

Teaching E-mails

Prophetic Warnings From A Righteous God

44. Are You Prepared To Equip The Saints For Service? (April 3, 2009)

Preparing the Family of Jesus To Be Light in Darkness

Our Father told us that the above heading was a key purpose for our ministry. Think about what *being prepared* means to you, especially in light of the Dark Days of Chastisement that are soon coming. In a recent e-mail we shared with you a prophetic warning from David Wilkerson written on March 7, 2009. Here is a brief excerpt:

"AN EARTH-SHATTERING CALAMITY IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN. IT IS GOING TO BE SO FRIGHTENING, WE ARE ALL GOING TO TREMBLE — EVEN THE GODLIEST AMONG US. There will be riots and fires in cities worldwide. There will be looting—including Times Square, New York City. What we are experiencing now is not a recession, not even a depression. *We are under God's wrath.*" (italics added)

In response to this warning we received many e-mails from around the world that confirmed in particular the burning cities. Some of you had been given dreams, others had received visions, and still others a strong witness in your spirit that God had directed David Wilkerson to deliver this warning.

When our Lord sends prophetic warnings, His intent isn't to threaten His called-out ones. Rather, He is prompting the followers of Jesus *to prepare*, to be *available and ready* to be His instruments of righteousness when the wickedness of many will be exposed and love will grow cold.

This time of preparation is accelerating toward the season when you'll be called to serve Him in the ever-encroaching darkness. And this is the assignment our Father has given us for Restoration Ministries: To

Prepare *You* To Be Light in Darkness.

"No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62)

You may have left the self-serving religious system, but you're perhaps (or probably) spending too much time feeling sorry for yourself rather than preparing for your specific *Spirit-empowered* part in advancing our Lord's Kingdom. We encourage you: Stop looking back at what you left! Especially don't be bitter or resentful!

Instead, focus ahead as racers running with perseverance (Hebrews 12:1). Throw off all those hindering memories and fruitless habits, and discover instead how you can bring the most glory to our Lord and King through your grateful, obedient trust. Don't let our Lord return to find you down-spirited, hiding out in self-pitying isolation in your home.

Do you understand our Lord's purpose for what's about to happen both here in the US and around the globe? It's part of a plan that spans centuries, an intervention by our Lord to slash through the man-made, man-centered religion that has supplanted the love-grounded trust relationship He has intended all along for those who are in Jesus as His own.

In the second and third centuries a religious system built on the glued-together foundations of the old **Levitical priesthood** and the prevailing **pagan Hellenism** created an unbiblical, exclusive clergy class. During the upcoming Dark Days of Chastisement, this unbiblical clergy system that stands between our Lord and those who would follow Him is going to *come to an end*.

We serve a God Who is *jealous* for the love of His Bride (Exodus 34:14)! He wants no intermediaries between Him and her, nor any system that would compromise His holiness with worldly practices. The religious system that tolerates sin and brings down His Name among the nations will fall, to be replaced by the Lordship of King Jesus, the Priest forever in the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:17). You can count on this: His way is going to be restored!

(For more on the vital role of Jesus as Melchizedek, see our March 2001 newsletter, “*Living as the Family of Melchizedek*”; also Lifebyte 34. The Abrahamic Covenant — *Groundwork For The Hebraic Restoration.*)

To understand the nature of what our Lord will be restoring, you need to anchor this truth: *Jesus NEVER established a clergy system.* That such a framework of intermediaries between Him and His Church exists is a *curse* on Christianity. Why? Because of the centuries of anti-Semitic attacks on the children of Abraham by the institutional church system, beginning with the Greek philosophers who converted to Christianity in the second and third centuries.

(See Genesis 12:3; also Chapter 5 of our book, *Restoring the Early Church*, “The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots”.)

How does God alter centuries of religious tradition that contradicts His Word? Consider those among the Jews — God’s chosen people!—who refused to trust Jesus as their long-prophesied Messiah. Forty years after the ascension of Jesus, God allowed the Romans to destroy the Temple, denying the Jews a place to offer their sacrifices and worship God.

As the Hebraic Restoration goes forth around the world, we believe we’re living in a period similar to the 40 years following the ascension of Jesus and the destruction of the Temple. That was a time of frustration for those who had embraced the Messiah. Known as “The Way” and a sect

within Judaism, they were confronted with tension over whether to follow the Law, particularly whether they had to be circumcised to be included (see Acts 15).

