

Teaching E-mail 59

Jesus Is Calling You To Lead

“Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called!” (Psalms 81:8)

(January 10, 2012)

Mental Traps May Be Hindering Your Obedience

“To whom can I speak and give warning? Who will listen to Me? Their ears are closed so they cannot hear. The word of the LORD is offensive to them; they find no pleasure in it”

(Jeremiah 6:10)

Prior to his homegoing to Lord Jesus in 2011, David Wilkerson spent decades delivering prophetic warnings through his Pulpit Series Newsletters. Yet over the years as we’ve talked with others, it seems so few have taken these warnings seriously as from God. It’s evident in Scripture that our long-suffering Father generally has a *delay period* between His prophetic warnings and when He executes chastisement. Full of mercy, He offers ample time for His people to respond to His warnings, that is, to *repent* and *return to His ways*. (The Book of Jeremiah portrays this clearly.)

We rejoice in those who have heeded the Spirit’s warning and pursued the path of repentance and righteousness out of wholehearted love for our Lord, grateful for the grace through which He strengthens each person to do their part. But, in your response of obedient trust, our Father is calling you to put your faith into action and begin to *lead others* in this path!

We’ve written previously that the Hebrew word for faith, *emunah* (*eh-moo-NAH*), is a responsive trust in God that’s reflected in your prompt obedience to do whatever He commands. Biblical faith is

not passive mental agreement with various Bible facts, as much of Hellenized, intellectualized contemporary Christianity advocates. (See James 2:20-24.)

Emunah is such an unyielding trust in your heavenly Father and in the trustworthiness of His commands that you immediately put them into action. Your obedient follow through to do His will authenticates your faith as genuine!

Your *obedient responsiveness* is essential as you lead others who come alongside you in your life journey in Jesus as Lord. However, you may find that you’re hindered from leading in the way our Lord has equipped you to. Let’s examine this possibility further. Several weeks ago we viewed a PBS show entitled, *“70 Minutes to Tsunami: How Did People Act?”* On March 11, 2011 the town of Yuriage, Japan was hit by a devastating tsunami. Of the 5,600 residents, nearly 700 lost their lives despite being warned *70 minutes in advance* of the tsunami’s approach. Researchers visited the survivors and conducted dozens of interviews, handing out hundreds of questionnaires.

Six hundred survivors gave details about their actions before the tsunami devastated their village. As a result of the survey, a dynamic action map was developed which showed how each person responded and what they did after they received the warning. The data demonstrated that many who perished did so as a result of particular **“mental traps”**—*blockages in the mind* that hinder people from taking appropriate action when

they're warned of impending disaster.

The majority of the people surveyed fell into one of three groups. We'll compare how each of these groups parallels the same "mental traps" that keep so many within Christianity from *putting their faith into action*.

1. Altruistic Behavior Bias. This group is overcome by their *altruism*, such a deep concern for others that their need to take action to save themselves when they hear a warning is set aside. The PBS episode cited a man and his wife who took too long as they tried to persuade an older woman to leave her house and seek higher ground. That delay resulted in the drowning of both his wife and the elderly woman in the tsunami. The distraught man survived by clinging to the roof of a house that floated by.

So many people are dominated by their blind commitment to relationships with their relatives and those in their faith community, even if these are keeping them from fulfilling Father's purpose for their life. When the Lord Jesus makes clear that they must leave these relationships in order to grow in His Spirit and do Father's specific will for that season of their lives, *they refuse to act*. They're imprisoned by this one thought: "If I obey God's call, I won't be accepted by these people!" As relationally considerate as this thought may seem, it is **sin** to you if our Lord is calling you to "**follow Me.**" (See Proverbs 29:25; Matthew 10:34-38.)

• **How about you? Examine your own determination to obey the Lord you say you trust. Is your life filled with testimony of faith-based, active response to whatever our Lord commands? Or, are you held back by relationships you fear losing or getting on the wrong side of if you obey the Spirit's call?**

2. Normal bias. These individuals were trapped by the complacent thought that *everything will go on as usual* no matter what may come. They refused to believe they needed to make a change or to respond to the current danger because *in the past* they hadn't been harmed. After all, past tsunami warnings hadn't come true, and life went on as usual.

Like the Israelites in the Older Testament, so many who claim to belong to Jesus today refuse to make a change in their lifestyle. Instead of obeying God's Word to be cleansed of all unrighteousness by confessing their sins and turning away from them (see 1 John 1:9; Hebrews 12:1), they go along with the world's way. Compromise allows them to feel good about their religious practices while still enjoying their sins.

As long as no one in their faith community confronts them about their disobedience, they're satisfied to stay there. For them, *normalcy* is not being rebuked for their sin. And in many faith communities, those who do voice warnings about tolerated sin in their midst are ostracized or ushered out.

