

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.

Will He Find Your Name?

Dear Friends,

This was not an easy letter to write, but a needful one just the same. If you are hungry to walk more fully in Jesus, this will stir you to cry out to our Father. If you have allowed sin to dominate you, may this warning awaken you to repent and restore true fellowship in Him.

You probably don't think much about your “personal identity” until someone asks you for *proof* that confirms you are who you say you are. If you've flown lately, you understand what we're talking about. Proof has become all the more critical in this age of terrorism — we each carry a burden to *prove our identity*.

We can learn a lesson from the Older Testament about what happens when you *can't* prove your identity. Following the 70 years of captivity in Babylon (present-day Iraq), the Israelites were permitted to return to Jerusalem. Those who were of the priestly tribe of Levi were called upon to *prove* that they were in fact priests if they wanted to serve in that capacity and receive the benefits that entailed. Those with no proof “*searched among their ancestral registration, but it could not be located; therefore they were considered unclean and excluded from the priesthood*” (Nehemiah 7:64).

The men who couldn't prove their claim were excluded from the priesthood. Can you imagine how they felt? These men *sincerely believed* they were priests, descendants of Levi. And possibly they were. But they needed to prove it!

Now, what about us today? Peter's words are often quoted to assure Christians of their status before our

heavenly Father: “But you are a CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, a HOLY NATION, a PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). But note this: These promises are *not* meant for those who *think* they are “Christians”, but only for those who can *prove it*.

Ask yourself:

- Are all who *call* themselves “Christian” really among His royal priesthood?
- More specifically, are *you*?

Enscribed in the Book of Life

One of the greatest and most destructive sins of mankind is *presumption*. This sin is what got Adam and Eve into trouble: *They presumed they could be like God*. So many today who consider themselves “Christians” wear their sin of presumption as a badge that they are the people of faith whom the Newer Testament writers are addressing. Yet, there is a “day of proof” coming when *all presumption will be judged*.

Picture that moment for yourself:

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.

*And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the **book of life**; and the dead were*

judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds...

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11-15).

When you come before His Throne, you can alter nothing about your life's response to Jesus to ensure that your name is in the Book of Life. Will the Lord find proof that you are, in fact, *His*, indwelt by His Spirit?

Will this be your joyous experience? *“He who wins the victory will, like them, be dressed in white clothing; and I will not blot his name out of the Book of Life; in fact, I will acknowledge him individually before my Father and before his angels”* (Revelation 3:5). What a magnificent moment!

The Bible repeats again and again that *each* of us has covenant responsibilities to fulfill in order to *win the victory*. Those who have embraced the true Gospel and understand its clarity in the Hebraic restoration realize a key truth: God holds them more responsible in their faith pilgrimage than Nicola-tanism ever taught.

“I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart” (Jeremiah 24:7).

Not many of us stop to consider that we're traveling through time according

Preparing the Family of Jesus for the Dark Days to Come

2 to our *Father's prophetic plan*. We've written in *Restoring the Early Church* and in other articles about our Father's revelation of the Hebraic foundations of the earliest Church. He's doing this in conjunction with fulfilling His promises to restore the Jewish people to Israel one last time.

Our Father hasn't changed His pattern to warn His people before consequences for disobedience take place. He stirred prophets in the Older Testament to proclaim His messages, and He uses Spirit-directed prophetic Jesus-followers today as well. Consider this:

- **Our God brings forth prophecies of both what He intends to do and the consequences for disobedience.**
- **He calls for His people to listen to the prophets through whom He continues to speak. And from His perspective, to listen means to take action.**

The return of the Israelites to Jerusalem was heralded by Ezra, Nehemiah and others as fulfilling God's prophetic plan: "*For thus says the LORD, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place'*" (Jeremiah 29:10).

The Israelites indeed returned according to prophecy. Once there, they were also encouraged by the prophets Haggai and Zechariah to finish the work God had called them to do — rebuild the Temple:

When the prophets, Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them, then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of Jozadak arose and began to rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them supporting them" (Ezra 5:1,2).

Our Father hasn't changed! Out of His mercy He continues to warn His sons and daughters today!