In accordance with His Word which had foretold that Gentiles “not of His fold” would be His people (Isaiah 49:6; John 10:16), our Lord freed His followers from entanglement with Judaizers who had refused Him and with those who demanded circumcision as an identifying sign of the Abrahamic covenant. The religious edifice that gave the Jews a common identification was razed as Jesus had prophesied (Matthew 24:1,2). His followers didn’t need a Temple. Each of them was a living stone in His collective temple, and they needed to be about expanding the Kingdom (1 Corinthians 3:16).

We can learn from the Chinese Cultural Revolution of several decades past how fruitful it is when our Lord destroys religious establishments that hinder the expansion of His Kingdom:

As severe as it was for Chinese Christians at the time, they now recognize how the Cultural Revolution completely dismantled institutional Christianity in their country. Almost all “church” buildings were destroyed. This led to the quiet proliferation of house churches among people who were fully responsive to the Holy Spirit. And like the early followers of Jesus, they counted the worth of their lives only in terms of loving and serving our Lord and His purposes.

Out of these dark times the Chinese church has become, by many estimates, the largest Christian community in the world.

What the destruction of the Temple and the destruction of “church” buildings in China did for the Kingdom in terms of purification and revitalization is what the Dark Days of Chastisement will do for Christianity in the United States and perhaps around the world. Our Lord will not only use these days to chastise, but to restore the loving relational responsiveness He intended with His people.

(If you haven't already, you may want to read our Hebraic article: *I Hate Nicolaitanism*.)

If you have fled the institutional, self-serving system, ask yourself this:

Will you be prepared to equip the saints for service?

On the last two pages of this Teaching E-mail we discuss what our Lord is restoring to those He's called out of the world to serve Him in His Kingdom. As Jesus restores the foundations of the earliest Church, He's calling *each* of His followers to fulfill their Spirit-empowered part out of loving devotion to Him. He wants *no spectators!*

We want to encourage you: Don't isolate yourself in your home feeling sorry for yourself. Instead, prepare yourself to do your part when the Dark Days do come. Be active now in learning how to make the Hebraic foundations your way of life so that you will be fruitful and steadfast in standing for and in Christ. The time is coming where you're going to be called upon in ways you couldn't have imagined.

“We have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the Word of God”
(2 Corinthians 4:2a).

You may be outside the religious system, but you may find that the Bible version you use is infected by deceptions fostered by clergy-system domination of those who sponsored the translation. In Chapter 2 of our book *Pastoring By Elders: “Nicolaitanism: Repression of God's People”*, we note how Bancroft's rules caused the King James translators to alter portions of Scripture to maintain the clergy system. Other translators have done the same.

(To understand the extent to which clergy intimidation exists in Bible translations, you may want to look at our Hebraic Article: *Commentary on the King James Bible Translation*.)

We'll examine some clergy-system induced distortions of God's Word so that you can correct them in your Bible. Some of the mistranslations can hinder you from cooperating with our Lord's restoration of how *He* is building His Church. As you'll see: That which our Lord is restoring calls for the *mutual cooperation* of the equipping gifts. *None of these will lord over the others.*

Each of the outworkings of these gifts existed in Judaism before the coming of Jesus and were well understood by His earliest followers. **The evolution of today's clergy class, however, nullifies the cooperative equipping work of these giftings, superceding them with a man-made elevation of a clergy role that was never intended by our Father.**

Paul clearly lists these equipping gifts and their combined purpose: to ready the people of God for service and to build up the collective body of our Lord:

And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some shepherds and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of serving others, for the building of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,12).

Over the centuries the clergy system (and intimidated translators) have deleted or distorted these gifts. Let's look at some contemporary Bible mistranslations of these giftings.

Apostle

In order to convince people that the only apostles were the original twelve, translators took the Greek word *apostolos* in the Newer Testament and translated certain instances as “representative” or “messenger.”

The Greek word from which we derive “apostle” is a person sent on a particular mission to deliver messages of truth. The Newer Testament cites a number of men who were referred to as *apostolos*, but the translators substituted other words (see, for example, 2 Corinthians 8:23).

Not even the words of Jesus are safe from alteration through clergy-intimidated translators. Following His washing of the disciples' feet, Jesus declares that "*a slave is not greater than his lord, nor an APOSTLE* (literal translation, NOT the NIV "messenger" or NKJV "he who is sent") *greater than the one sending him*" (John 13:16).