• **When you gather together for corporate worship, do you take comfort in being surrounded by others who are unconcerned by unconfessed sin? Would Jesus Himself join in your fellowship gathering of those whose lives bring down the holiness of His Name? Would your communal toleration of unrighteousness keep Him out?**

3. Majority sync bias. People live with a certain amount of *syncretization* with those around them. They generally try to mesh with the values and beliefs of people they care about. And because of this, they don't want to do anything that makes them *stand out or be different*. As the dynamic action map from Yuriage illustrated, hundreds of

vehicles fleeing to the safety of a high-rise hospital were stuck in a traffic jam with no one moving. When individuals who knew the tsunami was close ran alongside the vehicles to warn occupants to get out and run to higher ground, most refused. Why? They were in sync with everyone else who stayed in their vehicle. Few even left the congested main road to take the clear side streets that led to the hospital!

Being *in sync* with others in your relational realm no matter what they believe is very dangerous for followers of Jesus. It's a prison of horizontal tunnel-vision: you're more concerned with what other people think about you than about doing the will of your Father in heaven. Instead of looking to the Spirit of Christ to guide and empower you in accordance with God's Word, you look first to see what *everyone else is doing*.

Religious systems are the broad road on which your "life vehicle" is stalled. Taking the side road that leads to safety in Christ seems too risky. Look at "being in sync" this way: Sitting in orderly pews watching a pleasant religious performance every week can seduce you into *doing nothing* when Jesus calls you to come out of the crowd and stand for Him. That's because when you count the cost of a loving, obedient trust in Him, you don't want to forfeit the social get-togethers—the holiday celebrations, picnics and weddings from which you may be excluded because of your stand.

- **Are your social life and your relationships a driving force which is controlling your attitudes and behaviors? Is conformity a key part of your identity?**

You can recognize authentic followers of Jesus because they have no other will than to put His commands into action.

Their response evidences their love for Him! (See John 14:15.) Their way of life reflects the Spirit's *rhema* that has guided them. And, they have testimonies that depict the Divine intervention that always accompanies faith put into action (see 2 Samuel 5:18-25; Luke 1:26).

If you're going to follow Lord Jesus as His beloved brother/sister and sheep, you can't let any relational "**mental traps**" compete with your trust-based obedience. Just know that some will go on with you in your life journey in Him, and others will resist and refuse.

Think, for instance, about the wonderful closeness of enduring relationship the apostle Paul enjoyed with Timothy, Silas and Titus. Even the once-cowardly Mark returned to him as a valued companion in the faith (Acts 15:36-38; 2 Timothy 4:11). Yet, others in his relational sphere ultimately left and gave themselves over to sin: Demas (2 Timothy 4:10), Phygelus and Hermogenes (2 Timothy 1:15), Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20).

Whether his companions stayed true to Jesus or gave way to sin and departed, Paul himself remained obedient to his Father's will: "***I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus***" (Philippians 3:14). In like manner, you may want to keep the line from the song *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus* as a banner for your own life: "**Though none go with me, still I will follow, no turning back.**"

Our Lord Commands You to Lead

If you've determined that you're free from relational bondage and "mental traps," then there's something important our Lord would have you know—He wants you to **lead!**

Pay careful attention to these points:

When our Lord commands His own, *“Going [wherever you are], make disciples...”*, He means for you to *lead others on His path* (see Matthew 28:18-20). The *leading* we are speaking of is you living and reproducing your trust-based (*emunah*) way of life by example. By your godly and obedient way of life and your instruction in helping others put God’s word into action, you reproduce the work of Christ in you in the spiritual sons and daughters you disciple (1 Corinthians 4:17). **EVERYONE** who follows Jesus as Lord is commanded to do this!

Remember that the foundation of a relationship with our heavenly Father is *repentance*—consistently turning from sin whenever He convicts us, and turning to Him for forgiveness and cleansing with the intention of making His commands our way of life. That conviction is His work of grace in us! Staying repentant out of loving, obedient trust is the glue that binds this glorious relationship together right up until we are welcomed into heaven.

As our Lord’s representative, your leadership enactment calls you to be actively involved in the lives of others, role modeling and instructing them into a way of life pleasing to our Lord. (See Philipians 3:17.) *By this personal interaction, they can witness the character and motives of Jesus that His Spirit has worked in you. They’ll also see how the commands of God’s Word have become your way of life. And by not pretending you’re perfect and not trying to hide character flaws that still need sanctification into Christ’s likeness, you’re leading them into a pattern of turning to Jesus for the grace and power to become more like Him. This way of life, and the way of life it produces in others, is holy and pleasing to God!* (Romans 12:1,2)

Keep in mind that we’re not defining leading in the way much of Christianity does, as the mental trap of **ecclesiastical leadership**. To their detriment, most Christians consider leadership to be confined to those holding ecclesiastical positions. But ecclesiastical leadership and its hierarchy is a demonically-inspired means to subjugate followers of Jesus into passivity and unwillingness to seek and obey His will for their lives.

