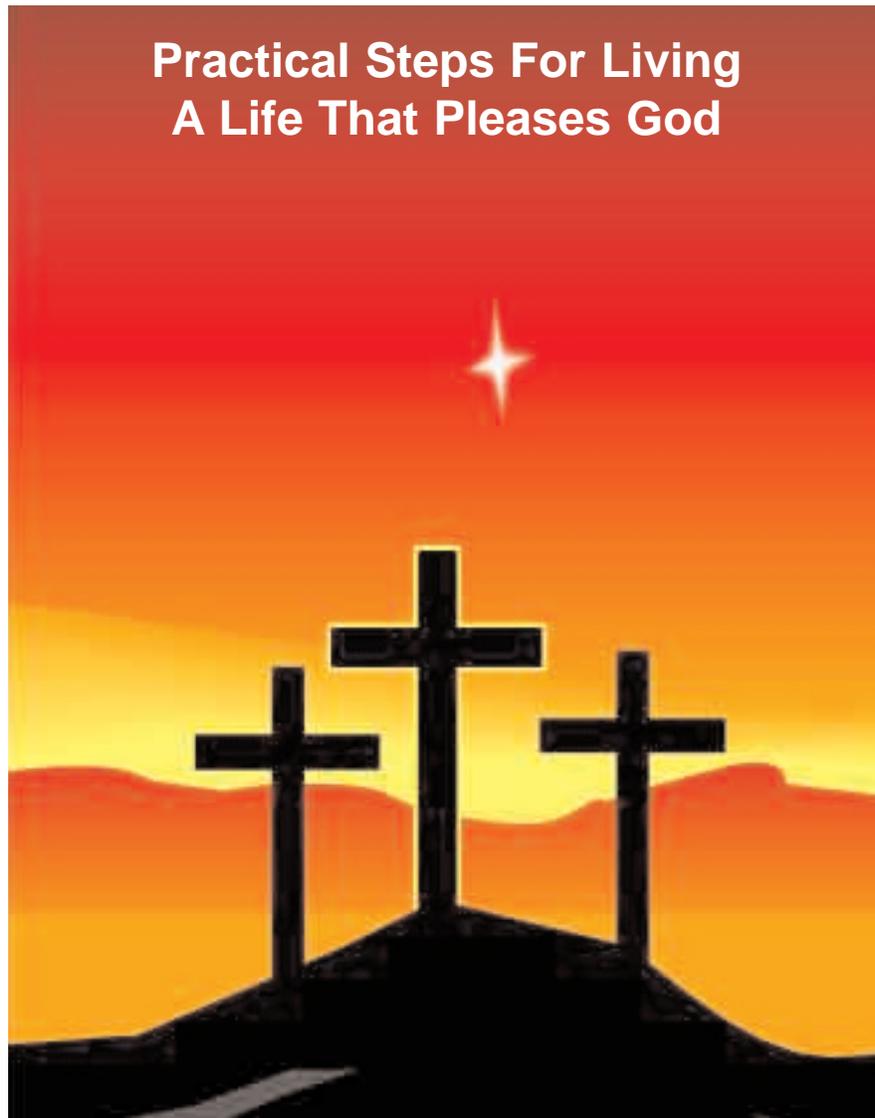


Lifebytes

25. So You Fornicated



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Dear Friends,

The other day I [Mike] found myself distraught as I was thinking of the different grandparents Sue and I know. Many of them we've known for years. As I considered what was going on in the lives of their children and grandchildren, I found myself getting increasingly angry. But rather than entertain these resentful thoughts, I repented for my attitude and began to cry out to Jesus for *His* mind on what I'd been thinking about. The result of my appeal to Him is this letter.

True Repentance Is *First* Taking Full Responsibility For Your Sin

What initially got me upset was this: Our longstanding grandparent-friends had admitted that before they became Christians they'd crossed God's holy boundaries in their youth. Some had fornicated and others "had to get married" (to use the vernacular of our generation), but recognized no need to repent.

Now we're observing the same painful path of sin in their children and grandchildren. The tragedy of this is apparent: Not only have these grandparents *not* re-affirmed God's holy standards in their own lives, some have even *lowered* the standards for their offspring.

