God's Word to your situation is it time to take the next step, *application of grace*. Grace is the power and desire to uphold God's truth in your life no matter what it costs you. Remember, you are applying *halakhahs* to your life because of your *love for Jesus*. The goal is *not* right behavior for its own sake. If correct behavior in the hopes of gaining God's favor is your motivation, you'll become prideful. You may even develop a disdain for others who don't live or think the way you do. God's grace will enable you to keep your new conviction because of your desire to *lovingly obey Him*. Continue to pray for grace. And repent of your failure for not having known these new truths or lived by them before this time.

You can readily recognize in the four steps above that rationalization is *completely eliminated* as a guiding factor. In other words, reliance on God's Word under the guidance of the Holy Spirit keeps you from giving way to your sin nature. Psychological analysis is NEVER needed for you to determine God's will or decision.

Creating a *halakhah* is a pure, God-given way for you to reflect your relationship with Him and your desire to put His Word into practice. In doing so, you're building on the Rock!

Determining God's will and plan through prayerful application of God's Word is crucial if you're going to bring glory to our Father! This is His means for you as you face your own problems in life, or are asked to help others.

If you turn to others first without discerning what God has to say, you're building your life on sand. And, anything that is built on sand is built on the wrong foundation. No matter what you do to prop it up with counsel, it will always fall!

So make "going vertical" habitual in your life, and teach it to your family:

The person who has been readily applying God's Word by establishing *halakhahs* will first turn to God and His Word for answers to life's problems.

As we mentioned earlier, the *halakhahs* you establish *in advance* may preclude that you'll even encounter a particular problem. As we wrote in ***Christian Halakhahs***, each *halakhah* is like a stone in the walls of Jerusalem as Nehemiah rebuilt the city. There comes a time when the wall is high enough so that a protected sanctuary based on God's Word has been established.

When it comes to helping the various people who've contacted us with a problem, there's a night-and-day difference in our ability to effectively assist them. As you read the next pages, evaluate which type of person *you* are:

The person who has been readily applying God's Word in establishing *halakhahs* doesn't bring you a problem, nor are they the problem. They've already gone into His Word to seek His solution, or they've received a *rhema* from the Holy Spirit.

Often all we're asked to do is to confirm the *rhema* or to determine if they in fact do have the best bib-

lical solution to the problem. Sometimes people who are new to this process need some wise counsel in getting started. This was the role of elders in the earliest Church, and we are privileged to be able to serve our Lord as we serve His people in this way.

Consider a few analogies so you can really get hold of how important the halakhic process is. Everyone has had someone propose to them an activity or plan they want to do. For instance, your 13-year-old tells you he wants to go to a movie with his friends. But when you ask about *which* movie, its rating, and when he wants to go, he answers each question with "I don't know."

Do you feel that you have enough information to give him an affirmative answer? In fact, depending on the character of your child, the *absence* of vital information may cause you to question what he's really up to!

Now, what if the same child comes to you with the same request. This time he's selected a specific movie, found that the rating is suitable, and tells you when he plans to go, who he'll be going with, and who will provide transportation. Your response is entirely different when someone has done "his homework" first. You're more willing to *cooperate* with his request rather than having to police it.

Another example: A friend asks you to join her at an all-day seminar conducted by a Christian speaker you've never heard of. When you ask about the speaker's background and what he'll be talking about, she replies, "I don't know."

How would you feel about going? How would you respond to her lack of investigation before she proposed it to

you? Your response would be entirely different if she'd anticipated the facts you needed to make a wise decision and had them available for you.

A person who habitually *looks to God first* acts entirely different than those who don't: "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding*" (Psalm 111:10). A wise person who seeks God first will investigate and examine available pertinent information *before* making a proposal to others. He'll also take that approach before involving others in his problems.

In your desire to help, keep in mind that the best counsel will always bring the *maximum glory to our Father*. Use this motivation as you ask the Holy Spirit to guide you: "Show me what will bring our Father the *most glory*."

Now let's look at the person who is *horizontally* focused, who quickly goes to others for help:

The person who hasn't been going to God first and applying His Word will rely on rationalization. You'll immediately recognize that they aren't sharing any biblical solutions God would have shown them regarding the problem, because they haven't sought Him out first. And, they'll often talk at length about another person they believe is the problem. They'll attribute all sorts of unsubstantiated motives and reasons for the "problem person's" behavior or attitude.

