

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for,
it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."*
(Matthew 18:19,20)



SECTION 6 - LESSON 50

FELLOWSHIP IN HOMES — Extended Spiritual Family:

• *A Journey Requires A Destination and A First Step*

Seize Your Neighborhood Then Your City For Jesus:

1. Establish a Perimeter of Holiness.
2. Secure and Protect Your Perimeter.
3. Expand Your Perimeter.
4. Destroy Satan's Perimeter.



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Introduction

In this final lesson we want to summarize some important concepts for you and your fellowship family. Never lose sight of the fact that you are on a spiritual journey *together* to a glorious destination, the throne room of God. And along the way you are privileged to carry out a wonderful assignment: *to take the Gospel to all people*.

If you're serving as an elder or almost-elder, your focus must be fixed on the love and power of Jesus in you to equip those in your care to fulfill this purpose (Ephesians 4:11-13). All other body-life activities must support His goal:

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And He died for all, that those who live should **no longer live for themselves but for Him** who died for them and was raised again. All this is from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the **ministry of reconciliation**: that God*

*was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And He has committed to us the **message of reconciliation** (2 Corinthians 5:14,15,18, 19).*

This earth will disappear, but what matters is this:

Will you and your fellowship family and all those He sends to you find joy at the judgment throne by hearing your names read from the Lamb's Book of Life?

Your faith community is part of the larger family of Jesus throughout the world. Your neighborhood is ground to be seized for our King. If you keep this focus with a compassionate burden for the lost, in time you will reach your city for God's purposes.

If you are enlisted by our Lord into His service, there's no way for you to bypass your enemy, Satan. To share the Gospel means that you must fight the war for souls. Your entry into that battle calls you to fight, to win, and to hold on to what you have conquered in the Name of Jesus. This is your biblical responsibility as His beloved bond-servant.

Elders who are serving the interests of our Lord must equip the soldiers in their

faith community to “press the attack” in obedient love. Failure to do this will result in believers who are like prisoners of war: alive but ineffective in serving the King.

FELLOWSHIP IN HOMES

Extended Spiritual Family:

A Journey Requires A

Destination and A First Step

Seize Your Neighborhood, Then Your City, for Jesus!

“As you go throughout the world, proclaim the Good News to all creation”

(Mark 16:15).

Our Hebraic forefathers who first trusted Jesus knew that He had died on behalf of all the world. This truth is summed up in the beloved promise related by John: ***“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever trusts in Him shall not perish but have eternal life”*** (3:16).

Jesus died as the Atonement for all mankind, and He intends for His followers to tell the world what He did for them.

Jesus didn't just scatter His disciples willy-nilly to all the continents. He had a plan: they would testify of Him as they *moved outward* in bite-size progression of encounter:

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).

The disciples were given their *immediate vicinity* as first priority, and then

worked outward from there. If you and those in your faith community have embraced the true Gospel, then you have the spiritual power to live transformed lives. With newness of His life in you, you're called to act on His behalf!

Several important Hebraic principles for reaching your neighborhood with the Gospel were discovered by evangelist Ed Silvano as he and his team saw God move mightily in Argentina. We've adapted some of his insights as recommendations for those who desire to see spiritual inroads made among their yet-to-believe families, workplaces and neighborhoods.

1. Establish a perimeter of holiness in each home of your faith community.

Remember, the primary reason to share as a fellowship family in the personal environment of a home is to uphold communal righteousness as you encourage each other to press on in loving and trusting Jesus (1 John 3:7).

We've mentioned several times that God answers the prayers of the righteous who walk in obedient trust. In this light:

- **Pray for our Father to raise up Christ-followers in your neighborhood who are burdened to live wholeheartedly in Jesus (Hebrews 10:38,39).**
- **Pray that the hearts of your unbelieving neighbors would respond to the Spirit's call to turn from their sin and find forgiving reconciliation with our Father (Acts 26:18).**
- **Keep on praying until our Lord answers these petitions that accord with His will (1 Thessalonians 5:17)!**

From our Father's vantage point much of Christendom today resembles disjointed, glorified POW camps which pose no threat to Satan's domain. When you establish a perimeter of righteousness around the homes in your faith community, you put Satan on guard. The enemy all too clearly recognizes that through righteous, effective prayer our Father's will can be accomplished and His Kingdom expanded.

Your homes become spiritual military fortifications—light in the midst of the worldly darkness in your neighborhood. Answered prayer is like artillery that paves the way for the ground attack.