There are always consequences when we leap off our Lord's pathway, and the generations that have succeeded us are tasting the bitter fruit. Some of these children themselves have gotten pregnant before marriage, and some of the grandchildren are imprisoned by homosexuality, alcohol or drugs. What's so anguishing to us is that many of the grandparents can't see how they've contributed to the sins of their children and grandchildren.

The sorrowful warning of Jesus comes

to mind:

*It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea, than that he should **cause one of these little ones to stumble** (Luke 17:2).*

Why have these children followed down the dark path of their parents and grandparents? The older generation has refused to deal with their sins in the manner our Lord requires. Our culture is no different than that of pagan Corinth. Paul admonished the Christians there:

*I am afraid that when I come again, my God may humiliate me in your presence, and that I will be grieved over many of those **who sinned in the past and have not repented of the impurity, fornication and debauchery that they have engaged in** (2 Corinthians 12:21).*

Our God calls for His children to **first repent** of all that has violated His Word and His ways. When you respond to the wooing of the Holy Spirit to embrace the Covenant our Father offers us, the first stipulation is **repentance**. A life of repentance *because you love Him* is the spiritual glue that connects you to our Father on your journey to salvation.

True repentance is twofold. It calls for you to *turn away from* the sin to which you so readily gave in, and to *turn to* Him for forgiveness and reconciliation, purposing to walk in His holy ways in fellowship with His Spirit.

Again, the character of true repentance:

To turn from sin and its power, and turn to God and His ways.

What do you think it means to "*turn to God and His ways*"? It's far more than

just not going back to the same sinful acts and attitudes again, falsely assuming God doesn't mind! Turning to God as His trusting, obedient child calls you to respond in agreement with His Spirit to move forward into all that God requires of you in your relationship with Him. And, as you read on, consider the *spiritual totality* of your responsibility and privilege as a parent or grandparent that comes to you when you repent.

Let's first review the joyful outcome when you truly repent and confess your sin before our eagerly waiting Father:

1. **All your unrighteousness is removed.**

Get a firm grip on this powerful promise: *If you confess your sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive your sins and purify you from all unrighteousness* (1 John 1:9). By choosing to walk in obedient trust in His ways — the path of the righteous — He promises in His Word to hear your prayers and respond to them. Look at how how effective the prayers of a righteous person are (see James 5:16-20)! Isn't this what our children and grandchildren need from us on their behalf: **answered prayer**?

2. **Your sin is forgotten by God.**

When you turn away from your sin and bring it before Him to be forgiven and covered by the sacrificial blood of Jesus, our loving Father promises, *"I, even I, am the one who wipes out your transgressions for My own sake; And I will not remember your sins"* (Isaiah 43:25).

The payment by Jesus for the death that we deserve from our transgressions is complete. Because of that, our Father severs that sinful connection between us and our iniquity:

He has not dealt with us according to our sins, Nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, So great is His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, So far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalms 103:10-12).

When fellowship is restored with our Father through our repentance and confession, He forgets our sin! Keep continually in mind this critical point.

Because you are in *full fellowship* with a Father Who has forgotten your confessed sin, you must not dwell in regret over your past and your wrong choices. Any time you allow yourself the dubious luxury of wallowing in guilty regret, you nullify for yourself His merciful forgiveness and His power for you to press on according to His ways. This is why Jesus warns us, *"No one who puts his hand to the plow and keeps looking back is fit to serve in the Kingdom of God"* (Luke 9:62).

If you need to ask forgiveness and make restitution to those against whom you've sinned, then do so. But refuse to give way to the trap of *mulling over with regret* what should have been but wasn't.

Remember the biblical pattern:

- We all must take responsibility for our sins,
- repent and confess them,
- and press forward into the grace of our loving Father. If He doesn't remember your sin, why should you?

Second, Each Generation Must Continually Affirm God's Holy Standards For Their Own Lives, and Re-affirm Them For The Succeeding Generation

A sober responsibility to our offspring must be carried out because of our past sins. If you've truly repented and have affirmed His ways for yourself, you need to re-affirm His holy standards to your children and grandchildren through word as well as example.