- *These* are times prophesied long ago by our Lord through His prophets.
- *These* are also times that require prophetic reminders of how to live righteously to please our Lord.

The restoration of the Hebraic foundations is in accordance with the prophetic plan of God. It is going forth, carried by those whom He has called and gifted as prophets. And there is good reason for Him to raise up prophets as He has always done to carry out His mission. Read through the first three chapters of Ezekiel as if He were calling *you* in that prophet's place to proclaim His sorrow over His people's disobedience and rebellion.

"Today, if you hear God's voice, don't harden your hearts"

(Hebrews 4:7)

Can you discern true prophecy? Or, do you hold to a creed which believes that prophecy is no longer valid for the Church today? I've walked in the prophetic for 27 years as one of many to whom our Father has given the prophet message of the Hebraic restoration. Be assured, I've often felt the despair of Jeremiah and Ezekiel!

I'd like to review with you the true nature of biblical prophecy:

*Prophecy is our Lord's means to speak both **specific guidance** and **warning** to His people. He often uses prophecy to **remind** His children of His requirements and to **voice warning** to those who are straying. For those who are humble and obedient, prophecy is encouraging. It shows the path of **keeping the way** of the Lord, **cooperating** with His plans, and **bringing glory** to Him.*

*Prophecy also **warns the disobedient**, often telling them the **consequences** of where their disobedience will lead. God's warnings are part of His **mercy** and are intended*

*to bring **conviction, repentance, and change** to a person's way of life.*

A biblical prophet is prepared to both *encourage* people on the path of righteousness and *warn* those who stray. You may remember from our writings that the synagogues began during the seventy-year captivity in Babylon. God's people began to gather together at the homes of the prophets to learn God's commands in order to live them out.

We believe that the nature of true teaching that our Lord wants among His people today is the prophetic. It is teaching aimed at imparting understanding and bringing conviction that results in a *changed life* that glorifies our Father.

Don't these two passages describe the prophetic nature of teaching? Paul forcefully declares,

*"We proclaim Him, **admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom**, so that we may present every man complete in Christ"* (Colossians 1:28); and,

*"Let the word of Christ richly dwell within you, with **all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God"*** (Colossians 3:16; see also 2 Timothy 3:16-4:1).

Teaching and admonishing, are the prophetic *dynamic duo* that God calls for to impart His Word. Admonishment includes warning and rebuking when needed so that the hearers may return to the path that pleases God.

We want to encourage you as a *follower of Jesus* with this thought: When you embrace the prophetic words God is revealing and apply them to your life, you begin to *live* prophetically. Your way of life is a *living example* to others of God's commands being walked out. As you tell others the reason for why you live as you do, you speak prophetically.

Two hindrances can keep you from living prophetically:

1. **Some ignore the prophetic word and go on living as their inclinations lead.**

3 2. Some fear the loss of friendships more than they fear God.

Do either of these apply to you?

Today, few encounter true biblical teaching and admonition in the Nicolaitan religious system. Nicolaitan foundations are found in Hellenism — imparting information in order to make people *knowledgeable*.

Knowledge alone is a far cry from God's pattern of imparting a way of life that pleases Him. If Jeremiah were alive today, he'd be repeating the same words he spoke to the wayward Israelites: "*Then you come and stand before me in this house that bears my name and say, 'We are saved' — so that you can go on doing these abominations!*" (Jeremiah 7:10).

God Does Get Angry

The Bible demonstrates that our long-suffering Father can be pushed to anger. Gross unrepentance and failure to be concerned with His commands does this. One of the great revivals in the US began when Jonathan Edwards preached "*Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.*"

I can remember one time when I actually felt the heat of God's anger. I never want to experience that again. A friend who had been a pastor for a number of years humbled himself one Sunday evening in front of his faith community. He confessed his lack of trust in God and the hypocrisy that he felt was enveloping him.

The people gathered around him to pray. One woman, however, used this time to berate the humble man under the guise of praying for him. As she spoke, the Lord called me to step away from the people encircling my friend. He addressed me in such anger that I felt scorched. "YOU STOP THAT WOMAN! If you don't, she'll be dead before this day ends!"

