

Yeshua

MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"— our Jesus.

Dear Friends,

How would you respond if someone asked *you*, **“Why can’t you love your wife?”**

This question was asked me during the most difficult period of my life. I had been in the wounded warrior stage for almost 4 years — emotionally hurting and feeling betrayed.

My seminary had dutifully prepared me to place ministry above my marriage and family. Most of the clergy I counseled kept that same priority. My counsel did enough to get them back into the fray, much like a trainer attempts to get his boxer back in the ring for the next round. We all had it wrong! God was using problems in our ministries to get all of us *back to our marriages!*

If our Father hadn’t shown me such unmerited mercy when he got me to Israel, Sue and I would be among the divorce statistics of so many who are, or who have been, in full-time ministry. It’s as though the Titanic is sinking and God is rescuing those He can use later. I’ve mentioned previously that clergy are now the leading occupation for divorce in the US, ahead of doctors and policemen.

My friend Bert had asked me, “Mike, why can’t you love your wife?”, more than once at the beginning of our stay with him in Israel. I initially thought he want-

ed to hear why I was so hurt and how I perceived Sue had failed me. But he wasn’t asking that at all!!!!

Bert was really asking why I wasn’t crying out to my Father for the *agape* love she deserved from me. Both Bert and our Lord knew that any love that was less than what the Father would give me for Sue was carnal and selfish. I needed a love so divine that it didn’t matter what Sue did. In essence, *His love* could keep my love for her from rising or falling despite her actions.

Our Father wanted me to see the love in His heart for her, and for me to be a vessel for her to experience it. In our Father’s wonderful mercy to me, He sent me to a man who refused to listen to my blame and excuses. In my distress, I wanted to take Bert *horizontal* and tell him how I had been let down. But Bert sent me *vertical* and had me take it up with my Father at the throne. *We all* need a load-bearing friend with that kind of confrontational courage!

My Confession: Before Israel I had let ministry become my idol. As I reflect back, I can see that I worshiped what *I* was doing for God. As with any idol, our Lord lets you be brought down by whatever you worship or put your trust in besides Him.

He did this in a marvelous way when He wanted to free the Hebrews from Egyptian slavery. Each of the 10 plagues was a direct attack on one of the gods in whom the Egyptians trusted. With the final plague of the Passover, the Lord declared, *“I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord”* (Exodus 12:12).

As we travel the country sharing the message of Restoration given to us in Israel, I can see how the suffering the Lord took me through has been used to help other men. His purpose was not only for me to love Sue as He desires, but also to help other men who, through blaming their wives, were “passing the buck” of personal responsibility. Paul understood this preparation phase of suffering when he wrote, *“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God”* (2 Cor. 1:3,4).

If you remember, in a prior letter we mentioned a statement which could encapsulate the earliest church’s understanding of marriage: “If you want to

Equipping the Church to Go Back for its Future

know my love for Jesus, watch it² in how I love my wife.” A wife is the highest gift God could give a man. The foundation of a husband’s authority is summed up in the phrase, “The buck stops with me.” In our homes and faith communities our Father establishes men in positions of authority. Authority is the responsibility to *include* and *exclude*, to *commend* and to *correct*. As we pointed out before, Our Father will not accept excuses from us men when we fail to fulfill our responsibilities. And He will not allow those who exercise authority to blame the ones in their care when they themselves have failed.

As people who attend our workshops grasp the different facets of the Restoration, they are confronted with the increased *relational commitment* required of them—a relational commitment both to God and to their spouses and others with whom they have intimate fellowship. How many times at the end of a workshop have I heard, “My wife won’t go for this,” or, “You don’t know my wife, she thinks everything is okay the way it is,” or, “If we start upholding the righteousness that God requires, we’ll lose our friends!” When I hear their excuses and blame, I can hear myself when Sue and I arrived in Israel.

What these people need is the conviction to pray for the empowerment of God’s grace to follow His commands no matter what the cost. If the litany of excuses is allowed to continue, these individuals have already lost. When I tried to open my

mouth with excuses in Israel, Bert shut me down with, “But Mike, **why can’t you** love your wife?”

The man who blames his wife for why he can’t lovingly follow God’s commands sets his wife up as an idol — a god greater than our God. This man is setting her up for trouble because God will fulfill His words, “*You shall have no other gods before me.*” Through Bert, the Lord punctured my blame and excuses.

Sue and I are very aware of how humanly difficult it is for people to face the truths of the Restoration. How important it is to encourage people to shut their mouths before they begin to blame or give excuses. Rather than reciting a litany of blame as a “victim,” they need to be asking for God’s help. In the years we’ve been sharing this message we’ve learned that no human effort can effect the changes the Lord desires to bring about.

Keeping a closed mouth is the crucial first step. Consider a few “mouth” verses: “*Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue*” (Prov. 17:28). People reveal more than facts when they speak; their *inner motives* come through: “*Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks*” (Matt. 12:34).

Oftentimes, people who are in the habit of speaking too quickly need the help of others to confront them. Some of you reading this letter are familiar with my favorite manner of confronting people. One particular situation several years ago illus-

trates how this method helped save a marriage:

Sue was helping a woman who was having trouble in her marriage. One day Sue was on the phone with her. She put her hand over the receiver and told me that the woman’s husband was packing to leave her. I went into the bedroom to pray and discerned a prompting from the Holy Spirit. I asked Sue to see if the woman and her husband would join us for dinner.