Let's review why it's so important for perimeters of righteousness to be established within the home of each follower of Jesus:

- Perimeters *secure a sanctuary* of spiritual refuge and nurture in the home (Romans 15:13).
- Those within the perimeters *experience peace* and *unity* as they forfeit their own sinful desires in order to please their Lord (Colossians 1:10).
- By upholding communal righteousness within the perimeters of a home *prayers will be answered* (Hebrews 12:14).

It's important that each home, that is, each person or family, establish *halakhahs of practical righteousness* for their home. When the biblical parameters for righteousness have been established, each household can then scrutinize their homes for any unholy items or activities.

Remember, holiness is a *heart matter*—out of your heart emanates the actions that appease your sin nature.

Make sure your heart is responsive to the Spirit, then launch your housecleaning!

Sinful reading materials or Internet offerings, offensive television programs, unholy music, even pagan or occult souvenirs will hinder intimacy with God and the effectiveness of prayer. So will alcohol or drug abuse, rage, or self-indulgence in excess of any kind. Prayerfully examine your attitudes and behavior toward each other in your family as well.

Don't underestimate how critical a secure perimeter is for effective spiritual warfare. An elder must encourage those he serves to walk in ongoing holiness, forgiveness, and repentance, making sure he's upright in those arenas himself.

By example and word he should strongly emphasize their need to cleanse their homes of unholy things and practices. Wherever he detects tension or apprehension in marriages and other relationships, he needs to come alongside these believers to point them to Jesus and help them restore intimacy before Satan can establish a foothold.

How vital it is for each fellowship family member to be ever mindful of personal righteousness and the power of prayer to release God's intervention. If each one is diligent and vigilant, then the faith community will function from a position of strength. If there are weaknesses and breaches, then those who are eldering need to confront and undergird these family members in Jesus.

From the position of personal loving obedient trust in Jesus, the perimeter will be secure.

Late one afternoon a family that had recently come into our home fellowship were leaving after our gathering. The children commented, "We like coming here; your

home is always full of light!” Hearing their sadness, I [Mike] asked the father if I could meet with him during the week. Due to his work schedule I was able to meet him at his home mid-week while his family was away.

When I arrived at his home I discerned that it was spiritually dark. Since “Jim” was on the phone, I went into the bathroom and prayed, “In the Name of the Lord Jesus I bind you spirits from interfering with my time here.” Immediately I felt something around my throat begin to choke me. A demonic voice growled, “You have no right over us here. The man has invited us into his home.” I gasped, “I’m here on my Lord’s business, and I order you in the Name of Jesus to not interfere.” Whatever was choking me let go.

Later, as I was talking with “Jim” I told him what had happened in the bathroom and the demon’s words. Dropping his head he admitted, “That’s true. I never keep my children from the DVD’s, CD’s, and TV programs that I know are wrong.” He repented, and purposed to cleanse their home.

When the family came home later that day, he shared with them about our meeting. They all repented and removed the offensive material from their home. I returned to visit a week later, and it was a home full of light!

Is your home a sanctuary and refuge of love and peace for each family member and visitor? Yes or no? If no, what do you need to change? How can your fellowship family help?

What particular names is our Lord putting on your heart to pray for them to be prepared to respond to Him? Begin to pray individually and collectively for them.

2. Secure your perimeter and protect it from infiltration.

Securing your perimeter calls for each head of household to be vigilant against unclean infiltration, and for each elder to help when needed. Those serving as elders need to come alongside the families in their fellowship to help them discern areas of sin in their home if there is relational apprehension or ongoing unanswered prayer.

A home of righteousness is a weapon against Satan. And the combined effects of a fellowship of righteous homes is powerful. Be aware that the enemy will continue to try to breach the walls of each household to keep your faith family from being effective instruments in the lives of yet-to-believe neighbors!

The Adversary often uses deception as well as outright temptation to infiltrate the homes of those who want to live uprightly. Three practices common even among Christians are avenues by which demonic spirits are deluding many:

(1) Misuse of psychology

The practice of psychology in itself isn’t wrong. It’s misused, however, when it deals with sin as merely a problem to explore and examine rather than confess and turn away from!

Psychological techniques that ignore personal responsibility for sin ultimately end up imprisoning the counseled in their past as perpetual victims. No matter what was done to you, in the power of the Spirit you are called to forgive from your

heart. Through that same Spirit, you also need to ask forgiveness for any attitudes to which you've given way that have kept you from being fully available to serve our Lord's purposes in love.