Realize from the start that you won't be able to help this individual unless they experience a heart change! By not

even attempting to go to God first, they've given way to *idolatry* by trusting in their own rationalization. In effect, they've chosen their sin nature over the Holy Spirit to guide them.

At the same time they fail to see how they've given in to the **spirit of witchcraft**. This spirit gives people a false sense of control over people. By relying on the rationale of *psyching people out* by determining their perceived underlying motives, they feel empowered. They put people into tidy psychological, categorical boxes: "He must have been abused"; "She had an uncaring father"; "His wife is controlling."

Those who categorize people like this don't realize that Satan has a foothold in their life. He's using them to compound the problem they're facing (see 2 Timothy 2:26). The enemy relies on man-centered, Hellenist psychology to give people control over others through *blame or victimization*. They become prideful in their ability to put definitional labels on other people so they don't have to face their own personal responsibility.

This is where it gets ugly when this second group contacts us with a problem. If the Holy Spirit gives us a *rhema*, we'll advise them about His path for them. But, as soon as we do, we can hear the bristly voice of defensive rationalization. It sounds something like, "I don't think you *understand* the problem. Let me tell you more..."; or, "I think your counsel is too hard. People's *feelings* will be hurt if I follow through with what you're saying." The counsel falls on deaf (or defiant) ears.

In these situations you can sense the caller *turning against* you. We've never been a help to this second group. NEVER!

Indelibly imprint this truth on your heart:

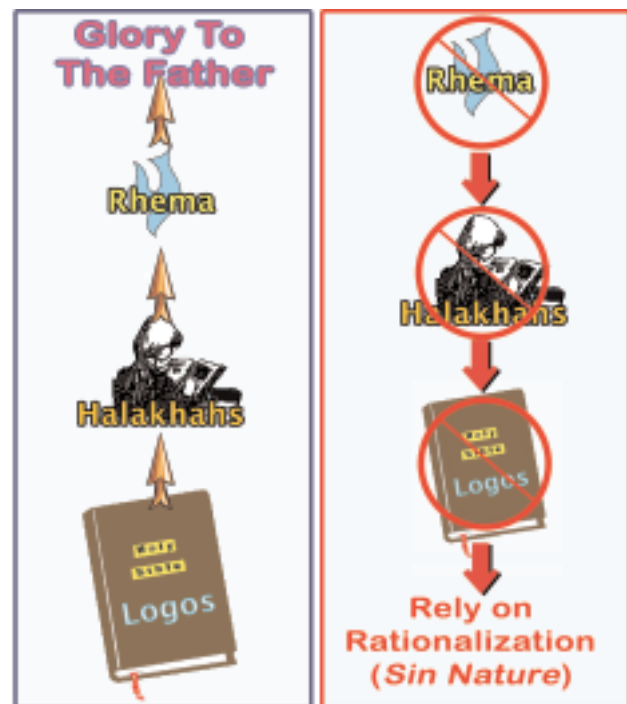
If your way of life has been to go vertical to God first and a horizontally focused person comes to you with a problem, there's no hope of resolution until he or she repents before God. HE is the One they're leaving out and sinning against through their rationalization!

Jesus's words truly pertain to this situation: *"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces"* (Matthew 7:6).

We encourage you to follow this process:

- **Before you try to help anyone with a problem, verify how intensely that person has sought God and His Word first.**
- **If they have, ask them to share what God revealed to them so that you can discern and confirm it by the Spirit in you.**
- **You may want to ask if they've fasted about this situation as well.**
- **Even if you know the person well, discern whether you're dealing with a Teachable Fool (someone who just needs some wisdom), a Hardened Fool (who may agree that your counsel is sound but refuses to apply it), a Mocking Fool (one who concludes that your counsel has no merit), or a God-denying Fool (who rejects the God of the Bible but has created a god in the image he wants Him to be). If you try to help any of the last three, you'll fail. (For more on types of fools, see *Lessons On Restoring the Early Church*, Section 1, Lesson 10.)**

- **If the person *hasn't* gone vertical first but is turning to you instead, you're stepping into a trap of idolatry and witchcraft. You'll get hurt in the end. Count on it!**
- **Send the person away until they're willing to look completely to God first. In some instances, if they're willing, you can help guide them in searching His Word. But you can't try to solve the problem without having them go to God first.**



A Strong Warning To Men:

Is there anyone who doesn't realize that most men love to be *problem solvers*? Just listen to them talk together. Or, ask a wife when she's emotionally hurting. Rather than offering loving care and sympathy, her husband gives her unsolicited advice so he can solve what he perceives to be the problem. Many a man has only complicated the REAL problem.

