

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

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

We'd like to begin this Abide by highlighting the fellowship experience of our Lord's earliest followers, which has been ours also. During the fellowship gathering each week among the *genuinely* born again, wonderful testimonies are often shared by those who live on the frontlines of serving our Lord in fulfilling our Father's will – and foremost in our Father's heart and will is **the salvation of mankind**. As extended spiritual family in Jesus, we are mutually committed to being our Lord's redemptive ambassadors wherever we are. And because of this love-driven role, demonic opposition is something each of us contends with. That's why we depend so much on praying for each other and having contact all during the week.



From our own experience, we in our faith family recognized that the testimonies we each offered revealed that we'd taken action on *rhema* we received from the Holy Spirit. These responses of obedience to the Spirit's prompting frequently led to divine encounters with certain individuals which He had set into motion. Some of the encounters initially started out as what could have been a potentially frustrating event! But when the situation was committed into our Father's hand, He brought about a conversation or a result that wouldn't have come about if we hadn't obeyed the Spirit's guidance. Another faith family practice: the children were always an integral part with us when we gathered. That way they could listen to the adults and teens testifying to the living reality of our Lord Jesus. When we gathered together collectively our key consideration was, ***"If Jesus doesn't show up, why should we?"***

Out of love for our Lord and for one another as family in Him, we were collectively determined by His grace to live in communal righteousness for His Name's sake. And because of this we had "God-size" answers to our prayers which many would consider miraculous! It wasn't because we didn't sin, but because we fulfilled our Lord's command in Matthew 18:15-17 by confronting unconfessed sin when our prayers went unanswered. Each person staying repentant out of love and obedience was essential. And confronting unconfessed sin so that prayers are answered and our Father glorified in our testimonies was key. This biblical response is woven throughout Scripture, and is a paramount identifier in the fellowships of the *genuinely* born again

Again, our fellowship family experience was what God's Word describes — and this is what our heavenly Father is restoring.

Here are some examples from Scripture revealing how our Lord used particular individuals who were fully yielded to Father's purpose as the Spirit gave them specific *rhema*:

"Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, 'Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza.' This is a desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, 'Go over and join this chariot'" (Acts 8:26-29).

*“And while Peter was pondering the vision, the Spirit said to him, ‘Behold, three men are looking for you. Rise and go down and accompany them without hesitation, for I have sent them’” (Acts 10:19-20). Later Peter testified about how our Lord clarified the meaning for this journey to the centurion's home: *“As I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell on them just as upon us at the beginning. Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, ‘John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:15-16).**

Nowhere does Scripture declare a cessation to the way of life our Lord Jesus informs us would be the experience of the *genuine*. He makes this clear about the Holy Spirit: *“The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from or where it goes. So it is with everyone who is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). And Christ promises specific signs which all who love and serve Him as Lord would experience:*

“Truly, truly, I say to you, the one trusting in Me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father” (John 14:12).

“And these signs will accompany those who trust: in My Name they will cast out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up serpents with their hands; and if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16:17,18).

Yet why hasn't this been the reality throughout Christianity? Demonic deceiving spirits infiltrated Roman Catholicism and later much of Protestantism through anti-Semitic theology. These theologians developed insidious belief systems which eradicated our Lord's promise of spiritual power which all the genuine would experience. So, if you're *genuine* you must rid yourself of any doubt about our Lord's assurance, and experience His power for yourself. You'll find your heart responding with the same holy boldness as our Lord's earliest followers:

“‘Grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching out Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus.’ And when they had prayed, the place where they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and they spoke the word of God with boldness” (Acts 4:29b-31).

“I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ Who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another” (Romans 12:4,5).

No one is born prepared to mutually cooperate in a fellowship family which experiences spiritual power and relational intimacy. For the *genuine*, maturing in power and intimacy must be deliberately developed out of a heart motive of love •as you help each other grow in Christ-like character transformation, and •through the harmonious cooperation of the various spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit apportions to each in your fellowship family. Through the Spirit at work in each person, everyone is an active participant in these two endeavors. Some of the *genuine* may be more mature than others, but you are all one body in the Spirit (1Corinthians 12:20-27). In your relationship with each other, it's crucial that you consider yourselves as team members cooperating together!