The personal interaction of an apostle with those to whom he delivers the Good News is obvious in Paul's loving devotion cited in 1 Thessalonians 2. His reference to himself, Timothy and Silas as "apostles" (v.6) was no mere title as some today might assume! Rather, they lived among the people as *role models*, lovingly devoted to those who were family in Jesus with them (v.8). Their example of *apostleship* was an action fleshed out as the tender spiritual nurture of a mother (v. 7), and their exhortation and godly example as a father (v.11,12).

The loving affection of an authentic apostle is further modeled by Paul in his anguished tears emanating from deep love for his spiritual family in Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:4) as well as his "wide-open heart" for them as his children (6:11-13).

God has and will continue to sovereignly choose apostles and send them to carry out their mission according to His will (1 Corinthians 12:28). But these who are sent forth won't just be dropping off messages. Their very lives will be invested in their faith families.

Prophet

And God has placed some in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues (1 Corinthians 12:28).

Prophets in the Older Testament generally spoke forth messages from God as warnings and predictions of what was to come. Those with prophetic gifting in the Newer Testament, however, are *declaring truth through inner Holy Spirit inspiration*

whether in a predictive sense or delivering direct counsel from God.

Interestingly, Paul, Barnabas and Silas are referred to as prophets as well as apostles, indicating that these giftings aren't exclusive (Acts 13:1). Judas and Silas, in their capacity as prophets, *exhorted and strengthened* the called-out ones in Antioch (Acts 15:32).

Again, there is no scriptural basis for the present-day assumption among certain denominations that prophets no longer function! In fact, since prophets are listed as "second" among God's placement as well as second in the listing in Ephesians 4:11, this gifting has great priority from God's perspective for the building up of His people.

To neutralize the ongoing role of prophet within the Church, some translators altered the original word *propheteias* used in 1 Thessalonians 5:19-20. Rather than its literal meaning of **prophecies** from the Holy Spirit — the speaking forth of God's will and message, they inserted "*inspired messages*" which waters down the purpose.

Evangelist

Paul exhorted his spiritual son, Timothy, "*But you, keep your head in all situations, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist* (Greek: *euaggelistes*), *discharge all the duties of your ministry*" (2 Timothy 4:5). The deacon Philip is also cited as an evangelist (Acts 21:8).

So what was an evangelist? Like his counterpart in the synagogue, the evangelist in the early Church was a *church planter and repairer* in the pattern of Paul, Timothy, and Titus. *He stayed on as long as need be in order to establish local bodies and assist the faith communities through tough times.* (See, for example, Acts 14:21,22; 17:11-14.)

You'll notice that there is overlap with the work of an apostle as we described in the section earlier about that gifting. *Personal interaction* with hearers was a hallmark to ensure that the truth shared was

being put into practice as a functioning, collective body. That *ongoing relational contact* undergirded their discipling of the new faith communities — an essential component of biblical evangelism.

Recognizing that local leadership and guidance were needed by those who were growing in their walk in the Lordship of Jesus, the evangelist exercised his Spirit-given authority in anointing older, spiritually mature men who were qualified to be shepherds (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

With the later intrusion of ecclesiastical hierarchy modeled after the Roman government system, however, no longer were men who were known among local bodies for their wisdom and nurture anointed as elders. Overseers from *outside* their relational sphere were sent as clergy functionaries, trained and educated in the Hellenist pattern of pagan priests.

Today's concept of evangelist has imitated the "outsider" pattern of a stranger coming in to do a "drive-by" — **one who conducts mass crusades**. To a gathered throng this person declares a Gospel (often omitting the essential component of repentance, which calls for *turning away from evil* and then *turning to God* in the saving Lordship of Jesus) — and then immediately moves on to the next drive-by.

Such an incomplete, man-devised methodology accounts for staggeringly grievous statistics. Numerous studies reveal that only 4-10% of those who go forward at these kinds of "evangelistic crusades" remain true to Jesus or even become part of a local faith family.

That modern-day evangelists don't stay around to disciple new believers and integrate them into faith communities is a method that feeds the desires of clergy who certainly don't want any outsider being involved in their "turf". Nor do many clergy want to be accountable to make sure that those who are responsive to the Gospel are incorporated into a faith community, not as

passive spectators but as equipped fruit-bearers.

So many millions have heard the words of evangelists and even "gone forward". Yet the most glaring consequence of these crusades seems to be *an inoculation* of masses of people against the true Gospel of the Jesus they've never known as Lord of their lives.

