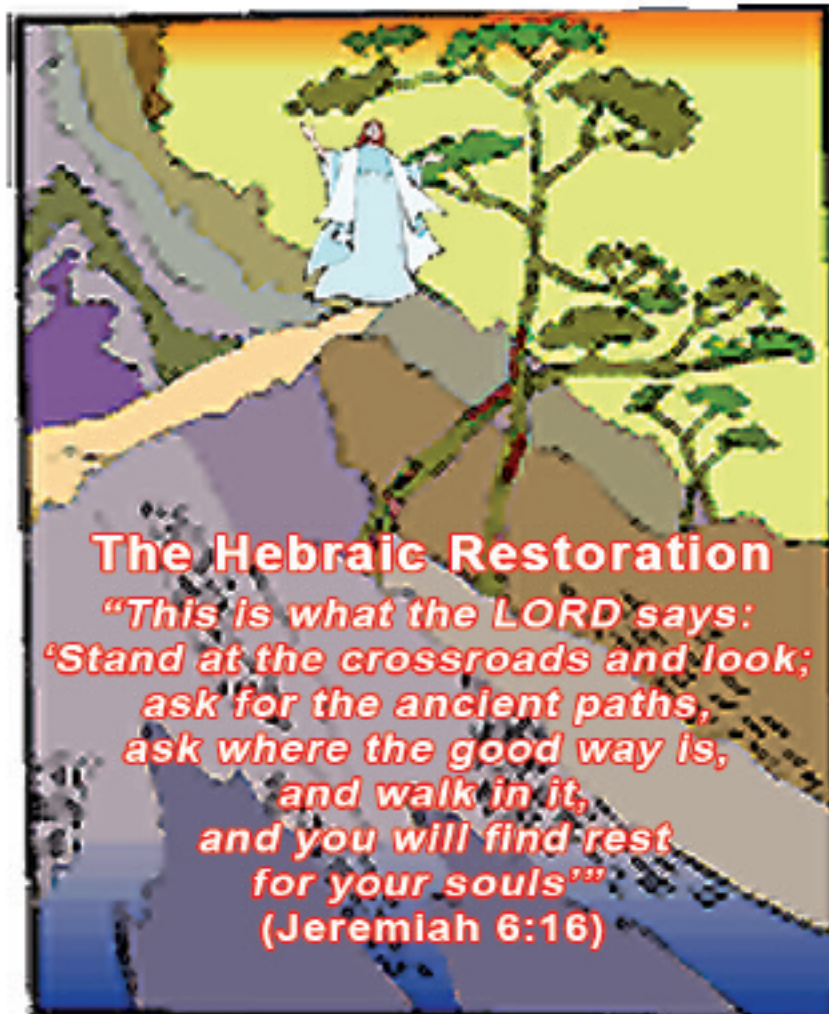


# Lifebyte 35

## Thy Kingdom Come In My Life

*"My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may Your will be done."* (Matthew 26:42)



**Restoration Ministries International**

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Dear Friends,

Our friend Mark Dill recently phoned after returning from a four-week trip to China with his family. He related something to us to this effect: “They talk just like you guys... they talk *Kingdom* talk... You guys need to go there... Now that I’m back in the States I can see how far away western Christianity is from what God desires.”

“Kingdom talk.” Do you know what that is? It’s the compelling, life-stirring conversations of followers of Jesus. When we first met Mark and his family a few years back, he was a “churched” person and an elder in his congregation. Then God prompted him and his family to leave that gathering. Our Father wanted to refine them to become *followers of Jesus*—and not just Mark and his wife, Katy, but their teenage children as well.

Initially they lost a number of churched relationships as do all who leave the Nicolaitan religious system. But in place of being *taught at* and *program-swamped*, they began to discuss as a family the truths of God and apply these to their lives (see Malachi 3:16-18).

Mark led his family into daily discussion of how to apply God’s Word to each anticipated situation, assured from our Lord’s promise in Matthew 18:20 that they were being guided by His Presence. Spiritual anointings fell on his children as they became more devoted to seeking and obeying the will of God in their daily lives.

While the Dills were in China they encountered many who marveled over the teens’ faith and conviction in particular. Adults and children alike become *Kingdom people* when they take personal ownership of applying God’s Word. These applications become their *halakhahs*, His personal commands for them.

*We have an obligation to represent Jesus to all we meet because all people need Jesus.*

Mark shared with us how God had prompted him to fulfill in his family these words of our Lord Jesus: “*Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4). “Word” in this passage is *rhema*. Our Lord was directing Mark to teach his children how to seek the *specific will of God* for decisions, attitudes and actions.

- A *halakhah* may be viewed as a Kingdom principle you’ve established that has become part of your character.
- A *rhema* is a personal revelation from God that either reveals a truth to you or commands you to do a specific task.

Throughout our writings and DVD’s on the Hebraic restoration, we continue to emphasize that **your home is the basic building block of spiritual development for your family**. And, within **your home**, establishing halakhahs and seeking God’s rhema are indispensable facets of Kingdom living.