Many religious leaders argue that Romans 12:8 proves their position is justified as their particular gifting. However, the original text is concise: “the one taking the lead, in diligence.” The *lead* being undertaken refers to the earnest action of personally guiding and caring for others; it’s the same word used in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 for leading “in the Lord.” “Lead” in both these instances means **“one who personally cares for others with diligence”**—the same Greek word which also describes the activity of elders in 1 Timothy 5:17.

In none of these verses does the word “lead” connote an official title or capacity exercised like the secular or religious rulers of Jesus’s day. As He repeatedly taught, those who lead others in His Kingdom are characterized by humility, servanthood, love and sacrifice—in other words, by character traits of the great Shepherd Himself in His particular interaction with each and every lamb.

Let’s look at another often cited passage about ecclesiastical leadership:

*“Remember **them which have the rule over you**, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation”* (Hebrews 13:7, KJV).

The words *“them which have the rule over”* are a paraphrase of one Greek word

—*hegeomai*—a verb meaning to lead as in TO GO BEFORE as a guide. In a Christian context *hegeomai* describes the *action* of guiding, going on ahead, and leading the way as an example, not sitting in power as an overlord of others.

The selection of the English word *rule* came with worldly, demonic design to promote ecclesiastical domination. To “rule” is to exercise domination through the right and power to govern or judge—a definition and function that’s devoid of the biblical criteria for leaders *to serve others* in humility (Luke 22:26).

What so drastically changed Christ’s call from *servant-leaders* to rulership through domination? Church authority was firmly fused with political rule in the early 4th century under Constantine, initiating a lasting system of control. When King James in 1604 commanded an official and authoritative translation of the biblical text into English, he demanded that the translators abide by Bancroft’s Rules of interpretation. The translators were thus kept from removing the old but inaccurate ecclesiastical words that supported clergy domination. (See for yourself, for example, where the words “pastor” or “pastors” were wrongly inserted throughout the Book of Jeremiah and Ephesians 4:11 to replace the correct translation, “shepherd.”)

King James was a staunch advocate of the divine right of kings, and was supported by puppet bishops who answered to him. The King as absolute ruler was the Anglican answer to papal domination. Any resistance to either the pope or the king was considered a sin worthy of eternal damnation.

The usurping of rulership by ecclesiastical leaders has become the “mental trap” that hinders so many individual Jesus followers from fulfilling their responsibility *to*

lead others in discipling. Jesus is the ONLY Head of His called-out ones, and He has called *you* to disciple others by leading them to Him and to live according His Word by the power of His Spirit in you.

If every person who claims to belong to Jesus would love their unbelieving relationship(s) as themselves (Luke 10:27) and take them under their care by coming alongside them in holy example as His ambassadors of truth, this nation might truly become “one nation under God.”

Our Personal Pilgrimage to Lead

Before receiving the Hebraic foundations from our Father in 1994, I (Mike) had occupied various positions of leadership in religious systems: an elder in two congregations, a Sunday school superintendent, a youth director, and a counselor to religious leaders in New England. As suitable as these positions of leadership seemed at the time, in retrospect I can see how wrong they were. Not only was I lacking wisdom and experience from God’s perspective; my labors were just keeping religious systems running smoothly. No one was personally investing themselves in discipling others who would then make disciples as well!

As Father has made clear to us in Israel 18 years ago, ecclesiastical positions *hinder* others from walking in their giftings and joyfully discipling others into spiritual maturity—the pattern of authentic Kingdom reproduction.

Mike’s testimony

In 2002, nine years after our return from Israel with the Hebraic foundations, Sue and I spent some time vacationing on a beach in North Carolina. During my early morning walks, our Father’s repeated command for us was this: **“Live deter-**

mined for Jesus Christ alone. Find other determined people and contend for Jesus."

This revelation further confirmed a dream the Spirit had given Sue upon our return to the States:

"I was on a mountain top that was a flat plateau. Behind me was darkness and steep, jagged rocks that represented my past. But ahead of me, light was growing brighter and brighter, like the dawn! I heard a voice saying, "Press on into the light. **You can look side-to-side to see who's going with you, but you can't go back.**"

The revelation on the beach that morning created a steadfast resolve in our hearts. We could sense the determination the apostles must have had when Jesus sent them out with this command: *"Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road"* (Luke 10:4). In other words, serve His purposes alone without concern for worldly priorities, and don't get sidetracked or hindered by mental traps!