While you must not live in regret about your past sins, you need to remember an important spiritual connection with your descendants:

- Your offspring have inherited a sin nature *through you*.
- That sin nature is *active* and will cause them to sin, often in the same way you did.
- Because of this reality, you must *re-affirm as holy and good* the standards of God you violated in your own life, and help your children and grandchildren resist the same temptations you gave in to.

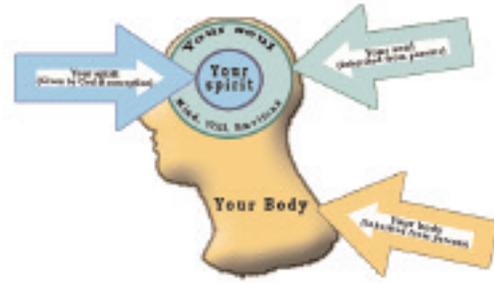
Remember:

**Both We and Our Children
Are Born With A Sin Nature
That Must Be Resisted**

If you want to be the kind of parent and grandparent our Lord calls for, you need to maintain an ***eternal perspective*** of the children He gives you. Any time you tolerate the values and goals of this world at the expense of God's standards and requirements for a heavenly welcome is grievous parental neglect.

At conception something far greater occurs than just a sperm uniting with an egg. A *pilgrimage to eternity* is set in motion. That developing embryo who is your child receives:

1. A **spirit** from God that will ultimately spend eternity either with Him in heaven or apart from Him in hell.



2. A **soul** from you (his parents) that encompasses his mind, will and emotions ***as well as his sin nature***.
3. A **body** with the genetic traits of you, his parents.

All throughout life your children will face a battle of who will rule them: the Holy Spirit through their spirit, or their sin nature through their soul.

The battle of Who or what will rule your children's lives will go on until the day they die (see Galatians 5:17). There is no "Christian Nirvana" here on earth in which you can rise above the struggle against sin and never confront temptation again. Our sin nature is always in us, although through obedient trust in our Lord we are no longer enslaved to it.

For if you live according to your old nature, you will certainly die; but if, by the Spirit, you keep putting to death the practices of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).

It's what we and our children do to resist it that counts. That's the essence of Paul's exhortation to the Rome believers:

Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" (Romans 8:5).



So many Christians lose sight of the reality that **sin is an active evil force** in each of us! Keep in mind that your sin nature insidiously tempts you to live contrary to God's law, even though you now have His power within to resist.

The followers of Jesus in Rome were surrounded by a culture that was straining to pull them back into its grasp if they allowed their old sin nature to be revived. Paul reminded them of what they used to be enslaved to, and the consequences of that old way:

- *For when we were **controlled by the sinful nature**, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we **bore fruit for death** (7:5).*
- *But **sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead.** (7:8).*
- ***I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.** (7:18).*
- *So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in **the sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.** (7:25).*

When any generation of Christians drops its guard and *fails to resist* their evil sin nature, they will sin. If that generation doesn't re-affirm God's holy standards and train the generations that fol-

low to resist, their sinful inclinations and actions will be exacerbated. An oft-quoted saying bears repeating: ***What one generation tolerates in moderation, the next excuses in excess.***

A Christian brother called the other day and mentioned how his godly mother had tolerated young men "sowing their oats" when they're young. She took it for granted that men's nature compels them to fornicate. As he talked, I was reminded of my own upbringing.

Both Sue and I were children of moral failure. When I began to date, my Mom would warn, "Just make sure you don't get them pregnant." That was the moral criterion for my dating relationships.

Years later I found out that my parents had to get married, as did Sue's. Now it all made sense. My Mom always enjoyed immoral movies, TV shows and magazines. No one, not her parents or even her priest in all the sermons she listened to, taught my parents to re-affirm God's standards. In that void, my parents gave way to their sin nature and disregarded God's ways.

The pattern not only continued but was expanded. We were immoral, then the next generation of our extended family not only fornicated but also lived with each other before marriage. Will the following generation condone homosexuality as well as promiscuity in the ever-increasing toleration of sin?

Remember:

What one generation tolerates in moderation, the next excuses in excess.