Your prayerful, biblical halakhahs reveal that you *belong to Him*. Your rhemas evidence that you’re *hearing from Him*. This pattern of determined and diligent *pursuit and application* of His will is what God has always wanted of His children as they represent Him in blessing the people around them:

*Observe them [the word of His commands] 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’ (Deuteronomy 4:6).*

Let's draw upon the admonition of this verse and expand it to apply to your household:

*Apply God's Word carefully and diligently, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to those who know you. When they hear about your halakhahs and rhemas they will say, 'Surely this home comprises wise and understanding people.'*

If you've been entrenched in the Nicolaitan religious establishment for many years, you'll need steadfast determination to grow in this area of halakhahs and rhema. That's because the Nicolaitan religious system has discouraged the home from being the center of spiritual development by offering programs and activities through which a husband/father can outsource his family for spiritual training. (For more on outsourcing, see our [June-July 1999 Newsletter: Crossing the Jordan.](#))

And what has been the painful result of years of outsourcing? Most men discover after they leave the system that they really don't know *how* to lead their family into spiritual maturity. You may be experiencing this situation with your own family. As many of us men who have embraced the Hebraic foundations have realized, we're trying to walk in a truth we've neither seen nor experienced before.

Relax! God is well aware of both your ignorance and your heart. This is why His Spirit in you is your guide to help you accomplish His will and prepare your family as successors in His Kingdom.

*So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days.*

We want to make you aware of one other stumbling block for families who have left the Nicolaitan religious system. First, ask yourself and each other: *HOW do we worship?*

For years you ascribed to religious practices that were contrary to God's Word for followers of Jesus. You attended "services" that involved a prescribed liturgy conducted by a **professional clergyman**. You attended **prepared stage performances** which are no different than the pagan Greek religious practices from which they were adapted.

Because of the **orchestrated format** to which your congregation had grown used to, you and your family were hindered from seeking *rhema* together in your gathering as did the early Church.

The Apostle Paul was addressing citizens of Corinth who'd been steeped in a heathen Hellenist culture when he directed that their gatherings be *rhema* dependent. He realized they needed to set aside old priest-dependent ways and actively cooperate with the Holy Spirit so that they as well as their extended spiritual family could be edified:

*When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church [literally, called-out ones] (1 Corinthians 14:26).*

Make this passage your way of worship! *Everyone* should bring something that will strengthen each other when you are together—**EVERYONE!** Notice how Spirit-dependent the different facets of their gatherings were—worship songs, instruction, revelation, tongues, interpretation. And, the fruit of their gathering: **the Father's children were**

***strengthened in their ongoing journey with our Lord Jesus.***

This is what a gathering of Kingdom people looks like! They want to experience their one-another edification, not spectate while the “trained and talented” demonstrate their prowess. They want *Jesus* to show up in their gatherings. They’re eager to be strengthened and encouraged for their work in the Kingdom.

But know this: Before Kingdom people get together, they prepare themselves to participate! Each individual and family asks the Holy Spirit to convict them of any unconfessed sin so that they may repent and be cleansed vessels through whom the Spirit may work. They understand their *communal responsibility for righteousness*. And, they pursue our Father's will: Does He have a word of instruction to be shared, a revelation, a song? This pattern of personal preparation is a far cry from sitting in a pew and watching a performance!

*Don't seek great things for yourself;  
seek first the Kingdom of God.*

Developing personal halakhahs, prayerfully relying on rhema, and earnestly preparing for worship participation are not the only clues to recognizing a Kingdom person.

Keep this in mind: A follower of Jesus who serves in the Kingdom has a *Kingdom heart*. We want to share with you what a Kingdom-hearted person looks like. This point is vital for your own spiritual journey. ONLY people with a Kingdom heart will enter the gate of heaven. The concept of “churched” people is a creation of man that has no foundation in God's Word. It slams shut the reality of an ongoing, loving and obedient relationship that He has called for all throughout Scripture!

Jesus issues this warning to religious leaders for all time who manipulate power and pervert truth, all the while pretending to be “holy” but lacking a kingdom heart:

***“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the Kingdom of heaven in men's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to” (Matthew 23:13).***

Because of the prevailing influence of Hellenism on Christendom over the centuries you may have a faulty concept of what “church” means. Your misconception may have hindered you from fully perceiving the *Kingdom* that King Jesus came to establish.

First, indelibly mark in your understanding these scriptural realities:

- **People who *embrace our Father's Covenant* are “the church”, those whom He has called out of the world to serve in His Kingdom. The church never was, and never will be, a place or institution.**
- **Our Lord Jesus came to establish a *Kingdom*, and His criteria for accepting you at the Judgment Throne—proclaiming your name from the Lamb's Book of Life—will be based on *how you live in His Kingdom*.**

If you're a follower of Jesus in Covenant with His Father, then you're a *Kingdom* person, not a “churched” person. Let's examine Kingdom life:

- our responsibilities as we live in the Kingdom;
- the consequences if we fail our responsibilities.

Most of what we need to know about the Kingdom is found in the very words of Jesus. Jesus mentions the word *church* in the gospel accounts only twice, in Matthew, chapters 16 and 18. But He speaks repeatedly about the *Kingdom*.