Shepherd

Few of us today have an agrarian background, especially with sheep. But the intimate relationship of shepherd and sheep permeates much of both testaments, depicting a *relational responsibility and responsiveness* seldom experienced today among church leaders and their flocks. The following excerpt from our book *Pastoring By Elders* comes from Chapter 2. "Nicolaitanism: Repression of God's People".

To undergird a clergy/laity distinction in the Newer Testament, translators not only of the King James Version but of virtually all commonly read translations used the word "pastor" in Ephesians 4:11: "*It was he who gave some to be...pastors*" Had the Greek word used here, *poimen* (poy'-main), meaning "shepherd," been translated as such, this passage would have kept continuity with the other Newer Testament passages that refer to the shepherding role of the elder, *presbuteros* (prez-boo'-tair-oss). The inaccurate translation creates a false distinction between the ecclesiastical position of clergy who are called "pastor", and the Hebraic relational function of older men who shepherd the Father's children as family leaders.

The role of a biblical shepherd of the New Covenant is patterned after a number of honorable sheep caretakers in the Hebrew Scriptures. Our relational, caring God is known as the *Shepherd of Israel* (Genesis 49:24, Psalm 23:1). He not only tenderly gathers and cares for the "sheep of His hand" (Psalms 95:7), but also exercises discipline by not tolerating unconfessed sin among His flock (Psalms 74:1).

A man who cared only for himself and served his own interests was severely castigated by God as a “false shepherd” for the harm he was doing to His beloved people (see Ezekiel chapter 34; Jeremiah 25:34-38).

The intimate relationship with and personal knowledge of each of his sheep by the shepherd was poignantly depicted by Jesus in John chapter 10. The sheep have been in close contact with the shepherd for so long that they recognize his voice and trust His ability to guide them into all that is good for them. Today’s version, the professional clergyman, has little knowledge of the private lives of the “sheep” since he is more of a system administrator than a personal role model of nurture and guidance.

In the Newer Testament three words are used often interchangeably to reflect a biblical elder who serves as a spiritual resource and leader of the collective gatherings of Jesus-followers. A *poimen* is a shepherd who intimately and personally guides, guards, folds and leads to nourishment. This term is used to depict Christ (Matthew 26:31; John 10:11,12,14,16) as well as those who serve the “flocks” of Jesus-followers as spiritual shepherds (1 Peter 5:2).

An *episkopos* is literally a person who watches or oversees with diligent and watchful care. The meaning certainly overlaps with the role of shepherds, as the elders from Ephesus are charged by Paul to “take heed to yourselves and to **all the flock**, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to **shepherd** the church (the called-out ones) of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Episkopos is full of honorable purpose, as Peter uses it with Shepherd to refer to Christ (1 Peter 2:25) as the One who oversees our souls, again intertwining the similarity of service. Paul makes special note among the saints of Philippi of those who “oversee” as well as those who have been selected to serve as deacons (*diakonoi*). There is a *plurality* of both within congregations, not a

“bishop” position from afar who receives reports as with many of today’s denominations. And, there is no indication in the scriptural text that any *office* of bishop existed among the earliest called-out faith communities — again, a man-made contrivance for control.

Paul goes to detailed length to describe qualities that are needed in those who would aspire to “oversee” faith families — and most of these qualities are *relational* with both their own family as well as fellow servants of Christ (see 1 Timothy 3:1-7).

The third word used to denote biblical eldering and leadership is *presbuteros*, literally an “older man” as used in 1 Timothy 5:1, 1 Peter 5:5, and John 8:9. As the term *elder* clearly denotes, this person has quite a number of years under his belt, and hopefully the compassion and wisdom to have learned from his mistakes!

The interchange of these three terms is most evident in Peter’s admonition to the *elders* (*presbuteroi*) who *shepherd* (*poimane*, a command verb of active response) God’s flock, *overseeing* (*episkopeo*) them willingly and becoming examples for them to emulate (1 Peter 5:1,2). You need to have a *relationship* with your elders if you’re going to learn to imitate the qualities that prepared them for eldering as God called for through Paul’s instructions. Yet today’s “church elders” often have little or no contact relationally with the rest of the congregation in ways that would reveal the development of Christ-like character.

The work of biblical elders had long been a part of the Jewish community prior to the Incarnation. Jewish elders, respected older men of wisdom, were present at the city gates to serve the community in many ways, such as maintaining discipline and excommunicating those who broke the law (such as in Exodus 31:14). Their decisions served to keep the people safe and reinforce the boundaries established by God’s Word.