The counseling that is so prevalent in Christendom today focuses on the *cause* of your pain rather than on the healing the Spirit can bring as you purpose to forgive from your heart. If you demand a pound of flesh from the one who has hurt you, you'll keep yourself imprisoned in the past and thrust away the grace that our Lord would give you if you chose to cast down your wounded bitterness.

Bitterness and refusal to forgive are self-inflicting weapons of unrighteousness. So often those who counsel others to explore their bitter memories are themselves still prisoners of bitterness.

Weigh seriously Jesus' warning:
"Woe to you, you make a person twice as much a son of hell as you are"
(Matthew 23:15).

We've personally found no fruit in trying to help people who are enslaved to their past as victims and have been counseled by others to relive their pain through memory exploration. They insist that someone has to pay for their hurt! Tragically, not only do they stay mired in bitterness; they also try to recruit others through one-sided slander to take up an offense on their behalf.

As we shared in Lesson 33, our Father uses your suffering to develop the character of His Son Jesus in His children. Our past hurts are altered by Him to trans-

form us. They are His personal "marks of ownership", the healed scars He can use as loving testimony to help others. Those who can accept this truth have been shown the beauty that is born out of their suffering, and the hope and patient endurance that our Father brings about through the pain (see Romans 5:3-5).

(2) **False prophets**

Since Satan can impersonate an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14), it's no surprise that he can manipulate prophetic words to try to deceive the righteous.

Those who prophesy false words as though they have come from God manipulate forecasts of the future for personal gain or recognition. Some claim special insight into "end time" scenarios. Yet Jesus advises, "**No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father**" (Matthew 24:36).

Other false prophets demand immediate response to their proclamations without providing time for those present to test what's been spoken through the confirmation of two or three. Paul understood the danger of false prophecy (see 1 Thessalonians 2:2), and in two of his letters warns the followers of Jesus to weigh and to test what is shared:

- ***"Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said"*** (1 Corinthians 14:29).
- ***"Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good"*** (1 Thessalonians 5:19-21).

Please consider this:

- **Mike:** I've walked in prophetic gifting for almost 30 years, and I know how it can be used by God to help people stay within

the boundaries of His Word. Test everything, and reject only that which is false.

(3) **Contrived worship**

Compromise has become a byword of this generation. Since absolutes are despised, unrighteousness that titillates the flesh has filtered into worship experiences. The awesomeness of praising our holy God has been sullied by Satan's deception into a man-centered forum for emotional highs and sensual presentation.

How often collective worship has become a worldly performance using the same sort of music and hype to conjure a **soulish mood** as pagans use! We've experienced firsthand congregational gatherings in which worship leaders with "*unclean hands and impure hearts*" practice musical forms that please *them* but not the Father.

What kind of worship *does* please our Father?

The exuberant and grateful expression that emanates from a repentant heart!

Scripture is clear about the parameters by which we can approach our God in worship. A pure and humble *heart condition* produces a spirit of living sacrifice that pleases Him:

*Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in **spirit and truth**, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks (John 4:23).*

*You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; You do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a **broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart**, O God, You will not despise (Psalm 51:16,17).*

Be careful that you don't put *feeling good* about your worship ahead of making sure it's acceptable to our Lord! This can easily happen if unrepentance is tolerated in your midst.

Several years ago we did a seminar at a large congregation. At one point we were addressing communal righteousness. During a break the young man who had recently been made "worship leader" a few months earlier approached me [Mike]. He'd been beset by emotional tension and his marriage had been losing warmth and peace.

I knew from the Holy Spirit that God was allowing this to happen because the man was using his music to conjure moods for a group whose lives smacked of unrighteousness. I asked him, "If God won't hear the *prayers* of the unrepentant, do you think He accepts their *worship*?"

At that moment the leadership of the congregation came up to us. I asked them the same question and they emphatically replied, "No!" The worship leader asked what he should do. I suggested, "Start the service by making sure everyone has repented for their sins. Explain why they must do this, and ask them to kneel. When they're clean before God they can stand. And when all are standing, you can begin worship."

It took almost an hour before everyone was standing. Some just knelt and confessed their sins, while others cried with deep sorrow in their heart, and still others went to those present to ask forgiveness. When the worship began, it was as though the sanctuary had shiny new lighting!

Please ask yourself:

- **When you worship, do you keep repeating the choruses as if God didn't hear you the first time? To our Father, mindless repetition is the same as pagans repeating many words in the vain hope of being heard**

(Matthew 6:7). Be careful you don't try to conjure a soulish mood for *yourself*!