If you hunger to be a Kingdom person, you need to forget your Nicolaitan religious training and pay full attention to the very precise warning of Jesus. Opportunities as well as trials and tragedies face every human being. It's those who walk according to the will of the Father who will find themselves steadfast on the rock of loving, obedient trust:

***"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness"*** (Matthew 7:21-23).

***"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash"*** (Matthew 7:24-27).

## 1. Entering The Kingdom

### *A Change In Relationships*

Because He is fully man as well as fully God, Jesus had a biological family. But notice how He identifies those who are *truly* His family:

*And stretching out His hand **toward His disciples**, He said, "Behold, My mother and My brothers! For whoever **does the will of My Father who is in heaven**, he is **My brother and sister and mother**"* (Matthew 12:49,50).

For a follower of Jesus, those words are clearly comprehended. But for those who are comfortable in their Nicolaitan religious practice, His words are difficult to live by. In fact, they fly in the face of those who believe they're "saved" according to contemporary misinterpretation but have no intention of living according to the "will of the Father"!

Just remember that our Lord is "*calling us out*" of a sin-nature based lifestyle and the relationships with whom we once enjoyed sin. He's also "*calling us in*" to a holy Kingdom with Kingdom relationships who purpose to love and serve God. The change is both dramatic and costly; that's why He urges us to first weigh the cost.

- *If anyone comes to Me, and does not **hate** his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not **carry his own cross and come after Me** cannot be My disciple.*

- *For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not **first sit down and calculate the cost**, to see if he has **enough to complete it**? Otherwise,*

when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.'

• Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not **first sit down and take counsel** whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and **asks terms of peace**. So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not **give up all his own possessions** (Luke 14:26-33; see also Matthew 10:34-38).

Our Lord calls for a radical alteration of your relational priorities. You must weigh the cost before you decide. Contrary to so many false gospels today, Jesus didn't come to improve your lifestyle and make you happy in worldly success. Far from it! He came to cull you out of darkness and enlist you to *work in the Kingdom*.

It's going to *cost* you to be in the family of Jesus—not in any way that you could earn this wonderful privilege, but in the depletion of the worldly priorities, goals, relationships and values you once cherished. Are you willing to pay whatever it costs you for the *pearl of great price*? And, is your heart set on *completing your pilgrimage*?

• **List the five most important people in your life. Describe why you hold each with such value and esteem.**

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• Jesus cautions, “*Anyone who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me*” (Matthew 10:37). How does His declaration match up to your list of valued people?

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## 2. Kingdom Living

### *Doing The Will Of The Father*

In Matthew 7:21-27, quoted on the previous page, our Lord Jesus makes perfectly clear the criterion for entering the Kingdom: doing the will of the Father. If you bought into a false gospel so that you could “get saved”, you may struggle with this touchstone of obedience. You may be thinking we’re talking about *works* here. Not at all! This isn’t a matter of grace versus works. It has more to do with understanding *our responsibilities* when we embrace our Father’s Covenant.

If you were raised within the Nicolaitan religious structure, you may be like the singles’ group that used to meet at our retreat center. Many of them were looking forward to *getting married*, but few spent the effort to make the personal changes they needed for a *quality marriage*. Many were fixated on a point in time, fantasizing about the *day* they would be married. But they failed to consider what the daily sacrificial responsibilities of *being married* would require of them.

How may this apply to you?

You may be so overly focused on the *day of justification* when you first put your trust in the blood of Jesus and entered our Father’s Covenant that you’ve stopped any further growth in

relationship with Him.

- You're complacent in the way your spiritual life is, and self-satisfied. Because you believe that you're "already forgiven", you walk in the unrighteous ways of the world and still call yourself "Christian". Repentance—turning away from sin and walking in obedient trust—doesn't even occur to your deceived heart.

- It doesn't bother you that your choices bring down the name of Jesus, or that His Lordship demands *life-long sanctification* on your part as you cooperate with the Spirit to reach your salvation goal.

[For more on justification and sanctification, see our Hebraic article: [\*The Gospel Of The Covenant Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation\*](#); also, [\*Jesus In Your Home Video: Section 2; Segment 10—The Indwelling Holy Spirit \(Part 2\)\*](#).]

Let's continue to investigate our Lord's criteria for doing the will of the Father. Jesus repeatedly set forth His clear example of doing His Father's will:

*Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work" (John 4:34).*

*"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me" (John 6:38).*

So ask yourself: Is *doing the will of the Father* only for His Son Jesus, or for all our Father's children? It's indeed for all of us! In **Lifebyte 34. The Abrahamic Covenant—Groundwork For The Hebraic Restoration**, we share that our Father desires that *all* His called-out ones *be His blessing* to the people of the world. **To do His will is to be His blessing.**

To be God's blessing is a crucial, non-

optional part of Kingdom living. Failing in this matter can cost you dearly: *"Therefore I tell you that the Kingdom of God will be **taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit**" (Matthew 21:43; also see Romans 11).* If, like the Pharisees, you've embraced a false, man-constructed tradition, you'll probably think these words apply to someone else. Not at all!

Beginning with Abraham, our God retains in His Kingdom those who will *be His blessing*. There are NO spectators on the pilgrimage to salvation. Doing the King's will identifies you as a subject of His Kingdom. And look at what this love-motivated obedience by His people will ultimately bring about:

*This gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a **testimony to all nations**, and then the **end will come** (Matthew 24:14).*

Notice our Lord doesn't refer to the "gospel of the *churched*". When proclamation of the Kingdom gospel extends to the furthest reaches of the earth, the *end* will come! Hallelujah!!!