I stepped back into the circle and spoke up, repeating what the Lord had just told me. The woman fled the church building while the rest fell on their knees repenting before God.

Keep this in mind: *Our God is slow to anger, but He does get angry.*

Live as Those Whose Names Are in the Book of Life

If we claim to follow Jesus, we need to act **now** to scrutinize our lives for any forms of ungodliness. We can't wait til the Judgment Throne and think we can change then.

What does it mean to live our pilgrimage on earth in such a way that we *win the victory*? The whole thing can be summed up in this:

Living the Way of Righteousness and Love that pleases God.

In order to live a certain way, you have to first learn what is required of you. Isn't that what the Bible makes clear? A righteous way of life is an obedient walk of His love and power in and through you. Your heart yearns to both be *conformed to the character of Jesus* and to serve Him, *fulfilling our Master's purposes*.

The opposite of a life of righteousness is a *self-centered* life — exactly what the false gospels of today produce. So many "Christians" think, "I'm OK with God no matter how I live." The Nicolaitan system permits, and even encourages them under the banner of false grace (license to sin), to stay in their unrighteousness. The deluded can sit in pews each Sunday in complacency because no one confronts them about their sin. [See our Hebraic Articles, "*I Hate Nicolaitanism*" and "*Impudence: Reflection of the Anti-Christ Spirit in Today's Church*".]

1. Righteousness Begins at Home

The way of life that pleases our Lord begins in your home. And, a faith community that's based on living as a holy priesthood is built on the righteousness of each home. To live righteously — the way that's right in God's sight — we must study God's Word *both* for understanding and, more importantly, for application. Our testimony to our way of life in which we

have *applied* His Word speaks louder than quoting a Bible verse that we've never lived out.

Each facet of His commands by which you begin to live is like Nehemiah rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 3). [See our book, *Christian Halakhahs* for more on this connection]. Like those walls that kept Israel's enemies out, your applications, called *halakhahs* (HAH-luh-kuz) protect your home.

Two dramatic events that occurred during our 11 years at a retreat center flesh out this concept. These were events in which God took action to convict individuals about the unrighteousness they tolerated in their homes. His goal? To restore full fellowship based on love-grounded obedient trust.

1. One Sunday we visited a congregation that frequently used our center. During a time of lifting up needs, a man went forward with his family to ask for prayer. They had been in a major accident the day before. The vehicle was totalled and several of his children were still in the hospital.

As I bowed to ask the Holy Spirit what to specifically pray for, I heard Him whisper, "*It was I who did this to him. The way the man lives in his home is an abomination to Me. Now tell this to the elders before you leave here today.*" I approached two of the elders and shared what the Spirit had said. They assured me they'd go to the man's house that day.

That evening I received a phone call. "Mike, we went to that man's house. It's not only what he *does* in his home, it's what he *has* there as well that are abominable. But he refused to repent."

It just so happened that a few weeks later we again visited that faith community. The same man stood up in front with his family to confess his sin. The day before, his entire home had burnt to the ground.

4 2. Another family had experienced a number of car accidents over several years' time. The parents came to see us to ask for help. We asked if they might have some "household idols".

They assured us their home was clean. We invited them to join us at a *Basic Life Principles Seminar* being held locally. [We'd first attended a few months after becoming followers of Jesus in 1977. There our eyes were opened to God's righteous requirements, especially the importance of applying the Bible to our lives and growing in Christ-like character.]

The couple listened intently as the topic of household idols came up at the seminar. That night they arrived home to find that their daughter had been in a head-on crash. She was shaken but not injured.

The whole family immediately went through their home removing everything that had been mentioned. Their 2 AM bonfire lit the sky! And, the accidents ceased.

Household idols carry with them a demonic influence. They include, but are not limited to, Voodoo items; sensual or violent tapes and CD's; Cabbage patch dolls with Hindu god's names imprinted on them; TV shows and videos that violate God's name or standards; computer games that promote violence, sensuality or demonic interaction. Ask the Holy Spirit for discernment about your own home.

Again, your removal of 'demonic rubble' is similar to what Nehemiah did before the Jewish people could rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Wherever Sue and I move, we also pray about the place before we move in, anointing the door frames with oil and commanding in the Name of Jesus that any unclean spirits leave.