The elders of the Newer Testament also

kept the local congregations safe by maintaining adherence to God's Word and expelling the unrepentant in their midst (for example, 1 Corinthians 5:2). They also prayed over and anointed the sick (James 5:15) and role modeled how to live worthy of God's call on their lives. In summary, biblical elders served interactively in the footsteps patterned by their Chief Shepherd, Jesus (1 Peter 5:4), with humility and compassion for their brothers and sisters.

It's appropriate at this point to mention briefly the translational bias that has infiltrated the word *diakonos* (deacon), used for those who served within specific faith communities. Both the NIV and KJV promote the word "minister" rather than *serve* in such instances that reflect a position rather than an act of service. And, when you hear the term *minister* today, you immediately think of officially ordained clergy.

In Acts 6:1-4, the Hellenist widows were being neglected in the daily service (*diakonia*) of food distribution. The Twelve directed the disciples to select seven to be in charge of this. Yet the NIV adds to the Apostles the word "ministry of the Word" — a term *not* in the original text but one that adds a ecclesiastical flavor to the work of the Twelve.

A similar interposition of bias in both the NIV and KJV comes into play in Colossians 1:7 and 4:7, where certain men who serve (*diakonos*) are referred to as *ministers* rather than servants in terms of what they are doing as faithful brothers in Christ.

Teacher

Just as Paul reiterated that he had received a multi-faceted appointment from God as apostle, proclaimer, and teacher, so too the *teaching* gifting is recognized by

many as part of a shepherd/elder's role (1 Timothy 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11). For instance, Paul made it clear that elders were required to be *able to teach*, and that a number of elders labored to the point of weariness in their teaching (1 Timothy 5:17).

Paul's pattern of teaching, like Jesus, was based on *interactive discussion* in which he spent months, even years, alongside those he was instructing (Acts 18:11). His *way of life* was proof that how he lived was the same as what he taught — and that could be attested to by those among whom he spent intentional time. This *relational* pattern of integrity was Paul's guidance to his younger protegee Timothy, with whom his discipling was that of a father and son (1 Timothy 1:18; 3:10).

Paul's teaching encompassed more than the mere transmission of biblical facts that passes for sermonizing today (along with entertaining jokes and anecdotes). Paul determined that teaching often needed to be accompanied by admonishment and warning (Colossians 1:28), rebuke and correction — using God's Word as the standard for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). His primary aim was to help people apply God's Word as a way of life that would please their Lord.

The interactive discussion which leads to application of God's Word is first practiced in *your own home*. This should be the lifeblood of your daily routine with your family, so that the wisdom of your applications (your *halakhahs*) may be seen by those who know you. When the Dark Days come, your biblical applications will act as a spiritual firewall of protection for you.

Nicolaitanism is a man-dominated ecclesiastical hierarchy in which most of the human effort is used to keep the religious system going.

The Kingdom foundations our Lord is restoring are Spirit-empowered — most of the activity involves extending the Kingdom on behalf of the King.

The Foundational Priorities our Lord is Restoring

You need to make HIS priorities your priorities.

1. Jesus, the Head of each of His followers, doesn't need *intermediaries!*

"[Jesus] is the Head of the body, the church (the ones He has called out of the world); He is the beginning and the firstborn from the dead, so that in all things He may be holding the first place" (Colossians 1:18). "But speaking truth in love we may grow into Him in all respects Who is the Head, Christ. From Him the body, being fitted and being held together by every ligament of supply, makes for the building of itself in love, each part doing its work in its measure" (Ephesians 4:15,16, literal).

Please ask yourself:

- Since Jesus is the Head of each His followers, did He or did man create the ecclesiastical clergy systems present in western Christendom?
- Does the expression of your love and faith show that you actively trust in the Spirit of Christ within you to guide you to fulfill your Kingdom responsibilities?
- Or, does your spiritual life depend on religious programs and services? Are you sinning through irresponsibility?

2. To ensure that each follower is equipped to fulfill his or her purpose, Lord Jesus *apportioned the coordination of foundational gifts.*

"He gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of service, to the building of the body of Christ until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and of the full knowledge of the Son of God, a mature man attaining to the stature of the measure of the fullness of Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-13, literal). The work below began in the synagogue and continued in the Church through Spirit anointing.