During our stay at the beach the Lord also added a new command to the two He'd previously given us regarding the Hebraic Restoration:

1. "Share this message."
2. "Free the captives."
3. "Lead others." After a pause He said, "You are called to lead; do it diligently."

I'd initially been reluctant to do more than fulfill the first two directives because I'd always connoted *leading* with religious positions. Yet, a prophetic friend had been speaking to me for over a year telling me, "It's time for you to lead." For several days I asked our Lord for clarity about leading. The answer came in an unexpected way.

A Lesson from the Pelicans

A few days after our Lord's revelation to lead, I walked out to the beach at dawn. As I was standing on a dune overlooking the ocean I experienced a wonderful time of prayer and thanksgiving. Momentarily an insight into *leading* came to me from our Lord.

As I looked down the beach at the rising sun, I saw a trio of pelicans flying toward me a couple minutes away from where I was standing. The wind was coming from the ocean, and the pelican in front was leading the others over rooftop to rooftop using the updraft from the buildings to make their flight down the beach easier.

Shortly after that group passed, another flight of 3 came winging along the shore following the exact same track as the first three. A *rhema* came to me: "The leader of the first group of pelicans had taught the second leader how to catch the updraft from the roofs."

A short time later a much larger flight of pelicans (25+) came overhead following the same path as the two smaller flights. It was then that the Lord enabled me to grasp the nature of the leading that He wanted:

Sue and I, along with those who are *determined* to make the Hebraic foundations their way of life, are like the first flight of pelicans. We are training the *second* flight, most of whom for the time being are somewhat isolated families and home fellowship families embracing the Hebraic foundations. They are especially resolving to help each other uphold communal righteousness for the Name of Jesus. By the third generation, these small "flights" will become larger flocks—gatherings of home fellowships committed to His Kingdom purposes. This will happen during the Dark Days of Chastisement to come.

Currently people are being prepared in their homes and small faith communities to lead by personal example. Those who guide them have matured in the character of Jesus and are discipling in wisdom, encouraging each one to identify and use their spiritual gifts so that they too can function as a body unified in Christ by His Spirit. The lives of these faithful and chosen in Christ reflect the love of Jesus to the unbelievers around them, those for whom He died. Out of love for Him, those in Christ put their faith into action by making disciples, reproducing their way of life in others.

Conclusion

If you are following Jesus, your *emunah*—your heartfelt, wholehearted trust—will be evidenced by your actions as you obey His commands. Just keep in mind that your obedient response doesn't gain you any merit in your Father's sight. Rather, your love-prompted actions *confirm* that you belong to Him.

If you're to lead in the way our Lord calls for in His Word, you need to intentionally *represent His loving concern* for the salvation of those around you by what you do and what you say. Don't just tell them *about* Jesus as though He's buried in the Bible's pages. Lead them to Him as the living and active Son of God, sharing yourself with them and instructing them in His reality!

The relationship you have with your Lord Jesus evidences Father's love for you. Through Him has come the repentance in which you turned from your sin to receive His forgiveness and the glory of His indwelling Spirit when you were born from above. Speak of this with the joy and assurance you have of both the truth of His Word and the new life that you've experienced through His ongoing

transformation process in you. Both your words and your actions should reflect a Lord you *know and trust personally*, not a vague Someone you know *about*.

Your relationship with those you would disciple needs to be like eggs *scrambled together* rather than eggs in a carton. The prophets in the Bible "scrambled" their lives with the people they were concerned for, living among them and interacting with them on a daily basis. Their lives were so intertwined that most had to endure the painful consequences from God when the people refused to listen to their warning.

The pattern of leading today is similar to the life of a prophet: it is *upfront and personal* in service to others. Let's review a bit here. You may think that a synagogue is the Jewish version of the Christian church—and maybe today there's a similarity. But the synagogue got its start during the Babylonian captivity 586 years before Jesus's incarnation. Israelites who were earnest to know the Word of God went to the house of the prophet(s) who lived among them. There they learned both to understand and to apply God's Word.

It's not a stretch to realize that throughout the week the prophet followed up on the people to help them put God's Word into action. He unpacked for them the ways of God, and ensured they lived that way. Be like them by putting into practice our Lord's words, "*teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*"

Leaders whom our Lord prepares have unflinching trust in our Father even if they must stand alone. By His loving power they exercise the courage to leave behind those who refuse to go on, and the compassion to reflect our Father's mercy

to those they disciple. Those who lead in Christ never start out intending to be a leader but become one by Spirit-grown character qualities that are reflected in a biblically-based lifestyle. A leader personally cares for each individual who is entrusted to his discipleship, yearning that the Christ-in-him be reproduced in each one he leads. Does this describe you? Do you want it to?