*He that trusts in Jesus does what he cannot do, attempts the impossible, and performs it.*

The Newer Testament writers clearly understood this obedience factor for the Father's children to fulfill His will. Consider their stirring declarations of promise for those who live in Covenant union with or Father:

*You need to persevere so that **when you have done the will of God**, you will receive what He has promised (Hebrews 10:36).*

*The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever* (1 John 2:17).

*As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God* (1 Peter 4:2).

Making sure that his listeners grasped all that is entailed in Kingdom living was a key part of Paul's evangelism: "For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you **the whole will of God**" (Acts 20:27).

The Apostle also commended a particular prayer warrior for his steadfast intercession that his countrymen press on in the will of their Father:

*Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always **wrestling in prayer** for you, that you may **stand firm in all the will of God**, mature and fully assured* (Colossians 4:12).

Have you been trained to evaluate yourself more by what sins you *don't* do than by what you *do* to fulfill the will of our Father? Do you look at the people of the world with disdain and say to yourself, "I'm not as bad as *that* person is!", or, "How can he/she sin like that?!" It's all too easy (and self-excusing) to "look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and **pay no attention** to the plank in your own eye" (Luke 6:41). A follower of Jesus who fails to do the will of the Father is in sin.

Never mind what everyone else is doing! Scrutinize *yourself* and judge your life by the standards of God's Kingdom.

***To know our duty to God and do it not is sin.***

• **Write in your own words what you believe the will of God means for you.**

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• **Our Lord has called us to be *His* slaves, doing the will of God from our heart** (Ephesians 6:6). Describe how His will is being accomplished through you.

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• **Would our Father commend you for how you are doing? Yes or No? If no, what do you think the consequences are for your disobedience and self-will? What do you need to change before it's too late?**

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### 3. Jesus Is Establishing A Kingdom *Do You Want To Live In It?*

When our Lord was asked by His disciples how to pray, He responded, "*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, **Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven***" (Matthew 6:9,10). Jesus tells us to pray that the *Kingdom of God* be established, and that *His will be accomplished* here on earth.

We in the United States don't easily grasp what life in a Kingdom is all about. Since we have no king over us, each person feels pretty autonomous, doing all he or she can to "pursue happiness". Most of us have a difficult time envisioning ourselves as subjects of any kind of

king, even if it's King Jesus! The implicit requirement of *immediate obedience* from a king's servants eludes the mindset of many would-be followers today.

Because so many have been duped by the religious establishment of Nicolaitan structures, they neglect to hold our Lord in the awesome regard He deserves (see Hebrews 12:28,29; also Esther 4:11; 5:2).

The King's right to establish the *framework of obedience* is disregarded. Biblical commands are perceived as mere suggestions, or considered totally irrelevant because we are now "under grace". In other words, the misled believe that God is interested more in their happiness than in their obedient service to Him.

• Describe what you believe to be God's responsibilities to you. Then describe what you believe are your responsibilities to Him.

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Jesus declares without apology, "*I tell you the truth, no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again*" (John 3:3). The words "born again" are commonly bandied around. But few understand what Jesus meant when He told us about this rebirth: *what we must do* to enter His Kingdom.

First consider what the words "born again" mean: you must be born all over again—born from above—so that God's divine nature dwells in you through the Spirit of Jesus.

In order to be reborn you must first *die*. Do you understand this? To be in His Kingdom you must die to the rulership of your sin nature-controlled soul and become a person led by His Spirit.

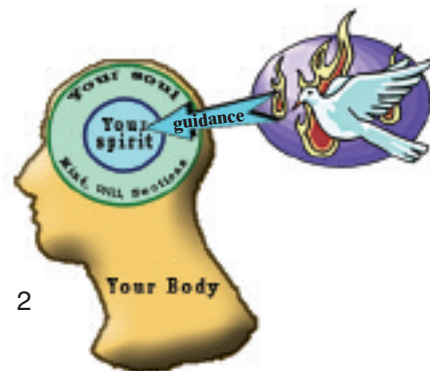


Remember, you were born with a *soul*, that is, your mind, will, and emotions which were imparted to you by your parents. Along with your soul you received your sin nature, an evil motivator that influences and controls your life (Diagram 1).

You also have a *spirit* which is given to you at conception by God. This spirit yearns to return to God, but can't until you are born again. At that time the Father seals you with the Holy Spirit, enabling you to be guided by His Spirit through your spirit on your pilgrimage to salvation.

This is a key factor for you to understand if you want to live in the Kingdom. You once relied on the mind, will, and emotions of your soul, which were tainted by your sin nature. Now you have the opportunity for Spirit-to-spirit revelation (Diagram 2). In order to *live by the Spirit*, you must set aside the input of your soul as your chief source of guidance.

A born-again person can hear and obey the Spirit of God in him:



*You should not be surprised at My saying, 'You must be born again.' The wind blows wherever it pleases. You **hear its sound**, but you **cannot tell** where it comes from or where it is going. **So it is with everyone born of the Spirit** (John 3:7,8).*

A Spirit-led person has given up on relying on his soul and wants the Holy Spirit to guide his life. Often he doesn't even know *how or where* the Spirit will lead him next (see Acts 8:26-40)!

Now make sure you understand how critical this Spirit-to-spirit interconnect- edness is for you: *"Those who are **led by the Spirit of God are sons of God**"* (Romans 8:14). Are you grasping the connection?