Men enjoy bringing about what they perceive to be a favorable outcome. It

gives them a sense of accomplishment. Much of their identity and satisfaction are based on getting to the “bottom line”. On the other hand, women are much more like our God in being attuned to **process** which takes *all the variables into consideration*.

Most men overlook a key variable to which most women are very sensitive: the *feelings* of the people involved. [A notable exception are those women who have suffered such emotional trauma themselves that they hide in “caves” for protection. They’re too frightened to even be in touch with their *own* emotions.]

When I [Mike] am trying to help a man who is focused on finding the solution to a problem with his wife or daughters, I ask Sue to join me in the conversation. When she finishes sharing from a woman’s viewpoint all the variables and feelings that are operating, we can assure you that most men have never even considered anything close to her input. “*A wise man listens to advice*” (Proverbs 12:15).

Still, those who are horizontally focused will disregard her wisdom and refuse to deal with the critical variables she’s presented. They want to *solve the problem*, not take responsibility for the process. “*Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him*” (Proverbs 26:12).

After Sue has spoken and been rejected by a resistant man, that’s all that the Hardened, Mocking or God-denying Fool will hear from my wife.

Suggestions In Helping Others

The early Hebraic believers were persistent in *knowing and applying God’s Word, seeking rhema from His Spirit*, and

establishing Scriptural halakhahs. His *revealed will* was far more cherished than relying on their own rationalization. The former brought *glory to the Father*, the latter brought folly through the sin nature.

The Hellenist influence in today’s church leans heavily on rationalization, employing a lot of “pro-or-con” reasoning in decision-making. This type of human reasoning results in control and manipulation that tend to divide and estrange people.

Be careful you don’t get into this mode of decision-making. YOU CAN’T FIND ONE INSTANCE IN THE BIBLE OF GOD BLESSING PRO-OR-CON REASONING.

[For more on this, see Lifebyte 22. ***Obedient Trust Versus Reasoning***.]

When someone presents a problem to you, hear “through your spirit” more than you hear through your ears. If you’re accustomed to going vertical to God first in your life, the Holy Spirit will give you discernment.

If you hear the Spirit through your spirit, He may show you that the “problem” exists because God is trying to bring that person to repentance. Or, He may be trying to teach them to develop a habit of prayerfully applying His Word. Many situations are created by our Lord to chastise, to confront, or to cause people to become more conscious of *Him* and grow in their trust and dependence on *Him*. You don’t want to get in God’s way!

Trying to “solve the problem” through your mind’s rationale will only complicate matters. Please, seek the Holy Spirit’s revelation and discernment before you even attempt to offer counsel. When the Holy Spirit has revealed His solution to you, you not only bring

to the one you're assisting God's blessing, power and grace; you also increase the potential that our Father will ultimately be glorified. Anything less is meaningless and fruitless!

A Word of Encouragement to Parents:

If you have children at home, now is the time to teach them to go to God's Word as soon as they encounter problems. Show them by example and encourage them to seek His halakhic application.

A child who matures to adulthood dependent on God and His Word will never fail nor be put to shame. That's a legacy that is truly a testimony of faith. Use this time wisely. Apply Deuteronomy 6:1-9 with diligence in your own home!

When you've established a wall of truth around yourself and your family, you'll discover that you can more clearly understand biblical truth from the framework of *applying it to your life*.

Prior to this time, you've probably agreed *cognitively* with the Bible. But once you discover the peaceful comfort of personal *halakhahs*, you'll cherish the mighty truths that have become your building blocks of protection. Appropriate the Hebraic understanding that from this day forward you'll trust and obey that which He reveals to you!

We can assure you of another important observation:

Those who habitually apply the *logos* to their lives through establishing *halakhahs* are far more likely to receive *rhema* guidance when it's earnestly sought. Don't forget this!

Bibliography

1. Derek Prince, *Faith To Live By* (Ft. Lauderdale, FL: Derek Prince Publications, 1977) p. 79,80.