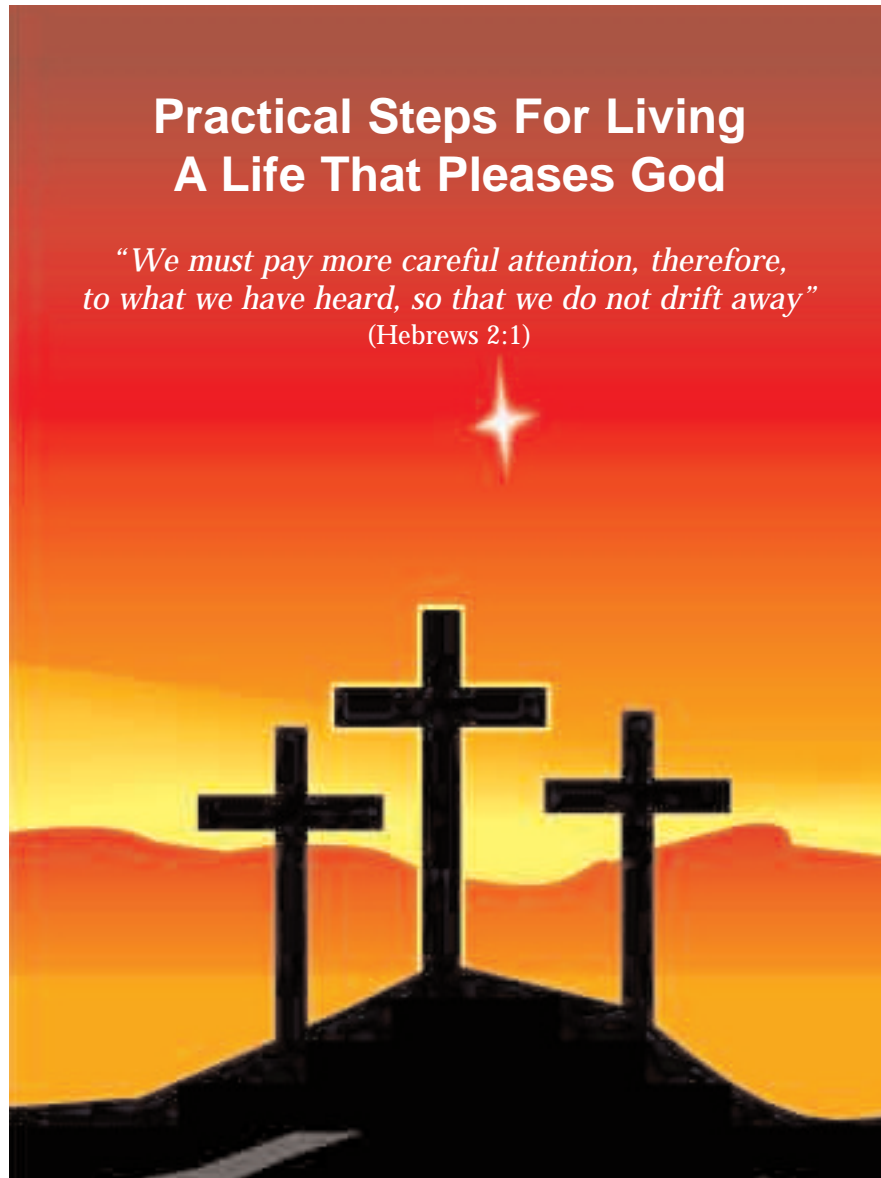


Lifebytes:

29. You Haven't Been Here Before



Practical Steps For Living A Life That Pleases God

*"We must pay more careful attention, therefore,
to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away"*
(Hebrews 2:1)



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Dear Friends,

One of the frustrations of life is being misunderstood. And, as you know, there are all kinds of misunderstandings. If you've relinquished the complacency of being a Christian *in name only* to be a **follower of Jesus**, you've most likely experienced this with your old acquaintances.

To truly follow Jesus means revamping your life goals and values — and it's going to cost you! If those close to you are unwilling to make those changes with you or accept them in you, you *will* be misunderstood.

Our Lord makes clear what the cost is if you're going to follow Him with all your heart, soul, mind and strength as He calls for:

*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**; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow Me is **not worthy of Me** (Matthew 10:37,38).*

You may not yet have taken this bold step of putting your loving, obedient trust in Jesus *ahead* of all your other relationships — even if that means being committed to Him so deeply that even your family doesn't recognize you!

It's easy to be comfortable in the Hellenist pattern of western Christianity. Sitting in a pew with others around you can give you a certain degree of affirmation. It may satisfy you that so many others are like you in your time-slot-for-God approach, but have you ever really asked *our Father* for His appraisal of your faith walk?

You may remember from **Lifebyte 27. You Must Be Born Again: Life Begins in the SPIRIT (John 3:8)** the

retired clergyman who had nothing recorded about him in heaven. Is anything about *your* life recorded in God's books? Are you going to wait to get there to find out? Or, is there a way you can be assured here on earth that heavenly greetings and reward await you?

You may be one of those who has left the religious establishment and are now meeting in homes. But are things really different for you other than the change of where you get together? So many establish "mini-churches" in their home with a meeting time scheduled once a week. Some of you have contacted us and gone on at length over what you're doing at your weekly meetings. But nothing you've mentioned has anything to do with the Hebraic restoration of His relational priorities and stirring each other in righteousness and load-bearing!