### 1. Born again > 2. Spirit-led > 3. Child of God

This life-changing progression has nothing in common with the Nicolaitan concept of "born again": sit in the pew > attend our Sunday school > give us your tithe.

As a Spirit-led follower of King Jesus, you keep seeking the Kingdom and pressing on to do your part in it. There's an *earnestness of heart* in you that hungers to lovingly serve Him and His purposes. It's as if you can't wait to get to the bottom of the funnel we wrote about in Lifebyte 34 (see Diagram 3). Jesus makes clear your first priority: *"But **seek first His Kingdom and His right- ousness, and all these things will be given to you as well**"* (Matthew 6:33).



*Your responsibility to do God's will is individual, untransferable and urgent!*

Your *eager determination* is a sign of the Spirit at work in you. Let's look at some of the examples Jesus uses to describe the nature of the people who are seeking first His Kingdom:

*"The Kingdom of heaven is like **treas- ure hidden** in a field. When a man **found it**, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and **sold all he had** and **bought that field**."*

Again, the *Kingdom of heaven* is like a merchant *looking for fine pearls*. When he *found* one of great value, he went away and *sold everything he had* and *bought it*" (Matthew 13:44-46).

- Describe what being born again means to you.

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- How does the Holy Spirit guide you? List two or three recent instances of guidance He gave you and how you responded.

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### 4. Kingdom Life Is Filled With Trials *How Do You Respond To Suffering?*

Jesus didn't want Kingdom people to be surprised when trials and suffering come. If we want to belong to Him, we need to embrace the suffering that

accompanies our intimacy with our Lord: “For you have been **called for this purpose**, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you **an example for you to follow in His steps**” (1 Peter 2:21).

A time is coming very soon when those who are hiding out within the religious systems will persecute the followers of Jesus. Precedent is found throughout church history:

*They will **put you out** of the [religious establishment]; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will **think** he is offering a **service to God*** (John 16:2).

It may be hard for you to believe this is coming, but it is. You have only to read the testimonies of our persecuted brethren around the world to realize that they’re suffering at the hands of *religious people*! The question is: Will you endure with love in your heart toward your persecutors?

The cost of becoming a Kingdom person is high. Paul knew better than anyone the price of turning away from man’s approach to God in order to walk in righteous relationship with Him. He intends his counsel as encouragement: “We **must go through many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God**” (Acts 14:22).

**No sacrifice, but a privilege!**

Earlier we described those whom Jesus considered to be His “family”. To enter and live fruitfully in the Kingdom of God will cost you relationships as you re-prioritize your life in accordance with Kingdom standards. This decision may lead to rejection and persecution of you.

The Apostle “whom Jesus loved” wanted to make sure that the trials of Kingdom life did not deter any of the followers of Jesus from abandoning Him.

The elderly man recognized the fellowship family connectedness that grows out of enduring the consequences of holding to their King:

*I, John, your **brother and fellow partaker in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus**, was on the island called Patmos, because of the **word of God** and the **testimony of Jesus*** (Revelation 1:9).

[For more on the vital faith component of suffering with a right heart, see our Hebraic article: [\*The Gospel Of The Covenant Is The Pilgrimage To Salvation.\*](#)]

- **What is your reaction to suffering and trials? Do you embrace them as God’s will, or grouse and grumble? Ask those close to you for their input.**

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[Mike:] My friend, Tom Woodruff, and I were talking several weeks ago. We both became followers of Jesus in very diverse ways. (Sometime I’ll ask him to share with you his amazing odyssey!) I had been drawn by the Spirit to enter the Kingdom by reading the Bible through twice. With other Navy brothers I experienced Kingdom living. Everything we saw in the Scriptures we wanted to walk in ourselves. And boy, did we see miracles, deliverances, anointings, and answered prayer!!!

Then I resigned my commission and went to seminary. I became “a church person”. Whereas aboard ship I had been *alive*, during my experience in

“religious education” I died.

Years later, as Sue and I began to live out the Hebraic foundations, we returned to be Spirit-led Kingdom people again. (So has our friend Tom!)

And, as we’ve pressed on into Kingdom living, we’ve needed to encourage each other to *not look back* at our time in religious systems. It’s wisdom to heed the words of Jesus our King: “*No one who puts his hand to the plow and looks back is fit for service in the Kingdom of God*” (Luke 9:62).

- **Are you a person who looks back at what you’ve given up for Jesus? Yes or No? Why do you think Jesus commands us to not look back?**

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## 5. Kingdom Dweller = Humble Heart *Are You Humble?*

Our Lord presents us with a remarkable character quality to emulate, given that He is the King of the universe: “*Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls*” (Matthew 11:29). Can we be peacefully yoked with Jesus as Lord of our lives if we *aren’t* gentle and humble in heart ourselves? NO!!!

Two of the disciples who were most intimately connected to our Lord reiterate a well-known truth from the Hebrew Scriptures: God opposes *the proud*, those who exalt themselves above others (James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). The word *oppose* means “to stand firmly against”. Picture God standing firmly against *you*. What feelings does this image evoke? Doesn’t that anguish really make you want to rid your-

self of any pride so that you can relish the grace He promises to give the humble?

And who are those who model the humility of heart that trustingly recognizes its need?