2. Your true identity is found by acquiring the character of Jesus.

Sue and I call ourselves "*followers of Jesus.*" This identification with Jesus not only includes our love-grounded obedience to fulfill His purposes, but also our trusting yieldedness to Him to develop His character in us — an ongoing, lifelong process! His disciples also identified with Him in these processes.

Denominational creed is a *label*, not an identity. Because of the intimacy we have experienced with our Lord over the years as His followers, it is painful to hear people identifying with divisive Hellenistic labels calling themselves Baptists, Presbyterians, Catholics, Methodists, Messianics, Charismatics, etc.

In our years of doing seminars in different faith communities, we have discovered a distinct connection between certain denominations and strongholds. Can you connect which strongholds belong to which group? [One of these groups is plagued by three strongholds!]

Baptists

Presbyterians

Catholics

Methodists

Messianics

Charismatics

Rebellion

Bitterness

Rejection

Pride

If you identify yourself by creedal allegiance, you're probably unaware of just how idolatrous and demonic that Hellenist-based identification is. The apostle Paul would confront your idolatry in the same way as he did the Corinthians in chapter 3 of his first letter to them:

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ....For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?... For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (vv.1-4,11)

We followers of Jesus are here to reveal Jesus-in-the-flesh to the world!

The world doesn't need to hear about which creedal faction you belong to while your lifestyle is no different than theirs. Those yet-to-believe need to see your *identification with Jesus* and a lifestyle that reveals Him. That will validate you!

Christ-like character development is the primary, yet most over-looked, need for our life journey's progress. It's foundational to our sanctification process.

The psychological inroads that have penetrated Christianity since World War II have made people more *personality conscious* than *character conscious*. A myriad of personality tests have developed over the last 50 years to box you in with an identity label. But your personality only reveals your internal inclinations. And these natural tendencies can cause you to act *contrary* to God's commands. A wise man once said, "**God's ways are exactly opposite your inclinations.**"

The Bible concurs:

"There can be a way which seems right to a person, but at its end are the ways of death" (Proverbs 16:25);

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts" (Isaiah 55:8,9; see also Proverbs 3:6; 28:26).

Keep in mind that *iniquity* is you simply doing what *seems right* to you without regard for God's commands. If you choose a life of iniquity rather than righteousness, beware. Rather than being welcomed into heaven, you'll hear, "*I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice iniquity*" (Matthew 7:23).

On the other hand, if you're determined to grow in the character of Jesus, you'll seek out God's will in each situation or encounter. You'll recognize the cautions God has given in His Word, and the consequences of disobedience.

5 You'll be far less likely to leave the path of righteousness to dabble in iniquity.

Those who call themselves "Christian" but care little about righteous character development may fake out others through an easy-going personality. They'll likely search for faith communities in which they **know** they won't be confronted with God's standards and purposes. They can *stay just as they are*. But behind the facade is a void, a lack of inner character that a *follower of Jesus* reveals. Unable to faithfully represent Him to the world, they don't even care to.

Christian-ese Talk Doesn't Mean a Jesus Walk

Even different cultures carry with them different personalities. If someone tries to describe Germans, Navajos, Mexicans or Chinese, for example, they're attempting to describe a *cultural personality*. But personality is not character. When God's Word is received by a person or a culture, for that matter, His truth confronts the cultural personality. That reality impacts biblical character production.

This confrontation can be a very painful process. The development of Christ-like character not only causes us to separate from our own inclinations; our character development often results in our rejection by family and others. We know that those of you who follow Jesus wholeheartedly have experienced this!

Let's review character. Character is impressed on us from our earliest years. It's imprinted on our way of life so that we uphold burdens and responsibilities that our inclinations alone would avoid. Good manners, healthy relationships, responsible work attitudes, and proper deference toward others who deserve it are just a few factors that are part of your character. [See chapters 7 and 8 of our book *Pastoring by Elders* for more on character development.]

Someone once described character as **who you are when no one is looking**. The Greek word for character

means "minting a coin". An image is impressed on the coin, an image that anyone can recognize. For *followers of Jesus*, the Bible presents clear guidelines of the type of Christ-like character He wants to *impress* onto *our* personalities.