✝ You may find it helpful that your home fellowship family read and discuss the following free online materials to help you develop a shared commitment to Father's purpose for your fellowship family:

[God's Instruments For War – Discovering & Coordinating Spiritual Gifts As Weapons of Warfare](#)

[Preparing For Pentecost: Do You Live As A “Cloistered Christian?”](#)

[Preparing For Pentecost: To Do The Father's Will, You Must Have His Spirit's Guidance](#)

[Preparing For Pentecost: The Spirit's Rhema Has No “If—>Thens” & No Pros and Cons](#)

[Preparing For Pentecost: By the Indwelling Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christ—God Reveals Himself](#)

The spiritual gifts that are given to each of the *genuine* are evidence that the Holy Spirit is abiding within you. And you have a vital relational privilege to help one another avoid quenching or grieving the Holy Spirit (1Peter 4:10). Take this to heart:

- Every follower of Jesus has some gift, therefore all should be **encouraged**.
- No one has all the gifts, therefore all should be **humble**.
- All gifts are for the one Body, therefore all should be **harmonious**.
- All gifts are from the Lord, therefore all should be **content**.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another...” Colossians 3:16a).

While spiritual gifts are distributed to each of the *genuine* according to the Holy Spirit's will, the mutual development of Christ-like character is an intentional and ongoing collective endeavor or you undertake because of love for your Lord and for each other. Mutually applying our Lord's commands is foundational to each of you developing our Lord's character qualities. Undergirding this pathway of mutual character development which is so different from the world's push for individual SELF-promotion takes humility:

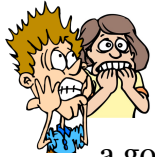
“So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation of love, any fellowship of the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in soul, of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:1,3-5).

Intrinsic to you mutually developing our Lord's character qualities is your intense desire to be like Him in this world. But the love of Christ and a way of life which sets you collectively apart as His by His Spirit at work in and through you faces some mighty obstacles here in the US. Unbelievers as well as nominal Christians are saturated with the goals and values of **Humanism, especially the unbridled pursuit of happiness without moral boundaries**. This insidious influence which dominates public education and the media is a constant challenge to the *genuine* in Christ. And for a fellowship family to experience the *death-to-self* that's necessary for each person to develop our Lord's character qualities, you must maintain communal righteousness by living repentantly out of love and obedient trust as our Lord's own. Your greatest ally in this endeavor is the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. He does magnificent things wherever humility and repentant hearts exist!

•Form, •Storm, •Norm and •Perform are the integral steps to spiritual teamwork

Forming: This is the initial stage in which those who are purposing to come together as an extended spiritual family fellowship get to know each other. Through discussion and prayer they commit to the purposes which Father has for this fellowship family in Christ.

Storming: As the fellowship family begins to meet together, disagreements or misunderstandings may arise as members encounter different views and beliefs. Storming may seem like something you want to avoid, preferring instead to "put on a happy face" even if inside you don't agree. But authenticity and mutual regard for others' points of view helps each person appreciate differences in background, maturity, experience, and gender. Voicing differences and hearing each other out is a vital part in the process of relational development—even if it seems so "unChristian" to disagree with each other.



Are you fearful that if you say something that needs to be said out of genuine love for someone, hurt feelings may result? Unless you're totally calloused, you'll find yourself having this kind of apprehension at times. The emotional tension and anguish you experience in these situations are part of your concern for how others feel. That's a good thing! There's nothing wrong with concern for people's feelings unless it turns into fear of hurting their feelings. Don't let your fear inhibit you from admonishing someone privately when our Lord's commands are violated. Fear is a self-imposed prison that prevents the authentic love of Jesus from emanating from you. In this psychologically-disposed culture, fear of hurting the feelings of others keeps many relationships from blossoming with Christ-like love.

Norming: As your fellowship family learns to resolve disagreements in a Christ-like manner (Philippians 3:15,16), they establish mutual trust. This allows them to cooperate effectively. We produced our free online booklet, [Growing Relationship Through Confrontation](#), to help the *genuine* work through the Storming and Norming stages as family in Jesus.

Performing: A fellowship family mutually fulfills Father's purposes by interceding, encouraging, cooperating effectively, and relying on each others' spiritual gifts. We're talking about extended spiritual family—the repentant who are totally committed to our Lord's character development and Father's purposes.

The gathering of spiritual family among our Lord's earliest followers wasn't centered on a scheduled meeting each week. Their devotion to one another encompassed a 24 hour-a-day, 7 day-a-week relational commitment to each other. What an apt and vivid description about them: *"And all who trusted were together and had all things in common"* (Acts 2:44).

Because of the loss of the communal foundations of Christianity, the *genuine* must be mutually committed to a life that's united by the spiritual gifts apportioned them by the Holy Spirit: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To Him be long glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen." (1Peter 4:10-11).



✗ A warning: Many "home group" articles are being peddled by the Nicolaitan institutional system today. These take a technical, systematic approach to "doing" a home fellowship. Sure, a plan which someone else has developed can make you feel secure. But there is nothing that compares to mutually relying on the Holy Spirit and each other for Christ-like development and doing Father's will!