



*"I AM where two or three are gathered in My Name."*

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The **Kingdom of God** is repeated over 60 times in the Newer Testament. That shouldn't surprise you since both our Lord Jesus and His earliest followers emphasized the Kingdom of God (John 3:5; Acts 1:3; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:31; 1Corinthians 4:20; 6:9,10). When you experience *genuine* new birth into Christ through the Holy Spirit, you enter the Kingdom of God as our Lord's called-out one (*ekklesia* = church = **called-out ones**). "Church" is never a place or something you attend. The collective *genuinely* born again comprise the **true church** whom our Lord Jesus has called out of the world system to abide in Him (John 15:1-8) in fulfilling His Father's will.

**The genuine are the "Church"**



You're reading the first segment in our new 'Abide Series'. We're directing these to the *genuinely* born again who are either currently part of a home fellowship/house church or are seeking to be part of one that experiences the **spiritual power** and **relational intimacy** of our Lord's first followers who met in homes (Romans 16:5; 1Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Philemon 2). We'll be discussing the divine purposes for fellowshiping in homes, two of which are these: **•experiencing 24/7 relational load-bearing** and **•maintaining communal righteousness**.

In this series of Abides you *won't* find a technically oriented, step-by-step method of "how to do a home fellowship". Instead, we'll focus on the **heart motives** and **attitudes** of the genuine who would gather as extended spiritual family and abide under the Headship of Jesus, their Lord and King. His Kingdom and your individual and collective purposes as His own in that Kingdom must be at the forefront of your attitudes and motivations in your fellowship family. It's also within your motives and attitudes that the Holy Spirit continues to transform each of you more and more into the character of your Lord Jesus.

*Experiencing relational load-bearing* and *maintaining communal righteousness* need to be the relational adhesive in your home fellowship family. These are Spirit-impelled by love for your Lord and love for each other. Even the immature must be disciplined to abide in these scriptural fundamentals so your home fellowship can carry out our Father's intentions for fellowshiping in homes: **✓fulfilling** our heavenly Father's purposes for His glory, **✓living** in love-grounded obedient trust under the rule of our Lord Jesus, **✓living** guided and empowered by His Spirit, **✓not** holding onto any unconfessed sin (attitudinal or otherwise), **✓living** as our Lord's redemptive ambassador to unbelievers in your relational sphere.

Over the years we've written extensively about the characteristics of home fellowship which our Father is restoring. Two of these articles are: [Fellowship in Homes - The Hebraic Model](#) and [Hebraic Home Fellowships Must Produce Godly Generations](#). In this series of Abides we urge you to **mutually discuss** the content with those on your faith journey with you. It's through mutual discussion that the Spirit of our Lord Jesus changes you and guides your attitudes and motives, enabling you to together apply God's commands and fulfill His specific purposes.

**An abiding insight:** The true Gospel within the New Covenant is more akin to a lifelong, ever-deepening love relationship of obedient trust which by grace leads to a heavenly welcome. Your mutual goal in living as our Lord's redemptive ambassadors *isn't* to just get people 'saved'. Rather you're personally revealing the abiding union of your life with Christ in the New Covenant. Individually or collectively, as you follow Jesus you must have this New Covenant attitude for yourself *if* you're going to disciple others into an ongoing life of love-grounded obedient trust.

## **Fellowship of Homes** ***Relationally-committed, not religiously ensnared***

Fellowship in homes is the third in the relational priorities our Father is restoring to Christ's own. At the core is the New Covenant union with Jesus by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and the preeminence of our Father and Lord Jesus in the lives of the *genuinely* born again. The quality of this relationship is based on your **heart motives** and **attitudes** (Mark 12:30), not on which creedal position you adhere to or what religious activities you embrace. The quality of relationship with our Father and Lord Jesus is first nurtured in your home, and each home is supported by the home fellowship family.

The fellowship gatherings each week (as well as other supportive contacts during the week) are used to edify the *genuinely* born again (1Corinthians 14:26). In order to maintain **communal righteousness**, which we'll discuss more fully later, unbelievers with whom you're in relationship must encounter the Gospel and their need to repent and trust in Jesus outside the fellowship gatherings. Let's see why this is.