*I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven* (Matthew 18:3,4).

It may be especially difficult for you men to start looking to children for the character quality of humility of heart that Jesus requires of you. But that’s what our Lord calls for in all of us who yearn to walk in His steps—the “open-hearted, unprejudiced, free-from-self-consciousness” regard for God as described by devotional author Oswald Chambers. We can neither enter nor become great in His Kingdom without the humility and trust of a child.

- **On the scale below, indicate where you would place yourself.**

**Humble** ..... **Proud**

- **How do those who know you well feel about your response?**

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- **What is it about the nature of a child that God wants to develop within us?**

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## 6. Kingdom Life = Halakhic Authority

### *Do You Apply God's Word?*

We shared earlier how important it is for your faith journey that you establish personal halakhahs. These prayerfully discerned biblical applications are part of Kingdom living because they *define your character*. Your halakhic applications indicate both your freedoms in the Kingdom as well as your boundaries.

Your personally-applied scriptural freedoms and boundaries are *not* like the creedal postulates that religious leaders hammer out at conferences to determine who is acceptable within their denominational parameters. Rather, your halakhahs are *applications of the Bible* for your personal, family, business and faith community life that flow out from your love for Jesus. [Please, see our book, *Christian Halakhahs*, for more on this subject.]

In the two instances Jesus directly addresses His “church”—His called-out ones—He gives to His followers the authority to *apply His Word to their lives*.

*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 (Matthew 16:19).*

*Truly I say to you, whatever you shall **bind on earth** shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you **loose on earth** shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if **two of you agree** on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. For where **two or three have gathered together in My name**, there **I am in their midst** (Matthew 18:18-20).*

- Do you have prayerfully grounded, biblical applications for your life? Yes or no? If

yes, describe two or three of your key halakhahs. If no, why don't you?

## 7. Kingdom Life = Flee The World

### *Are You A Worldly Person?*

The heart nature of those to whom our Father reveals His Son is fertile territory for the humble dependence on their Lord that obedient trust nurtures: “Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are **poor in the eyes of the world** to be **rich in faith** and to **inherit the Kingdom** He promised those who **love Him**?” (James 2:5).

As the apostle indicates, a particular type of person may have a difficult time inheriting the Kingdom. At first glance, it seems strange for those who are born again to be “commissioned” by our Lord to live in the very world whose values, ways and goals we have set aside to follow Him! But our Father's chief interest for our lives as we walk in obedient trust is that we reach those in the world for His Kingdom. At the same time we must not compromise with the world's temptations.

***Do not love the world or anything in the world.** If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **For everything in the world**—the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does—**comes not from the Father** but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but **the one who does the will of God lives forever** (1 John 2:15-17; see also James 4:4).*

*We are responsible, not alone for the good use of our money, whether it be little or great, but for its best possible use.*

Jesus issues a sorrowful warning to those who seek riches in this world, for He knows better than we do that gratifying our sin nature with the allurements the world dangles before us diminishes our hunger for His Kingdom.

*"I tell you the truth, it is **hard** for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:23,24).*

You can't be Spirit-led—fulfilling the will of God—and at the same time pursue the riches of this world. If you give way to the pursuit of earthly treasure, you *will* turn against God in your heart:

*"No servant **can** serve two masters. Either he will **hate the one** and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and **despise the other**. You cannot serve both God and Money" (Luke 16:13).*

*Make a life in the Kingdom,  
not a living on earth.*

- What is your view on money and pleasure? Also, what is your view of your work? How do your responses align with Scripture?

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- How does your current lifestyle align with or differ with a Kingdom lifestyle?

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As we write this Lifebyte, the holiday season is upon us.

- Would Jesus give presents during this season? Yes or No? If yes, would He give to the poor and to those who could never repay Him, or to family and friends? Describe why you think as you do.

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- Which do you think is more important in God's sight: for you to give presents to those who expect them, or to seek out and be kind to those who can't repay you? If your answer is kindness, then what are you going to do to fulfill this response?

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- Jesus certainly doesn't hedge about the difference between entertaining those with whom you're comfortable and can expect a return, and those who are truly needy and outside your "comfort zone. Which type of "blessing" do you prefer: that which passes by quickly here on earth, or one with eternal joy?

*"When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do,*

*they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous” (Luke 14:12-14).*

- As you consider this passage, might it have any effect on your holiday plans? Yes or No? If yes, what will you do differently?

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## 8. The Righteous Live In The Kingdom Are You Righteous Person?

We’ve emphasized previously how important *personal and communal righteousness* are for the life decisions and practices of our Father’s children. In Matthew 6:33, Jesus offers a dual command: “Seek first His Kingdom **and** His **righteousness**...” Paul later specifies, “For the **Kingdom of God** is...**righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit**” (Romans 14:17).

Your decision to walk daily in righteous response to the imputed righteousness of our Lord Jesus is a critical facet of your life in the Kingdom. As the Psalmist exults, “For the Lord is **righteous**, He **loves righteousness**; His countenance beholds the **upright**” (Psalm 11:7).

*If you personally and communally water-down the Kingdom through unrighteousness, you water-down its purpose—to do the will of God.*

The apostle to the nations takes great pains to delineate those who are *not* righteous in God’s sight. They have forfeited entry into the Kingdom and will miss out on eternal life:

For of this you **can be sure**: an immoral, impure or greedy person—such a man is an idolater—**has no inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and of God** (Ephesians 5:5).

