

NOVEMBER 2001

Yeshua MISHPACHAH

UPHOLDING HUMAN
DIGNITY



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.

Followers of Jesus are People of the Word

Dear Friends,

Sue and I just finished a wonderful six weeks of travel. The people we met and the things we did invigorated us all the more about the future direction of our ministry. We discovered once again our Lord's *timeliness* as we encountered people at crisis points of decision, reminding us of Paul and Silas in Acts 14:22 as they were called to *"strengthen the disciples, encourage them to remain true to the faith, and remind them that it is through many hardships that we must enter the Kingdom of God."*

At many of our stops we found ourselves helping people *apply God's Word* to situations they were facing. We felt like Ezra when he returned to Jerusalem with the Israelites who had been deported several decades before: *"This Ezra came up from Babylon. He was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses, which the Lord, the God of Israel, had given Israel... For Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel"* (Ezra 7:6,10).

We began our travel on September 25th, when the aftermath of the World Trade Center and Pentagon attacks were still in the forefront of the news. Just beyond the focus on the tragedy we saw an ecumenism beginning to form that was setting aside the Lordship of Jesus Christ as *God the Son* and emphasizing Him only as a man-teacher. We were amazed to see how many Christians were jumping on this band wagon. Some were even saying that the Koran was on par with the Bible for comfort and strength.

Sue just finished a book given to her, *Enroute to Global Occupation* by Gary H. Kah, a high-ranking government official who exposed the secret agenda of world unification. Nine years ago he was describing what we see in the false ecumenism of today. He warned, *"Some may consider the scenario I presented as too overwhelming. Yet the Lord has impressed it upon my heart to warn people, particularly Christians, of coming hard times so that they might be spiritually prepared."*

The Bible, Our Compass

One interpretation—Many applications

"If two men are fighting and the wife of one of them comes to rescue her husband from his assailant, and she

reaches out and seizes him by his private parts, you shall cut off her hand. Show her no pity" (Deut 25:11).

In 1978, several months after Sue and I gave our lives to follow Jesus, we attended a Basic Youth Conflicts Seminar in San Diego. The teacher, Bill Gothard, emphasized how the Bible addressed so many matters of life in very practical ways. Following the week-long seminar Sue and I got up every morning at 5 AM for a month to review his teachings. We didn't agree with all of his applications, but he made us aware of areas that we as a couple needed to search the Bible for guidance. When we finished reviewing and applying God's Word to these situations, we knelt together and vowed, "These are the principles Mr and Mrs. Mike Dowgiewicz will uphold in Your Name."

Having appreciated the wonderful relevance of *applying God's Word*, I began to review the Older Testament, asking the Holy Spirit to guide me into applying God's commands to my life. One day I happened upon the Deuteronomy 25:11 passage. How do you make an application based upon a woman grabbing a man's private parts? Well, the Holy Spirit gave me understanding: *"Your wife is not to correct a man unless he asks her for her input. Since she does not have authority, only you as a man have the responsibility to confront and correct other men."*

I shared with Sue the understanding the Holy Spirit had given me and she had a witness in her spirit that this was a good principle for her to follow. Over all these years Sue has obediently lived within this principle, and because she's never pushed her view on other men, they've found it easy to approach her for insight.

Well, 30 years had passed since that *halakhah* was established. I hadn't given Deut. 25:11 another thought until we were staying with close friends on this recent trip. The couple discussed with us the estrangement between her father and a brother-in-law. As they shared, the Holy Spirit reminded me of Deuteronomy 25:11. Again I was thinking, "What does a woman grabbing a man's private parts have to do with estranged relationships?"

Preparing the Family of Jesus for the Dark Days to Come

We got out a Bible and, after reading the passage, our friend exclaimed, "I know how this passage applies. My father uses his position with his daughters to usurp their husbands' authority!" Boy, was that a *rhema*! That realization led to some steps that her husband was able to take, since his father-in-law's actions were robbing our friends' home of *shalom* — of harmony and peace.

Over the next six weeks of travel that Deut. 25:11 passage got applied two more times—with another father-in-law and with a mother-in-law. At other stops we were able to help other followers of Jesus bring other Bible passages to application. It didn't take long for Sue and me to realize that the Holy Spirit was showing us how critical it was for our Father's children to apply His Word. His wisdom and blessings come when His children apply His Word in obedient trust.

We also saw that He wanted us to work like Ezra to help people in a process that is now foreign to them. Many of those we visited had been Christians for years but had only been taught the Bible as content to be learned, not as direction to be applied. With that realization the Holy Spirit began to direct our paths into what He wanted us to do when we returned to Arizona.