Sanctification, that is, our transformation in Christ-likeness, is our Father's method of character development for His children. "*For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren*" (Romans 8:29).

One thing you'll discover right away as you pursue the path of sanctification into Christ-like character: You will change nothing by your own energy and volition! Rather, you'll need to draw nearer to Jesus in greater dependency if you are to acquire His character. As you yield to His will, the Holy Spirit will change your heart's motivation to conform to Jesus. From *this* identity your attitude and behavior will follow. The *fruit* of this process is that the world will see Jesus-in-the-flesh *in you*.

[We mentioned some outstanding resources in character development in our last newsletter. They're worth repeating: *Character Sketches* and *The Power of True Success* by the Institute in Basic Life Principles (www.iblp.org/iblp/ or 800-398-1290); and *Building Christian Character* by Blair Adams (Truth Forum, 2433 N. 43rd St., Waco, TX 76710)].

If you've already purchased these books and are finding the beauty of character transformation, we welcome and thank you for your feedback!

3. Your purpose in life is to promote Jesus.

How? By living a holy life in love that's pleasing to our Father. Hebrews 12:14 emphatically commands, "**Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.**"

What does this phrase mean to you: "*without holiness no one will see the*

Lord?" Do you think it means just here on earth, or for all eternity? Too often we think of holiness as some form of religious ritual. But biblical holiness is that which you have *established in your heart* in loving obedience and service to God. For a *follower of Jesus*, holiness is wrapped around his or her heart's motivation: "*Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence*" (1 Peter 3:15).

These proven steps have helped others live a holy lifestyle.

- Ensure that you and your family have embraced the Gospel that our Father has given. We ask you to take the time to prayerfully go through our article, "*The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation.*" Without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, all your efforts will be just human endeavor. *With* the Holy Spirit come **grace, empowerment, and transformation.**
- Rid your home of demonic, unclean things and practices. Ensure that you and your family are free from demonic strongholds. The presence of strongholds in your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions, inhibits the Holy Spirit's influence and control in that area. You may want to review our book, *Demolishing Strongholds*, to assist you in this matter. If you have a copy (free download at website) open it to page 37 with your family and see if anything is influencing any of you.
- Seek Christ-like character qualities for yourself and your family. Besides the Bible, you may find it helpful to read about the heroes of the faith who preceded us. Voice of The Martyrs presents accounts of present-day brothers and sisters in Jesus who are suffering for their trust. Visit their website at www.persecution.com or call 877-337-0302. And keep this in

6] mind: Role model these characters qualities *yourself* before you try to teach others!

A Prophetic Warning

As we have seen in the past few elections, there is little difference between the Presidential candidates. Many evangelicals believe Bush is their man, but they are focused on man-concocted ways of achieving their purposes. Trusting in political solutions rather than embracing our Father's righteous requirements accomplishes nothing. Our repentance and obedient trust, not politics, is our only hope.

Our Father uses those who stand up and humbly acknowledge their *dependency on Jesus Christ* in front of the very people he is seeking to lead. They don't hesitate to represent their relationship with our Lord Jesus as well as the biblical basis for his lifestyle. Nor do they proclaim that the god of Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism is the same as the God of the Bible.

Anti-abortion is not God's way to end the killing of babies! Man-concocted ways of *fighting other people* do not exalt the Creator of life. You can never serve Jesus Christ and be *against a human being made in the image of God, and for whom Jesus died*. Show them Jesus as you pro-actively come alongside desperate women. Train up young people in the character of Jesus so they'll choose to abstain from fornication. *Changed lives* impact others for Jesus and prompt conversations about His Gospel.

Christian Political Action has done nothing to stop the darkness that God is permitting to come on this nation to drive us to repentance. All their years of fighting homosexuals hasn't stopped a thing!

Abortion of itself isn't causing God to judge this nation. Abortion is indicative of how far people who call themselves "Christian" have *departed from His priorities* as they have pursued the self-serving spirit of Nicolaitanism and its false gospels.