*The acts of the sinful nature* are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. **I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the Kingdom of God** (Galatians 5:19-21).

Do you not know that **the wicked will not inherit the Kingdom of God**? Do not be **deceived**: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the **Kingdom of God** (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

You don’t have to look any further for *personal consecration and cleansing* than the commands for Older Testament priests before they could draw near to our holy Lord. (And, as a “Kingdom priest”, you should be alert to the lessons our Father wants us to apply to our own lives from these prototype priests!)

As a visual image, Aaron the high priest and his sons and all the generations of priests to follow were to “wash their hands and their feet” before entering the Tabernacle. Ask yourself: Are YOU so aware of our Lord’s holiness that your “hands” (what you *do*) and your “feet” (where you *go*) are clean before Him?

Likewise, to “ascend the hill of the Lord” as spoken of in Psalm 24, we have the precondition of repentance: to make

sure we're drawing near to Him with *clean hands and a pure heart*. Ask yourself this: "When I worship or talk with my Lord in prayer, have I examined my heart motives and actions so that my prayer may be heard?"

Our great High Priest Jesus has offered the only sacrifice that could forever atone for our sins—and how we rejoice in His faithfulness! As His *holy priesthood* (1 Peter 2:5) we are to represent Him through *Kingdom* motives, values and lifestyles that distinguish us from those of the world.

A thought for you to consider about communal righteousness:

Out of your love for our Lord you may be yearning to stay repentant and serve our Father's purposes. But what about the people with whom you share fellowship? In God's sight, do you have any responsibility to *each other* to stay "clean"? Yes, you do!

The *communal awareness* of identity as one of God's people that was so clearly understood by the Hebrew people is why Jesus expounded on how to deal with an *unrepentant* person in your midst (see Matthew 18:15-17). Our *holy* Lord does not want His followers *fellowshipping* with the unrighteous. Our King calls us to have greater regard for communal righteousness than we have for the feelings of an unrepentant person.

(Note: He *does* urge us by action and example to lovingly interact with those who have yet to encounter Him—but that *isn't* biblical fellowship!)

Remember Who is sharing the command to evict the unrepentant person: the One who hung on the cross for that person's sin. By refusing to repent, that individual is nullifying in his heart both Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross.

Since "*the wicked says in his heart, 'You will not require an account'*", why should he be allowed to stay in fellowship with those who *are* setting themselves apart before our righteous God to serve our Father's will?

The command of God through His servant Peter reiterates our Lord's injunction to His Hebrew people to consecrate themselves to *be holy* (see Leviticus 11:44,45). This directive applies as well to today's Kingdom servants: to both your personal *and* communal responsibility for righteousness:

*But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior because **it is written**, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:15,16).*

Today's religious system sets aside God's command to approach Him in holiness by allowing anyone, even if unrepentant, to sit in the pew with you. Just the fact that the unrepentant person is permitted to take part in the gathering affirms his sin nature's desire to continue to sin.

In contrast, our God's standard for

*Anything that belittles or  
obliterates the holiness of God by  
a false view of the love of God  
is untrue to the revelation of God  
given by Jesus Christ.-Chambers*

fellowship, both with Him and with one another, is righteousness. In this light, don't let yourself fellowship with the unrighteous, even if the world and the "religious" murmur that you're "narrow-minded, unloving and intolerant". Upholding communal righteousness is a biblically mandated condition for you to gather with others for worship and fellowship.

The two of us apply the biblical standard of communal righteousness to four areas:

1. When we gather to **worship** with others.
2. When we **pray** with others.
3. When we **study the Scripture for application** with others.
4. When we **partake of the Body and Blood of Jesus** with others.

Before we even begin to share in any of these arenas, we ensure communal righteousness by asking that we and those present search our hearts for any unconfessed sin. We will not violate God's holy boundary for righteousness in order to appease the unrepentant! We encourage you to seriously consider this practice for yourself, your family and your fellowship family.

Answered prayer that brings testimonies to our Father's glory and faithfulness is important to us! Why would we (or you) want to forfeit this wonderful experience on behalf of anyone who craves their sin more than they do fellowship with our Lord?

- **How do you feel about the criteria we discussed for upholding personal and communal righteousness? If you differ, what are *your* criteria for fellowshiping with others? Include the Scriptural basis for your position.**

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## 9. Kingdom Living = Spiritual Power *Are You Living In Spiritual Power?*

Because of the Spirit of God dwelling within the followers of Jesus, we have spiritual power. You may not have seen that power exercised or testified to because the Nicolaitan religious system is not Spirit-dependent. And, many of today's churcheds have failed to grasp how important choosing to walk in righteousness is to putting His power into practice.

Picture Jesus offering these words of promise to *you* and to all who follow Him:

*"Yes, indeed! I tell you that **whoever trusts in Me** will also do **the works I do!** Indeed, he **will do greater ones**, because I am going to the Father"* (John 14:12).

*"And **these signs will accompany those who do trust:** in My name [by My authority] they will **drive out demons**, speak with **new tongues**, **not be injured** if they handle snakes or drink poison, and **heal the sick** by laying hands on them"* (Mark 16:17,18).