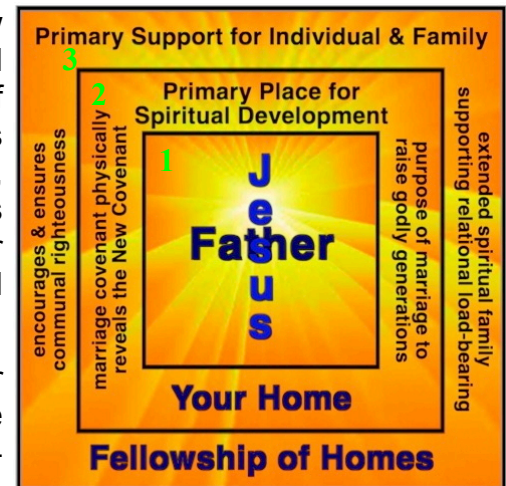
In Matthew 28:18-20 our Lord commanded His own to make disciples as they go, wherever they go. This included baptizing these individuals when they've repented and yielded themselves to Jesus as their Lord and Savior. And their ongoing discipleship included teaching them by role modeling, by testimonies of living witness, and by biblical instruction for application. The *genuinely* born again use their relational connections to make Jesus known by word and deed to their neighbors, co-workers and schoolmates in their homes, workplaces or schools. When these individuals are *genuinely* born again, they enter as part of the home fellowship family.

Keep in mind that in the process of making Jesus known to an unbeliever as Lord and Savior, you're not just having a Bible study with them, though what you talk about certainly agrees with Scripture. Rather, you're bearing witness of the reality of the Living Lord and what it takes to follow Him in love-grounded obedient trust. In your discussions you're revealing the presence of the Spirit of Christ within you! Your witness to them includes testimonies of answered prayers as well as the cost of following Him as Lord of their life.

Here's an important scriptural point which you've probably never encountered in any congregation or house church before. In order to maintain **communal righteousness**, individuals within a fellowship family who **intentionally keep sinning** and refuse to repent are excommunicated from the fellowship until they do repent. Making light of ongoing sin in your midst can corrupt others within your extended spiritual family (see 1Corinthians 15:33,34 as a warning).

**✗** Many misguided home fellowships contain both believers and unbelievers, as well as the repentant and unrepentant. As a fellowship they are **intentionally sinning** (see 2Corinthians 6:15; Matthew 18:15-17).

### **Father's Relational Priorities**





Collectively you must have absolute trust that the Spirit of the Lord Himself will guide your gathering as a fellowship family. That is, **if** you don't lock Him out through tolerated sin, the influence of demonic strongholds, and quenching His Spirit (1Thessalonians 5:19). Our Lord Himself warned His called-out ones in Laodicea about their lukewarm lifestyles while still identifying themselves as His followers: *"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent"* (Revelation 3:19). He also lets them know in the next verse that He's standing outside and knocking against a closed door—and remember, He's speaking to the called-out ones there!

**FYI:** Perhaps you should discuss with your fellowship family the maxim we have for our home fellowship gatherings: **If Jesus doesn't show up, why should we?** Authentic fellowship among your extended spiritual family must first start with the divine: *"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is [first of all] with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ"* (1John 1:3).

**Have you ever done this?** For all who are *genuinely* born again, Father has specific purposes for you to fulfill (Ephesians 2:8-10). Both you as an individual along with those in your home fellowship family should resolutely ask Him what His specific purposes are for you. The Spirit will reveal His answer because how else would you know what His specific will is for you and your faith community (John 16:13)? When an individual or fellowship family centers themselves on fulfilling our Father's purposes, the Spirit's **grace with purpose** guides and empowers them. It's a humble privilege to be used by the Holy Spirit as His presence within you provides divine assurance.