The Plan our Lord gave us: We envision using our website to contain stories of the *biblical choices* followers of Jesus have made. We intend to create an *extended family tree* based on the stories of those who, in following Jesus, have applied His Word: "*For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother*" (Matt. 12:50). The site will contain situations which individuals and families have faced — the biblical choices they made — the personal and relational cost of these choices — the feelings they went through. We'll keep the characters fictional to protect identity but the stories will be fact-based. We believe these stories will help many see to the Bible as the *living* Word that applies to their lives rather than as a textbook to be studied.

Visitors to our site can see others like themselves, people just like those in the Bible who made choices to live for Jesus. We trust that they'll be inspired from these stories to devote themselves more intensely to the purposes of Jesus and to seek guidance for their lives from His Word.

Living to Glorify the Father By Applying His Word

The path of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter till the full light of day. But the way of the wicked is like deep darkness;

they do not know what makes them stumble
(Proverbs 4:18,19).

Introduction

Knowing *about* Jesus and *following* Him are two entirely different matters! To be a follower of Jesus is a *way of living*. We're not speaking of services, prayer meetings, or participation in congregational programs. Walking with Jesus is a 7-day-a-week *pattern of life* which resonates with your relationship with our Father through Jesus! His path is a pilgrimage of righteousness, totally contrary to your natural inclinations.

Fully aware of our wayward tendencies, our Lord has graciously given His commands as His guidance for our life decisions and choices. If we are to truly live according to His Word, it's crucial that we make major adjustments in both our inward attitudes and our outward behavior. This is our greatest battle each and every day. But from the depths of immeasurable love, both the Father and Jesus have sent the Holy Spirit to empower us to live according to His Word.

The Nature of Mankind

Ever since Eden our Lord has been conveying commands for His people to *live by*. Because the only true God of all the universe is a good and righteous God, His commands provide for us the *freedom and boundaries* by which we may live fruitful lives that please Him. We rejoice at being made in His image, but do our lives reflect that honor in our choices and actions? Not as often as they should! Our propensity is to sin, not only against Him but against each other.

But our willingness to sin does not nullify the holiness of His commands. Instead, our sinful nature only confirms all the more our need to know and live out that which He has commanded us. It isn't as if sin gradually crept into mankind after many generations so that we could blame society for our human frailty. Every person from Adam and Eve onward is sinful in his/her core nature. As Jesus pointed out, "*For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander*" (Matt. 15:19).

Have you ever stopped to consider how tragic it is that Adam and Eve never raised any of their children in the Garden of Eden? Their firstborn, Cain, murdered his brother. Imagine as a parent the grief



Sin, in effect, is the opposite of love. It ultimately estranges us

of those first parents as they realized the tragic consequence of their own disobedience to their Lord.

Sin, in effect, is the opposite of love and ultimately estranges us from others. Our heart's motivation to give way to evil has historic roots: "*The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time*" (Gen. 6:5). Nor has man's sinful nature improved over time. Many centuries after Adam, the apostle Paul admonished, "*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*" (Rom. 3:23). If he were alive today he would stress the same point.

Each day confronts you with challenges to make choices that can transform your thought life and responses to mirror those of Jesus.

- Have you ever truly understood the *degradation* of your own sin burden?
- Has your grateful devotion to Jesus for the Cross He endured for your sins *grown* or *diminished* over the years you've followed Him?
- Does your walk with Jesus *encourage* or *dissuade* your family or friends from following Jesus wholeheartedly?

The Need to Apply God's Word

If we truly yearn to follow Jesus, we don't have to be captive to corrupt imagination or to pervasive worldly wickedness. The Word of God and the powerful presence of His Spirit equip us to walk in a way that impacts those with whom He puts us in contact:

"See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to him? And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?" (Deut. 4:5-8).

What would our lives be like without the guidance of the Bible? We would not even recognize when we have strayed beyond the confines of God's will by sinning against Him and against each other. The Word of God equips us to identify the freedom and boundaries of God in our relationship with Him and with those in our lives.

Note, however, that the Bible does *not* offer specific guidance in each of the particulars of all our life situations. What it does provide are the *foundational principles* by which we can apply the truth of His Word to all areas of our lives. Not all applications are obvious, though. That's why we so desperately need the guidance and the power of the Holy Spirit. It is He Who empowers us to both grasp and to live out the Word: "*All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work*" (2 Tim. 3:16,17).

The Hebrew word for *applying* the Word of God is *halakhah* [HA-luh-kuh]. It is derived from the word "*halak*" [hah-LAHK], which means "to walk." As we develop *halakhahs* by prayerfully pursuing the instruction and principles of the Word, we are establishing applications which guide our walk with our Lord. Our *halakhahs* reflect our relationship of love-based obedient trust in our Lord. Our halakhic applications identify that we *belong* to Him.