The longer you've lived "churcheds" as others have told you what to believe and how to live, the harder it is to take our King at His word. This is where you must look to the Holy Spirit to guide your spirit, and obey what He tells you. Then you can personally echo Paul's exclamation, *"For the Kingdom of God is not a matter of talk **but of power!**"* (1 Corinthians 4:20).

**The Spirit of God in you, and your trust in the Lord Who has redeemed you for His purpose, make Jesus's words a living reality in your life.  
Trust Him to do this!**

*Don't pray for tasks equal to your powers;  
pray for powers equal to God's task.*

- **Have you seen the power of God manifested through you? Yes or No? If yes, describe an instance or two. If no, why do you think this is so? Does your life of impotence nullify the promise of Jesus to you when He says, "You will do even greater things than these"?**

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*To be a follower of Jesus is  
to incur a tremendous  
responsibility to those who  
have Him not.*

We recently received an anecdote from our friend, Harry Hunt. We thought it to be a fitting ending to this Lifebyte:

### **The Apples**

Author Unknown

Nov 14, 2006

A few years ago a group of salesmen went to a regional sales convention in Chicago. They had assured their wives that they would be home in plenty of time for Friday night's dinner. Well, as such things go, one thing led to another. The sales manager went on longer than anticipated and the meeting ran overtime. Their flights were scheduled to leave out of Chicago's O'Hare Airport, and they had to race pell mell to the airport. With tickets in hand, they barged through the terminal to catch their flight back home.

In their rush, with tickets and briefcases, one of these salesmen inadvertently kicked over a table which held a display of baskets

of apples. Apples flew everywhere. Without stopping or looking back, they all managed to reach the plane in time for their nearly missed boarding. All but one. He paused, took a deep breath, got in touch with his feelings, and experienced a twinge of compassion for the girl whose apple stand had been overturned.

He told his buddies to go on without him, waved good-bye, told one of them to call his wife when they arrived at their home destination and explain his taking a later flight. Then he returned to the terminal where the apples were all over the terminal floor. He was glad he did. The 16-year-old girl was totally blind! She was softly crying, tears running down her cheeks in frustration, and at the same time, helplessly groping for her spilled produce as the crowd swirled about her, no one stopping, and no one to care for her plight.

The salesman knelt on the floor with her, gathered up the apples, put them into the baskets, and helped set the display up once more. As he did this, he noticed that many of them had become battered and bruised; these he set aside in another basket. When he had finished, he pulled out his wallet and said to the girl, "Here, please take this \$20 for the damage we did. Are you okay?"

She nodded through her tears. He continued on with, "I hope we didn't spoil your day too badly." As the salesman started to walk away, the bewildered blind girl called out to him, "Mister ..." He paused and turned to look back into those blind eyes. She continued, "Are you Jesus?"

He stopped in mid-stride, and he wondered. Then slowly he made his way to catch the later flight with that question burning and bouncing about in his soul: "Are you Jesus?"

Do people mistake *you* for Jesus? That's our destiny, is it not? To be so much like Jesus that people cannot tell the difference as we live and interact with a world that is blind to His love, life and grace. If we claim to know Him, we should live, walk and act as He would. Knowing Him is more than simply quoting scripture and going to church. It's actually *living the Word as life unfolds day to day*.

You are the apple of His eye even though we, too, have been bruised by a fall. He stopped what He was doing and picked you and me up on a hill called Calvary and paid in full for our damaged fruit. Let's start living like we are worth the price He paid.

Start today!

When Jesus finishes telling us about the "*signs of the end of the age*" in Matthew, chapter 24, He then shares a parable that warns about our responsibility to do whatever it takes to make sure we're in the Kingdom while there's still time:

*At that time the Kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise* (Matthew 25:1,2; see also verses 3-13).

Please don't just read this Lifebyte and do nothing about it. Change what needs to be changed in your life! This admonition applies to both you, your family and to those with whom you fellowship.

*We are encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His Kingdom and glory* (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

*Mike & Sue*

*Let us be satisfied with nothing less than the world-wide horizon of Jesus Christ our Lord.*

Put Kingdom living into practice this month! For example,

Do you know:

- **a shut-in who would enjoy a visit with you and a drive around town to look at decorations and lights?**
- **a man or woman persecuted for their trust in Jesus who needs your prayer and a letter of encouragement?**  
(see [www.PrisonerAlert.com](http://www.PrisonerAlert.com) for names, addresses and verses in their language)
- **an exhausted single parent who would love just a few hours alone while you take her children sledding, to the library, caroling, whatever?**
- **a lonely neighbor or three who would enjoy coming over for caroling, cookie baking, dinner?**
- **an international student who would love an invitation to share your holiday celebration at your home with your family?**
- **of a volunteer organization who needs someone to deliver food or gifts to needy families in your town?**
- **a soldier or student far away from home who'd love to receive a box of personal goodies, an encouraging book, some hand-knitted slippers, a pre-paid phone card?**
- **of an organization like *Voice of the Martyrs* or *World Challenge* who could turn a financial gift into food and Bibles and sewing machines and medical assistance for needy brothers and sisters in Jesus?**
- **of anything the Holy Spirit is whispering to your heart right now that would be the will of our Father and bring Him praise as you are a blessing in His name?**  
**What is He telling you?**

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