## Fellowship of Homes

### *The humble-hearted who are filled with child-like trust*

Our Lord Jesus repeatedly used the intimate relational phrase **"your Father"** as He instructed His disciples. And when they asked Him to teach them how to pray, He told them (and us) how to begin: *"Our Father in heaven"* (Matthew 6:9). The loving Fatherhood of God is more than a spiritual concept; it's a relational term calling for your committed trust in Him as His beloved son or daughter. A little child is totally dependent on his or her parents for their well-being and care. So it's no minor thing that Jesus reinforces such loving dependence as He praises His Father for choosing the very ones whom the world (and religious) systems hold in little regard: *"At that time Jesus said, 'I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father, for this was Your good pleasure'"* (Matthew 11:25).

Both abiding in and living under the rule of our Lord Jesus necessitates your absolute trust in Him and our heavenly Father! As Jesus made so clear, our trust must be as assured as a child's trust: *"Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 18:3). This is why the children who are among you are to be a vital part in the home fellowship family. Little children are role models in the *physical* world of the trusting faith in our Lord Jesus and our Father which adults must have in their *spiritual* being. Our Lord goes on to describe from our Father's perspective how important young children are to His family of followers: *"See that you do not look down on one of these little ones. For I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 18:10).





**An abiding insight:** It's vital that your home fellowship family not regard children as of little account. It may seem more convenient to send them to another room so they don't disrupt your gathering. But we've found that providing an area in our midst with special "quiet toys" and asking the older children to play quietly with them or read quietly to them works great! We've also found it helpful to encourage parents not to step in too quickly if there's a squabble. The older kids were well able to address any situations and defuse them. It's a two-way street: The children are your role models of trust while you role model *mutual participation* in your fellowship gathering for them (see 1Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16).



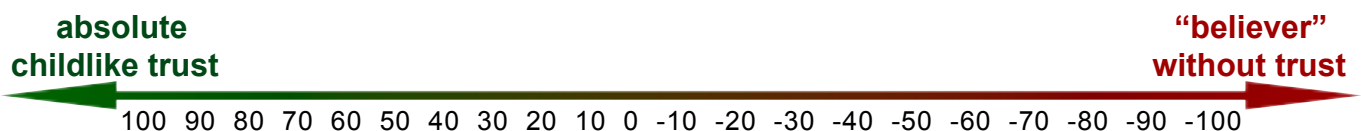
To repeat: Being *genuinely* born again is primarily distinguished by your **attitudes** and **motivations**, especially by your child-like trust toward our heavenly Father and Lord Jesus. Your attitudes and motivations are transformed by the Spirit of our Lord Jesus as you walk in **trusting obedience** as Abraham did. This process by our Lord's Spirit in the *genuinely* born again is explained this way: *"In union with [Jesus] you are circumcised with a circumcision not done by human hands by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ"* (Colossians 2:11; see also Colossians 3:1-10). **If** our Lord Jesus is to rule you, His *genuinely* born again brother or sister, then His Spirit is going to circumcise your heart and its predisposition to sin, as well as its fixation on the things of this world (Matthew 16:26).

✗ We realize that a number of misguided home fellowships are led by men who like to teach at people who sit passively listening. An example: Many years ago we visited a gathering at the home of a noted writer in the house church movement. People came from over 40 miles away to sit in his living room as he academically taught **at** them while the children were confined to a separate room. The attendees had no other contact with each other during the week, so there was little sense of family. Sadly, in this type of gathering the children learn to feel 'expendable' while the adults are "taught at" but remain unchanged.

### **Your child-like trust is often displayed when you encounter adversity.**

Our Father allows His children to go through difficult trials so we can display through our own responses the trust which our Lord Jesus exhibited: *"Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done"* (Luke 22:42). Displaying child-like trust reveals our real understanding of how sovereign our heavenly Father really is over all matters in the universe. You may indeed have to align your emotions when confronted by painful discomfort of difficult or challenging circumstances. Just make sure you never give in to distrusting the One Who knows and allows and even sets into motion what you're facing for His purposes to be accomplished.

- In your innermost being, do you see yourself as a trusting child of your heavenly Father?
- Ask the Holy Spirit to evaluate you based upon this spectrum of trust:



- When you say the words *"Our Father"* in the Lord's prayer, what tenderness of trust enters your heart? Or are you just repeating a familiar invocation?
- Do you have sufficient trust to let the Spirit of our Lord lead your daily life? Do you trust Him to lead your fellowship family gathering?