Shortly after we both became followers of Jesus in our late 20's, we went to a week-long seminar in which the teacher re-affirmed God's holiness and His holy

standards for us. For a month afterward we'd get up at 5 AM to review these righteous standards before Mike left for work.

With repentant hearts we recognized the holy standards of God of which we'd been ignorant and disobedient. We knelt together and purposed before our Lord Jesus that we would make His standards and ways our own.

[For more on this topic, see [Discussing How To Restore the Early Church, Lessons 42 thru 44: Godly Parenting](#), a free download.]

It really gets down to this:

- How much of a heart issue is it for you to spend eternity in heaven with your children and their children? Describe your convictions and what you're doing to help this happen.

Older Testament + Newer Testament = The Bible

Have you considered that one of the major reasons today's church parents and grandparents fail to fully uphold God's holy standard for themselves and their offspring is that the *Older Testament has been nullified* in much of Christendom?

An overemphasis on the Newer Testament that dismisses the importance of the Older Testament is contributing to **epidemic lawlessness** in Christianity today. This is why studies reveal that both Christians and non-Christians have the same moral values.

You've noticed that the writers of the Newer Testament repeatedly relied on the Older Testament to support their teachings. If they as well as Jesus recognized the Hebrew Scriptures as the Word of God, why aren't His followers today doing as He did?

Whenever the Newer Testament refers to *Scripture*, they're referring to the only Bible they had, the Older Testament. Paul made sure his apprentice founded his discipling on that very Word:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16, 17).

The **entire** Bible is God's guidance for His people. There is no way that you can fully grasp your own depravity unless you see yourself through the clear lens of the Older Testament. It was written as a *warning and an example* so that we, as Jesus' followers, might not give way to the same lawlessness and sinful self-gratification that many of the Israelites did (see 1 Corinthians 10:11).

Only with an understanding of your own sinful depravity and need for forgiveness can you lovingly appreciate that which Jesus has done for you.

If you fully fathom just how utterly sinful you are, you'll readily perceive God's grace in the atonement and gratefully embrace the sacrifice of Jesus on your behalf!

People who focus only on a Newer Testament perspective generally have *no fear* of our holy God nor any awareness of their personal responsibility to turn

from sin in order to live according to the *LORDSHIP of Jesus*. If He truly is your LORD, then you are His purchased beloved bond-slave, accountable to *fulfill His Kingdom purposes* rather than expecting Him to gratify yours!

Grievously, within Christendom today those who limit themselves to the Newer Testament have a twisted attitude and expectation that **“He owes me”**. Many “come to Jesus” through repeating a prayer formula, having been told that He will “improve their lives”.

The fruit of this is seen in the evil “Health and Wealth” counterfeit gospel embraced by so many today which places man and his sinful desires at the center of his religious pursuit rather than our Lord and His holy commands.

Others, ignorant of the precise pathway ordained by God in His Word, give way to Universalism, believing that all will ultimately find their way to heaven no matter by what gate or god they choose. Designing a Newer Testament belief system that’s bereft of its foundation on the Hebrew Scriptures provides an erroneous and fatal “all roads lead to heaven” theology.

Weigh these modernist man-pleasing beliefs with the irrefutable warning of Jesus, Whose truth never changes:

Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it (Matthew 7:13,14).



You may not be aware of how deeply Hellenist thought may be influencing you right now. The refining fires to

which Peter refers that test the genuineness of our faith (see 1 Peter 1:6,7) involve suffering of some sort. But any time you perceive your suffering as a negative circumstance to flee rather than as our Father’s way of developing Christ’s likeness in you, you have embraced Hellenist distortion.

Keep this in mind as well: Any time you hear someone proclaiming they’re part of a “New Testament Church”, they’ve succumbed to the teachings of Origen or other Hellenist-influenced writers. The *unchanging character* of God and the *righteous, loving fear* He calls for in those whose sins are covered by the blood of His Son are introduced in the Older Testament and *continued on* as foundational to His called-out ones in the Newer Testament.

Anytime Newer Testaments are singled out for distribution without including the Older Testament, the fullness of God’s grace and holiness is being denied — *ALL SCRIPTURE is God-breathed*.