We're not talking about blind obedience to words on a page. In our relationship with our Lord, the *halakhahs* we apply evidence our understanding of Who He is and our responsibility to Him. And as they apply to other people, our *halakhahs* indicate the level of our just and equitable treatment of them. "*So in everything, do to others what you would*

Your *halakhahs* reflect your relationship of love-based obedient trust in your Lord.

have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 7:12). Key to pleasing our Lord is grounding our life applications on the principle of always treating

others as we ourselves would want to be treated in the same circumstances. Keep in mind the corollary to this verse as well: "*Don't do to others what you don't want done to you.*"

Establishing *halakhahs* for yourself and your family extends far beyond Bible knowledge or memorization. When you establish *halakhahs*, you are embracing the *authority* the Lord Jesus gave to everyone who would put their trust in Him: "*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*" (Matt. 16:19). Jesus repeats this admonition in Matt 18:18: "*I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*" *Applying* the freedom and boundaries of God's Word are *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*.

These two passages of Scripture reference the only instances Jesus speaks of the "church," the "called-out ones." As His called-out ones of today, He commands His followers to use His Word to

address every concern and situation of our lives. Each *halakhah* we establish is, in effect, saying, “**This is the Word of God on this matter.**”

Please understand that Jesus commanded His sheep *not* to create burdensome new laws like the Pharisees did. However, just as He did, we are to *apply* God’s Word to all matters of our lives. To help you understand why you might even want to go through this process, take a lesson from our own government’s legal system. Think of God’s commands as our legislature which establishes laws for this country. We, His followers, are the courts in which the laws are *applied to each case*. Thus is developed a system of laws and the application of those laws. Over time, these applications have come to be called “legal precedent.” As the children of our Father, we have access to both the *unchangeable truth* of His Word and our *prayerful application* of that Word through His Spirit — our “*halakhahs*.”

If you truly want to understand the heart of a person who claims to follow Jesus, discover the *halakhahs* he has established for himself, his family, his business, his personal world. *How he lives* determines who he *really is*.

You might be wondering whether your own relationship with our Lord emanates just from your intellect or from your heart and spirit. Ask yourself:

- Does my study of God’s Word enlighten my mind but never penetrate my heart so that He can *change me* from the inside out in my relationship with others?

- Am I really willing to seek the Holy Spirit to reveal *halakhahs* to me — life applications for each and every situation and relationship — so that my life will truly *bring my Father glory* as He changes me? More importantly, *when* will I begin to seek Him to begin this process in me?

The Path of Righteousness Brings Glory to Our Father

There is absolutely *nothing* you can do by your own effort to be declared righteous in God’s sight. But when you trust in the atoning blood of Jesus, you enter into a covenant with our Father and are declared righteous on Jesus’ account. Only your trust in Jesus gains you eternal life. As a result of your relationship with Jesus you become a child of your Father. As his child, you yearn to live a life of righteousness, a life pleasing to Him. Right actions and just dealings with others are part of this enactment.

**As His child,
yearn to live a
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As in any loving relationship, you try to find out what pleases the other person. What pleases our Lord is for you to

love Him and to walk a path of righteousness that evidences that you belong to Him. “*You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*” (Matt. 5:16).

1. Seek Righteousness

“*But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. . . Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. . . Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . . For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven*” (Matt. 6:33; 5:6,10,20). We who yearn to walk in the steps of Jesus as a way of life have supreme purpose and meaning in our lives. Our goal is to please our Father with a love that evidences itself in righteous living.

The path of life that traces His steps entails trials and struggles. People will turn against you, slandering you and excluding you with derision because you are striving to stay on the narrow trail of righteousness. You can’t look to religious systems and practices to measure your progress in the Jesus life. His unfailing Word and your persevering trust in His Spirit’s love are the only standard of measurement in which you’ll find strength and comfort.

The only way your righteousness can surpass that of today’s Pharisees who believe they are right with God by their strict observance of laws and commands is by wholeheartedly abiding in *obedient trust in Jesus*. If you’re wondering if you have truly counted the cost of following Jesus, ask yourself:

- Has anyone ever persecuted (mocked, slandered, intentionally harmed or harassed) me because of a righteous stand I took in a particular situation?
- How did I respond to that persecution? As the apostles did with joy in sharing suffering for Jesus’ sake? or with embarrassment or anger at my tormenters?

2. Maintain Righteousness Through Confession

Walking the path of righteousness calls for you to *make choices*, choices that initiate and emanate from your thought life. You begin by resisting your own inclinations and self-serving human nature so that you can embrace the life applications you’ve discovered and developed from the Bible. Does your heart resonate with grateful joy when our Lord tells

Our Father does not answer the prayers of the unrepentant.

you what you must do? How very different are His thoughts and ways than ours! *“Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him*

turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts’” (Isa. 55:7-9).