3. Expand your perimeter.

In keeping with our Father's goal to be reconciled with the lost and share fellowship with the redeemed, expand your perimeter. When you lift up righteous prayer for your neighborhood, families, and workplace, our Lord is going to intervene. He'll break down demonic barriers so their hearts will respond to Him!

Encourage each other within your faith family to establish relationships with unbelievers. Those in your extended spiritual family should be using their homes as the primary place to represent Jesus to the world.

Inviting someone into your home is one of the most affirming actions you can take. The *relational connectedness* you develop as you befriend an unbeliever will be the foundation for the connection needed when, as a follower of Jesus, that person is welcomed into your faith community.

Inviting unbelievers into your fellowship family in hope that they might "get saved" is *not* the biblical pattern for spiritual reproduction. Home fellowships that use their gatherings as outreach for unbelievers ultimately destroy themselves.

Your relationship with an individual is the key for his eyes to be opened to the holiness of God as he sees Jesus working in and through you. Those personal times of having him in your home and doing other things with him will prepare your curious friend to become a sincere seeker.

When an unbelieving friend yields his life to Jesus, the effort you've expended in his life will be even more appreciated when you can share true spiritual fellowship. People need to be connected to *other individuals*, not to an impersonal group *per se*.

Do you remember the *formation of relationships* we discussed in Lesson 49? A home fellowship is a formation of connected relationships, and your friend will be connected to the others in the formation family through you.

Because Christ died to *redeem sinners*, He calls everyone who is known by His Name to share in His purpose. Relationships with unbelievers enable you to establish beachheads in enemy territory. To wage effective warfare, evangelist Ed Silvoso offers some recommendations:

- **Make a prayer list of the unbelievers with whom each person in your faith community has contact and is burdened for their salvation.**
- **As a fellowship family, intercede for each unsaved person on a regular basis. Weaken the power of the enemy through prayer for those people.**
- **As a follower of Jesus, you have authority over the spirits that will try to interfere with the salvation of the ones for whom you are praying. As you pray, bind the spirits in the name of Jesus. You can experience the same faith-filled confidence as our spiritual forefathers: "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name" (Luke 10:17)!**
- **If you have the courage, ask those in your faith community to put a sign in their homes indicating that this is a house of prayer and that you'll pray for any of the needs in the neighborhood.**

- Ask each fellowship family to keep a prayer notebook with four columns in it: date, petitioner, prayer request, date answered. Then have each one ask their neighbors and co-workers for specific prayer needs that they can note down and pray about. (They should urge the people asking for prayer to let them know when and how the prayer was answered so they can write that in the notebook!)

As you walk through your neighborhood, intercede for these people and renounce the spirits that interfere with our Father's purposes. Consider the same plan for your workplace.

As you seek to expand your perimeter your different spiritual giftings can be helpful to each other. This is why you need to be aware of your *own* gifts as well as those in your family and extended spiritual family. When these are combined and coordinated as "firepower" in your faith community, you can make effective inroads into the kingdom of darkness.

For example, your faith family may include a predominance of believers gifted with mercy and helps. As you look around your neighborhood you see a lot of latchkey children returning to empty homes. With that kind of need at your doorstep you might discern after a season of prayer that the Spirit wants to coordinate a group of you to man an after-school care center in someone's garage. In this safe haven the children can be helped with homework, learn about Jesus and His Word, and experience His loving kindness through you.

Or maybe you discover that many in your faith community are gifted in evangelism. They just *love* to share the Gospel on the job or wherever they go! The Lord

may nudge your extended spiritual family into sharing sandwiches with the homeless and needy at a local park while presenting His truths through song, mime and testimony. (Also, we mentioned in a previous lesson how a certain congregation and evangelist were each using *Demolishing Strongholds* as a tool of evangelism. Keep this in mind!)

The *combination* of the gifts of evangelism, service, mercy, giving and administration gives strength to this enactment of God's love. Everyone in your faith family has a spiritual niche to fill through the power of His Spirit to accomplish a Kingdom mission.

[See our workbook, *God's Instruments for War: Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare* (a free download) for further discussion of this topic.]

4. Destroy Satan's perimeter by multiplying your faith community.

Any goal that doesn't include provision for new home fellowships to be formed is an exercise in futility. Successful reproduction results in successors. Plan ahead for new faith families that could disciple and love new converts. Our Father, in the name of His Son Jesus, has given you the power and authority to plant new faith communities. Shepherds need to be purposely training successors to protect, train, nurture, and equip the new flocks.