[See **Discussing How To Restore the Early Church, Lesson 15: The Loss of Our Hebraic Roots.**]

- Describe your view of the Bible as a *continuum* of the Older and Newer Testaments. Why is it vital that the follower of Jesus breathe in and live out the truths found in both Testaments?

True Repentance Separates a Genuine Follower of Jesus From Those Who Call Themselves “Christian”

Over years of working with congregations throughout North America we've found that the differences among them lie more in the degree to which they **tolerate sin** than on their creedal or denominational distinctives. In fact, the clear demarcation in Christendom is between the **repentant** and the **unrepentant**.

[See **Discussing How To Restore the Early Church, Lesson 27: The True Gospel Of The Covenant.**]

Ask Forgiveness For Letting Your Children Down. Then, Re-affirm God's Standards

Our son Mike was in the Air Force when our Father took us to Israel to reveal the Hebraic foundations to us. During the years in which we were raising our son we followed the path of many of the Christian families around us, even educating him at home for his last 5 years of “formal” training. (In the middle he spent a year at a technical high school as well.)

Yet even through all this personal contact and effort, we still lacked God's eternal view of deepening his character and helping him to identify and walk in his spiritual gifts. We were so focused on preparing him to succeed in *this* world that we neglected preparing his heart and life for the next.

Last week when we finished the 50th lesson in our series, **Discussing How To Restore the Early Church**, I [Mike] called our son and asked his forgiveness for not

having known and applied the Hebraic foundations earlier when he was still under our roof. Then we sent him the lessons on parenting and a disc with all of the lessons from the series so he could discuss these with his wife and discern what to incorporate as they're raising our granddaughter. We want them to have a platform of discussion so that they'll prayerfully seek our Lord, explore His Word, and form their own family *halakhahs*.

“Do not remember the sins of my youth or my transgressions; According to Thy lovingkindness remember Thou me, For Thy goodness' sake, O LORD”
(Psalms 25:7).

No matter what your sin was in the past, if you've truly repented you need to come out from whatever prison of guilt the enemy has encompassed you with. And, if you've truly repented, you need to keep affirming God's holy standards not only for yourself but also for your children and grandchildren.

Let them know from your own mouth what is right or wrong in God's sight! Don't be a hypocrite and try to cover up your own sin. Humble yourself, repent, and affirm the holiness of His commands. Never give way to fear in confronting your children, perhaps apprehensive that they'll keep your grandkids from you.

If you do give way to silence when you see your children and grandchildren ignoring God and His ways so they can indulge their sin nature, will you just shrug and look the other way? Your seemingly benign non-confrontation does them a grave injustice on their journey to salvation.

WHERE WILL YOU DRAW THE LINE IF YOU *DON'T* AFFIRM GOD'S STANDARDS?

- **When they fornicate?**
- **When they live with someone who is not their spouse?**
- **When they become a homosexual?**
- **When they marry someone of the same gender?**

Where will *you* draw the line if *you* don't uphold God's commands out of love for Him?

You may have to ask forgiveness *from them* if you've been lax to affirm God's standards and gently but firmly reinforce His ways.

What "pet sins" do you currently tolerate either in action or attitude? Discuss this with your family. Discern if you need to repent and re-affirm God's holy standards.

Are there sins from *your* youth that your children or grandchildren are participating in? Are they tolerating in their lives a greater degree of sin than you did?

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

We encourage you to download the lessons in ***Discussing How To Restore***

the Early Church and use them with your family. If your children are grown with families of their own, ask them to go through the lessons with you. If they don't live near you, use the Internet and phone to communicate.

As it was with us before we learned these truths in Israel, none of you were aware of His restoration either. So ask forgiveness of your family, and ask them to discover, discuss and apply His restoration walk with you.

Rather than starting at the beginning lessons which contain a lot of historical background material, start with Lesson 23: ***Restoring The Early Church***. We focus on your marriage, your parenting, and your extended spiritual family who bear the load with you.

After you've completed Lesson 50, then you might want to go back and review the history of the Hebraic early Church. There you'll discover how Hellenism and Romanism have infiltrated and mutated that which made the earliest followers of Jesus so relationally intimate and spiritually powerful.

May our Lord bless and guide you as you seek to affirm His holiness in your family.