The God of heaven is keeping His

own word to both *hate* and *war* against Nicolaitanism: "*Yet this you do have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate...So you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Therefore repent; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth*" (Revelation 2:6,15,16).

A religious system that calls itself "Christian" is being warred against by the very God they claim to serve. This system has a divorce rate that far exceeds those who are not in it — up to 50% higher in the Bible-belt from which most of the religious influence on the rest of the nation emanates.

What is divorce, but the unwarranted lawless separation of one person from another? Isn't that same unwarranted lawless severance behind abortion? Deal with your marriage as our God Who "*hates divorce*" requires. Then you can effectively stand for the life of unborn children! Earnestly seek His help so that your marriage can shine with the character of Jesus. Then share with the world His power and His way to live.

Yes, God abhors the killing of babies. But He also hates that people who call themselves by His Name *defame Him* in front of the world by their own lifestyles.

Does your heart grieve for the lost? For those who have no relationship with Jesus, and for those who *think* they do but evidence no presence of His Spirit in their lives? Can you imagine how you would feel to find out, when it is too late, that your name *isn't* in the Book of Life and *won't* be proclaimed in front of the hosts of heaven?

Please **STOP** here! If you have been loose about your responsibility for living righteously in Jesus, hear our Father's call: "*Come now,*" says our Lord, "*let's talk this over together. Even if your sins are like scarlet, they will be white as snow; even if they are red as crimson, they will be like wool*" (Isaiah 1:18).

Look inside yourself, inside your home, and biblically discern what's going on there. Our loving and holy Father is ready and eager to forgive you and to help you through His Spirit to be conformed to His Son, Jesus. But, *you* need to confess your sins and repent by *leaving* your sin practices behind and *living* as God would have you according to His Word.

Neither the next President nor the Stock Market nor our mighty armed forces can save you either now or at the Judgment Throne. Your victory must be won now while you still breathe! Fervently cry out for, and walk in, an intimate relationship with our Father and His Son, Jesus — a relationship in which His very character is being imprinted on you and is readily apparent to others.

Humility, confession, and repentance are the biblical pattern of both testaments. Cry out in trust for the help that only the Holy Spirit can give. This is the pathway to ensure that your name will be found in the Book of Life.

Much of today's unrighteousness among "Christians" is based on their *tolerance of bitterness and resentment* in their lives. Hey! The first son, Cain was so bitter at Abel that he murdered him. But Abel's noble legacy didn't die with him: "*By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks*" (Hebrews 11:4).

Abel still calls to us: "*At all cost choose righteousness. This is the only path with eternal blessing.*" Isn't this the same message from John to *followers of Jesus* in the Book of Revelation? "*And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb and because of the word of their testimony, and they did not love their life even when faced with death*" (Revelation 12:11).

Bitter people will NEVER appreciate the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. That void of appreciation reveals their lack of true devotion to Jesus. That vacuum leaves them vulnerable to religious

7] forms and empty ritual. But even more tragic, in their own unforgiveness our Father doesn't forgive them.

A Prophetic Encouragement

If you have embraced the true Gospel and are sealed with the Holy Spirit, we want to encourage you on your path of sanctification.

First, don't look back on your past with regret. *Keep your heart focused ahead.* If you have repented of your past sins, don't let demonic voices remind you of them.

Second, don't be agitated by those who look down on you for what you have done in the past and repented of! If God isn't holding it against you, then don't be shamed by your accusers.

Otherwise, you will place yourself in a prison of self-condemnation. That prison will keep you from experiencing the true freedom Jesus offers you. Remember God's promise to you:

He has not dealt with you according to your sins, nor rewarded you according to our iniquities. [The atoning sacrifice of Jesus paid the penalty for your sins. Confess, repent, and look forward to see what His grace will do.] For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His lovingkindness toward you who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed your transgressions from you" (Psalm 103:10-12).

And imprint this on your soul: "*for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:34b).*

Stay free by not judging anyone else for the past of which they have repented. Give God room to do His good work: "So don't pronounce judgment prematurely, before the Lord comes; for he will bring to light what is now hidden in darkness; he will expose the motives of people's hearts; and then each will receive from God whatever praise he

deserves" (1 Corinthians 4:5).