As your extended spiritual families multiply, they can remain affiliated and coordinated through the relationships of the elders and the friendships that exist among the believers in the multiplied groups. Remember, in your expansion you are developing *extended spiritual family* or *kinfolk*. The different fellow-

ships can gather for any number of purposes, be they social and/or spiritual, just as natural extended families do.

A consideration for you:

Revisit and thoroughly discuss together as often as you need to these four steps for reaching your neighborhood and your town for Jesus:

- establish your perimeter,
- secure and protect it,
- expand the perimeter,
- destroy Satan's perimeter.

Then you can be confident that those within your extended spiritual family have the same motivational commitment to the goals of our Lord.

Healthy Home Fellowship Indicators

Check out the spiritual health of your faith community by considering the following six indicators:

1. Prayers are being answered. John sums it up best: *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name"* (John 15:16). Your fellowship with our Father and with His Son Jesus spurs you on in your hunger for righteousness. Answered prayer displays our Father's approval.

2. Those within your fellowship family are using their discretionary time to bless one another and to reach those who have yet to follow Jesus. Non-discretionary time, such as work, sleep, and school, represents the activities that take place on a regular basis. *Discretionary time* gives you the freedom to choose what you want to do and with whom you want to spend it.

Significant contact throughout the week among extended spiritual family who use their discretionary time on behalf of each other is a healthy sign. Personal desire to choose fellowship with one another strengthens the connectedness of the relationships and removes pressure from the elder(s) to be the only ones who minister God's grace through one-anothering.

3. Another wholesome indicator is when the children are comfortable with the adults, especially with the men. If a stranger visited your gathering and couldn't figure out whose children were whose, the care and acceptance being given to the children by the entire faith community would get his attention. And folks whose children are grown relish the idea of a little one to cuddle or read to or play with!

4. Evaluate every man by his wife's eyes. If he's fulfilling his role to love her and be considerate of her, her face will reveal it. The Bible commands a man to *agape* love both the Lord his God and his wife. The love he claims to have for God should be readily apparent in his actions toward his marriage partner.

If an elder doesn't see appreciation and love in a woman's eyes when she speaks with or about her husband, he should step in and gently inquire. This wife might need to talk with another woman, and her husband might benefit from the wise counsel of an older man to renew the zest in their relationship.

5. People who love God thirst to know His Word. They consistently search and apply the Scriptures in their own home. Teaching within the extended

spiritual family gathering should center around *application* or *clarification* rather than just reviewing Bible content. Each extended-family member will then have some spiritual nugget or question to contribute so that no one individual will be in a position to dominate the gathering with a lengthy monologue.

6. You are *multiplying* as new believers embrace the Covenant with our Father. Our Lord Jesus made clear that “*the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few*” (Matthew 9:37). If you’re sincerely going about His work, your fellowship family will eagerly look for opportunities to make Jesus known wherever they go. Then you’ll multiply yourselves to the glory of the Father.

Concluding Thoughts to *Discussing How To Restore the Early Church*

You’ve come a long way if you’ve completed all 50 lessons! We trust that you’re encouraged by what you’ve read and how you individually and collectively have been changed.

Over the years we’ve received all kinds of insights from people who’ve desired to restore the Hebraic foundations to their lives. Several we’ve included in this series. We encourage you to e-mail us or call if you encounter specific situations that are overwhelming you as you’re walking in the love-grounded obedient trust our Father is restoring.

We won’t give you decisions or directions, but we *will* refer you to the biblical processes our forefathers used which others have found useful in their walk.

May these purposes be the hallmark of your individual and collective walk:

- **Focus on Jesus and be transformed in His character as you love and serve Him;**
- **Remain repentant and immediately obedient so you’ll be available for our Father’s purpose;**
- **Pursue answered prayer that brings testimony to our Father’s faithfulness;**
- **And in everything, do it for our Father’s glory — EVERYTHING!**

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Recommended Further Reading

- Lifebyte 14: *Satan’s Hierarchy*
- April 2001 Newsletter: *The Awesome Preeminence of Jesus*
- September 2000 Newsletter: *The Power to Forgive*
- July-August 2004 Newsletter: *Will He Find Your Name?*
- May 2003 Newsletter: *The Grief Connection to Love*
- September 2003 Newsletter: *You Will Rule*
- September-October 2004 Newsletter: *Lessons From The Feasts*
- Our workbook: *Demolishing Strongholds*
- Jake Colson, *So You Don’t Want to Go To Church Anymore* [Paperback, 192 pages \$12 <http://lifestream.org/LsResource.html>]
- George Barna, *Revolution* [Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2005]