The husband stopped packing and they met us at a restaurant. During the meal the husband kept bringing up past instances of how this woman had let him down. The wife walked off to the bathroom in tears. Sue followed her.

Sitting alone with the man I asked, “Do you love your wife?” His reply was very affirmative. I then asked, “Is there anyone in your life whom you are willing to accept direction from?” He responded emphatically: “NO!!” Next I asked, “Would you like my help?” Yes, he would. “Every time you bring up anything negative from the past about your wife, you make out a check for \$100 to our ministry.” He blinked for a second, then wholeheartedly agreed to my terms.

His wife returned to the table and I told her what her husband agreed to. Hope shined in her eyes. She was aware that her husband rarely listened to anyone, and that he was a notorious penny-pincher. His agreement to my terms showed her that he meant business. Delightedly, I never did collect a cent, and they went on to mend their marriage! Often, the *old patterns* need to be broken, and

a challenge of accountability³ can help stifle an old response mechanism.

As those who have attended our workshops have realized, the Restoration truths require a commitment greater than most people have considered. This morning as Sue and I did a prayer walk at dawn, the Holy Spirit reminded me of the old song “*I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.*” Do you remember it?

*I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back, no turning
back.*

*The cross before me, the world
behind me,
No turning back, no turning
back.*

*Though none go with me still I
will follow,
No turning back, no turning
back.*

This song may become the theme song of the Restoration. Those who have studied and applied the truths which our Lord is pouring forth around the world know they can never go back. The ever-increasing love and intimacy with their Father is too precious for them to turn back.

We are often asked, “How can these truths permeate a congregation?” Many newsletters ago we mentioned a study of how change occurs in a given group. The study categorized five types of people in a congregation:

1. **Innovators** (2% of a congregation) — people who hunger for God and are willing to pay any cost to obey Him.
2. **Early Adaptors** (12%) —

people who enjoy relationships with innovators and have the confidence of others to be an influence in their lives.

3. **Early Majority** (33%) — people who don't like to be the first or the last but are definitely interested in what God is showing the Body.
4. **Late Majority** (33%) — people who wait for institutional endorsement before considering anything new.
5. **Laggards** (20%) — people who will never change no matter what you share. It's sad that in many churches laggards exercise great influence among the leadership and are easily threatened when someone proposes change.

Where would you categorize yourself? Your spouse? Members of your home fellowship? The leaders of your congregation?

Only the first three groups seem to attend our workshops. These three types of people seem to have the courage to press on together into all that our Lord would have for them. We encourage the innovators to be patient with the early majority. They may appear hesitant as they look back to see who else is coming!

Let's use a parallel with the sheep we kept at our retreat center. The shepherd was like the *innovator* as he led them to pasture. The ewes without lambs were the *early adaptors*, able to keep pace with the shepherd quite easily. The ewes with lambs were like the *early major-ity*. We had to move slowly

enough so that the ewe with lambs wouldn't have tension between her flocking instincts and her mothering instincts.

The truths we share and the books we've written require discussion first of all between husbands and wives. They need to come to a common agreement if what we've written is, in fact, the truth. Next, they need to see how God wants them to apply these truths to their own lives and families. If they are part of a small home group, these believers, too, need to discuss and apply the truths appropriately.

We have noticed a hindrance to this important process: a hesitancy in wives who fear what changes may need to be made, and a hesitancy in husbands who fear their wives more than they fear God. The hindrance is that simple!

Often it's the husband who voices his fears first. An old proverb I developed many years ago immediately comes to mind: The person who brings you the problem is the problem or the solution to the problem.

If you are reading this letter and stuck in hesitancy, order our book *Growing Relationships Through Confrontations* today! Another of my proverbs: Your love for someone can't grow while apprehension is present.

“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called Repairer of the Breach”

Those of you who have read our book *Pastoring by Elders*

are familiar with the importance⁴ of the above verse, Isa. 58:12. The message of Restoration is one of *mending*. Our friend Lu Sunderland from England who was with us at the Institute for Biblical Eldership in May called a mutual friend. Lu said that she had been unable to sleep one night and had prayed for a spiritual break-through. The Lord brought to her mind the above verse, emphasizing that He wanted the “breach” restored. When she asked Him, “What breach?”, our Lord responded, “The breach between Myself and the Church. Only *repentance* can repair it.”

At every workshop we emphasize again and again the importance of repentance—turning away from our sins and toward God in every area of our lives. The toughest questions most attendees face are,

- **Does God listen to the prayers of the unrepentant?**
- **Does He accept the praise and worship of the unrepentant?**

If you haven’t answered these questions for yourself, we encourage you to do so. Some tell us, “We’re of the New Covenant, and what you’re telling us is part of the Old Covenant.” No matter how hard we try to persuade them to search the Scriptures for themselves, few ever do.

For those who take such a view, I find it interesting that Isaiah (Old Covenant) and Peter (New Covenant) both agree:

“Surely the arm of the Lord is

not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:1,2); and, “For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). John (New Covenant) tells us, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” (1:9). And James (New Covenant) certainly understood the importance of righteousness when he tells us to “confess your sins...the prayers of a righteous man have great effect.” That is, the prayers of a person who confesses his sins are heard by the Father.

If you haven’t taken the time to learn and apply the truths being restored to repair the breach between our Lord and His Church today, we encourage you to “**Get going!**” He’s waiting for you.

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

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by Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

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