Every person who follows Jesus will be led out into a desert time, just as our Lord was. Paul, too, speaks of his own time in the desert: "*To reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went away to Arabia, and returned once more to Damascus" Galatians 1:16,17).*

If you're going through your own desert time, thank God! You need this season for both revelation of Him in you to be prepared for His purposes, and for the character refinement you never gave our Lord time for when you were shrouded in Nicolaitanism.

Don't look back longingly to the system in which you were not held spiritually responsible, as the Israelites of the Exodus did yearning for the "leeks of Egypt". You'll only hinder your own progress. If you will but *focus on Jesus* and let His transformation in you take place, you'll be useful for His noble purposes.

If you are married you won't press on until you do so together. Husbands, the time in the desert is when you learn to love that woman of your covenant as Jesus Himself would do. The earliest Church understood a wife to be one of the highest gifts God gives a man: "*He who finds a wife finds a good thing, and obtains favor from the LORD" Proverbs 18:22).* That's why Paul tells husbands that their wives deserve the *agape* love of God through them, "*Husbands, [agape] love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25).*

Men, during this time in the desert together, you will die to your ego daily. Your self-centeredness will be changed with such righteous, humble consideration for your wife that joy will be an envelope that surrounds her heart.

At the same time, every conceivable distraction will come from the demonic hoards to keep you from your God-required focus. RESIST!

Wives, you will be brought to the end of every facet of independent and argumentative motivation. No husband can live in an environment of disrespect: "*It is better to live in a desert land than with a contentious and vexing woman" (Proverbs 21:19).* You will see just how much you need your husband and how destructive your habitual resistance has been to him and to unity in your marriage. In time, with the Spirit's help, you will joyfully fulfill Paul's words, "*the wife must see to it that she respects her husband" (Ephesians 5:33b).*

To all of you: God has given the Sabbath as a **gift** to you. "*Jesus said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:27).* Nicolaitanism treats Sabbaths as a day of religious observance and obligation. Hellenism-inspired buildings with steeples dot the landscape to support this purpose.

Yet our Lord gave this day as a gift to you, a day of rest in joyful thanks to Him, and of recuperation. You'll find that you can't press on until you and your spouse and family embrace this day as a *gift* God intended for you. Cooperate with the Holy Spirit and with each other until your use of this day hallmarks your appreciation of it as a treasure from His heart to yours.

To all who follow Jesus, let your life with your Father, His Son, and the members of your own household shine with the love and heart humility that reflect the character of Jesus. Your yearning to reflect Jesus must be developed in your own home first. Then your children will internalize it and ultimately live it in their homes to come.

Following Him along with you,
Mike & Sue

Just a Piece of Information

From time-to-time we receive requests by people who are trying to locate faith communities that use our material. It has always been our goal to *share the Hebraic foundations* without forming an organization. Organizations have the habit of becoming denominations. We truly believe that the same Holy Spirit Who gave us what to share will help His people live it out and bring alongside those who respond to their testimonies and changed lives.

Hear Books/Articles on CD!

We invite you to download (or just to listen to) several of our books and articles on CD on your computer by going to our website.

Praise

• For the wonderful time away with our family since wrote our last newsletter. We appreciate the prayers lifted on our behalf — it was an *exceedingly abundant time*.
• For the continued access to our materials in other countries. The latest inquiry was from Zambia! We've also received a request to use the Spanish *Demolishing Strongholds* in a prison in California. If you

know of prisoners or prison ministries that could use this material, please let them and us know!

Prayer

• Please continue to seek our Father's direction for the *Jesus In Your Home* video segments as we work on this project. To give you some understanding of the demands of this project, it's like we once built bicycles and now we have to build jet airplanes! We are learning new software, and teaching ourselves video production and editing. Praises to our Lord, our friend Tom Woodruff has been such a decisive help. Don't overlook him in you prayers!

• Please pray for the resources we need to purchase more equipment for the video project, and for God to raise up others with the skills needed.

• Please lift up Leo and Lillie Mann as they continue to develop a Navajo oral version of *The Covenant Gospel Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation* article. May their "test subjects" who hear their translation also hear Jesus' voice calling them!

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