How often our Father receives praise through the testimonies of His children as they recount His faithfulness to creatively answer their prayers! However, there is a caveat before you pray: Our Father does *not* answer the prayers of the *unrepentant*, that is, those who refuse to confess their sins and turn from them. This restriction is found in both Testaments. Obedient trust founded on love brings Him near to us when we pray. Consider these passages of encouragement and admonition to walk uprightly:

“Blessed is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord does not count against him and in whose spirit is no deceit” (Psa. 32:1,2).

“If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer” (Psa. 66:18,19).

“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” (1Pet. 3:12).

If you refuse to humble yourself and turn from that which His Spirit has revealed to you as unrighteous, you sever your fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus. (See 1 John 1:6.) But He has graciously made a way for your fellowship to be restored through confession that emanates from a repentant heart: *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives”* (1 John 1:9,10). Confession clears the way for purification and restored fellowship.

- Do you ever try to rationalize or cover over your sinful choices rather than humbly bringing them to your Father immediately?
- How many times have you been *unavailable* for His purposes in a situation because you were as guilty of a particular sin as the person He sent your way to help? Has that sorrow driven you back to your knees to restore your usefulness as His treasured servant?

3. Walk as Our Father’s Child

Like any devoted parent, your loving Father desires an intimate relationship with His children. But in extending you that love, He will not set aside the standard of His holiness to indulge you in your sin. His willingness to answer your prayers is directly linked to your ongoing obedient trust in Jesus and His righteousness: *“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective”* (James 5:16). A life of answered prayer is both a blessing and a testimony of His faithfulness as you live out His Word. What separates a **follower of Jesus** from a “cultural Christian” is the evidential testimony of the intimate and interactive relationship that you have with our Lord.

- Are you currently going through the motions of religion but not following Jesus in the *intimate union* He longs for with you? Does lack of intimacy with Jesus bother you?
- Is complacency with Jesus also reflected in shallowness with your spouse, your children, your friends and coworkers? When will you humble your heart before our Father and ask Him to help you *love* the ones He wants you to?

Keep in mind that our Father stretches your perseverance and faithfulness to trust Him when He answers “No” or delays His response. That, too, is part of your transformation into the character of His Son. However, He also at times graciously responds sooner in order to give you opportunity for testimonies of praise!

- What legacy of answered prayers that bring glory to our Father *have you shared* with those you know?
- What *hindrance* to answered prayer is the Spirit reminding you of at this very moment? Are you willing to forsake any particular sin He reveals and to turn to Him for forgiveness and restored fellowship with Him?

Encouragement

Our Father knows each of us better than we do. He has no false notions about us. He knows how frail we are, but that doesn’t stop Him from loving us. In response to His love, all He asks is our loving obedience and trust in return.

Your family,
Mike & Sue

Phil. 3:1

The evidential testimony of your intimate and interactive relationship with our Lord separates a follower of Jesus from a “cultural Christian”.

Praise

1. For our recent six-week trip — the wonderful encouragement of meeting others face-to-face who are devoted to our Lord Jesus. We feel these trips offer important feedback to us, and we're grateful for the insights and direction we receive.

2. For the events that took place back here on the prairie while we were gone. As we hoped this place would represent, Matt had many opportunities to minister and help people while we were away. Somehow coming out here helps people see their lives from a different perspective.

Spanish Demolishing Strongholds

The Lord willing, we're sending the book to the printer shortly. In order to introduce the Spanish-speaking community to it, we're offering the first printing at **\$5 per copy**. Orders of any amount must be made to **Connections at 1-888-229-3041 along with payment by January 31, 2002** [We extended the deadline.] Consider ordering copies for missionaries or mission agencies working in Spanish speaking countries.

Prayer

1. Please continue to pray the Spanish version to *Demolishing Strongholds* all the way through to its printing. Satan does not want his footholds in the lives of people exposed. He is relentless to stop anyone or anything that exposes them. Even our efforts to copy the translation into the final program for printing is like "trench warfare".

2. Please pray for wisdom for us as we attempt to create this new part of our website, "*Living to Glorify the Father.*" Uplift those who may share their stories of obedience so that others can be encouraged.

NavRugs

Consider giving a **Navajo rug** for the holidays! It is more than just a beautiful handcrafted treasure — you are helping in a very real way brothers and sisters whom you will meet in heaven! Contact James and Joyce Skeet at **1-866-NAVRUGS** or visit their website: **NavRugs.com**

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