- An *apostle* (Heb. *shaliach*/Gk. *apostolos*) was a person sent forth to an appointed place on a mission. This is not a position of dominance either through ecclesiastical position or anointing. An apostle is a person used by our Lord to complete a specific mission on which he is sent. The Twelve, then Paul, received special commissioning from Jesus. But note other believers who are referred to as apostles: Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7), Barnabas (Acts 14:14), Silas and Timothy (1 Thessalonians 2:7).
- An *evangelist* (Heb. *magid*/Gk. *euaggelistes*) was a synagogue planter and repairer. This person not only shares the Gospel, but gathers together a faith community which he will leave in the responsible care of the elders. Timothy and Titus were both evangelists and faith community planters: *"But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry"* (2 Timothy 4:5), and, *"The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you"* (Titus 1:5).
- A *prophet* (Heb. *nabi*/Gk. *prophetes*) was one to whom and through whom God spoke for the benefit of His people. Prophets generally functioned beyond the confines of the Hebrew synagogue while Paul expanded that function to include prophetic messages shared within worship gatherings.
- A *shepherd* (Heb. *zaken*/Gk. *poimen*) was a gray-haired man of leadership, a respected elder who imparted wisdom and counsel to a specific group of people. As an older man he represented our Father's loving concern for His children—doing what was necessary to lead them through the narrow gate.
- A *teacher* (Heb. *rab*/Gk. *didaskalos*) rightly divided the Word to aid others so that they might apply it to their daily lives, and exhorted them to appropriate responsive action.

Please ask yourself:

- As our Lord Jesus brings about the Dark Days of Chastisement to restore the Hebraic foundations of loving, obedient trust for His followers, does He want you to be *prepared now* to equip others to do their part in His Kingdom?
- If He is calling you to do this, how diligently are you preparing? What are you doing to be prepared?
- Are there people you know who are manifesting the above gifts? How are they helping you fulfill your Kingdom service?

3. Jesus baptizes each of His followers with the Holy Spirit so that each *is empowered* to do his or her part in His Kingdom.

*“To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”; “seek in order that you may abound in spiritual things to **build up the [called out ones]**” (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:12).*

Please consider this:

• Jesus assures us that *“rivers of living water”* — the Holy Spirit — will flow from those who trust Him (John 7:38,39). What in your life authenticates that you truly are a conduit of rivers of living water through whom others can be blessed?

4. Equipped by the coordinated effort of the apostle, evangelist, prophet, shepherd and teacher, each follower of Christ must *actively do their part*.

*“For we are **His workmanship**, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10; see also Galatians 6:2); “Command them to **do good**, to be **rich in good works**, and to be generous and willing to share” (1 Timothy 6:18; see also Hebrews 13:16); “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility deeming others **surpassing yourselves**. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but **also to the interests of others**” (Philippians 2:3,4).*

Please ask yourself:

• King Jesus confirms that we will be judged by *“...whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me”* (Matthew 25:40). Would our Lord commend you for what you’re doing on behalf of people who *can’t pay you back*? If not, how do you need to change in order to carry out our Lord’s will that you serve others? • We are commanded to *“impart to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality”* (Romans 12:13). Describe how you meet the needs of God’s children. How do you practice hospitality as a lifestyle?

5. The Kingdom is expanded through the followers of Jesus.

*“All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Me. GOING therefore, **disciple all the nations**, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to keep all things that I commanded you**; and behold, **I am with you all the days until the completion of the age**” (Matthew 28:18-20, literal; see also 2 Timothy 1:8).*

Please ask yourself:

• Jesus spent the vast majority of His earthly time with the “sinners” of His day! Following in His steps means sharing life-giving truth with sinners *by coming alongside them* as His way in this Matthew passage. The first followers of Christ understood their Kingdom responsibility as a passionate involvement in *love-motivated service to Him and to humanity*. In this light, how are you purposefully and lovingly advancing the Kingdom of God? • Would our Lord perceive in you a blatant disobedience in your disregard for advancing His Kingdom?

5. Before you worship our Lord, come prepared to do your part.

*“Whenever you come together, each one has a hymn, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. **Let all things be done for strengthening [of all]**” (1 Corinthians 14:26); “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord**” (Colossians 3:16).*

Please ask yourself:

• *Worship* for the earliest followers of Jesus richly expressed their personal, heart-felt gratefulness. In their gatherings they were *prepared in their hearts* to thank their Lord and minister through the gifting of the Spirit. In this light, if your worship consists of others planning how the “service” will progress and performing it, are you sinning against God through stifling what His Spirit would do through you? • Will He accept your worship in those circumstances?