When people encounter the Hebraic foundations, many try to adapt this way of living to their prior Hellenist faith practices — sort of like "having services" in homes instead of under a steeple. That's like trying to take pieces from one puzzle and make them fit into another.

The best way we can describe this new walk is, "You've never been this way before." The sooner you perceive the Hebraic foundations as if you've never even had any experience in Hellenized Christendom, the easier it is for you to make each of the Hebraic facets a way of life.

Please re-read the above statement.

It's far easier if you think of yourself as a hard drive that has nothing stored on it! Prior to our Father opening our eyes to that which HE'S restoring, we had no previous experience or understanding of it either.

“See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland”

(Isaiah 43:19).

Before Israel entered the Promised Land, God briefed them about a significant difference they would experience:

*The land you are entering to take over is **not like the land of Egypt, from which you have come, where you planted your seed and irrigated it by foot as in a vegetable garden.***

*But the land you are crossing the Jordan to take possession of is a **land of mountains and valleys that drinks rain from heaven.***

*It is a **land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.***

*So **if you faithfully obey the commands I am giving you today—to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul— then I will send rain on your land in its season, both autumn and spring rains, so that you may gather in your grain, new wine and oil** (Deuteronomy 11:10-14).*

For generations the Israelites had relied on the Nile and its canals to water their crops. Now God was leading them to a hilly land that depended on the spring and fall rains rather than irrigation to water the crops. Think about this dramatic shift for them.

When a farmer relies on irrigation, his crops are watered through his own efforts. The farmer who trusts in the rains God sends to water his crops has a different heart. He plants and prays and waits until God sends His rain.

Our Father wanted the Israelites to depend on Him totally and wholeheartedly — to *love* Him and to *serve* Him alone. God’s requirement for His blessing of rain was that they keep His commands and live righteously in the land He gave them. (Remember His promise of blessing and curse in Deuteronomy 28?) When they entered the Promised Land, there would be a shift from relying on their own efforts of irrigation to waiting on the spring and fall rains from His sovereign hand.

Many of you are personally familiar with the courage and confidence in God that it takes *to wait*. Human nature wants us to *go and do!* But our Father wants the followers of His Son, Jesus, to depend on Him as their Provider.

Remember, our Father is restoring the *Hebraic foundations* — restoring the nature of relating to Him that our spiritual father Abraham had:

*If, in fact, Abraham was justified by works, he had something to boast about—but not before God. What does the Scripture say? ‘Abraham **trusted God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.**’*

*Now when a man works, his wages are not credited to him as a gift, but as an obligation. However, to the man **who does not work but trusts God Who makes ungodly people righteous, his faith is credited as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing upon the man to whom God reckons righteousness apart from works:***

*Blessed are those whose **lawless deeds have been forgiven, And whose sins have been covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will not take into account** (Romans 4:2-8).*

As you can see, two elements are being reinforced for us in this passage. First, the affirmation that we followers of Jesus, like Abraham, *trust* our God and *depend on* Him. We today must rely on the Spirit He has placed in us to help us understand and incorporate the Hebraic foundations as a way of life. And second, that you're walking in full assurance of your *atonement covering of Jesus* for the sin of which you've confessed and repented.

We've often emphasized the **discussion and confirmation of two or three** so that you'll *bring Jesus*, the Head of His body, into your midst:

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 18:19,20).

We regularly ask those who contact us with problems they're having in their faith pilgrimage, "Who have you discussed this with?" There's usually silence or an embarrassed, "No one." This automatic response is the fruit of Hellenism today:

**Contact the perceived expert.
He has all the answers.**

But this *isn't* the way of our Father! *His* way is through the discussion of two or three as you prayerfully apply biblical truth to a given situation. He wants you to incorporate the presence of Jesus in your midst. This is what the two of us rely on, and this is what we try to convey. But it's difficult to get this across to people who are trying to adapt the Hebraic way into a Hellenized mindset.

If you're computer literate, it's like trying to install Mac software on a Windows Operating System (OS). Far better that you treat yourself like a clean hard drive!

We realize that no man likes to admit that he doesn't know something. But, the Hebraic foundations are new territory for all of us.

Hebraic faith practices were once foundational for the earliest believers.

These were replaced through Hellenist and Roman influence.

Only since our Father returned Jerusalem to the Israelis in 1967 as He promised have these truths been revealed to Gentiles. HE'S behind the timing and the restoration!

We're *all* learning His foundational principles for the first time! So rest on our Lord's words to the Israelites when He began to show *them* new things:

You have not heard of them before today. So you cannot say, 'Yes, I knew of them' (Isaiah 48:7).

When you encounter new or problematic situations in your walk, it doesn't matter what Mike and Sue do. What's vital is that you appropriate the process of **discussion and application** as did our believing Hebraic forefathers.

God guided the Israelites for decades with His *shekinah* glory. Today He's given all who have entered Covenant with Him the indwelling Holy Spirit. He has given His people a process of knowing how to live for Him that brings Jesus into our midst: discussion by two or three, so that we might know His will and fulfill it. We don't need a fiery light at night or cloud by day. We have the Holy Spirit in us, and the presence of

Jesus when we discuss with the desire to apply what He reveals in obedient trust. **What more could anyone want?**

The real problem is that so many, especially men, can't let go of your old Hellenist ways. You can't wipe clean your mental "hard drive". Hellenism offers you a comfortable system of programs and organized creeds that you can wrap your complacency around and shelve when you choose to.

And, if you're in a position of leadership in a Hellenist congregation, you have control and direction over people. That's power for a man, and it's hard to give up. The Hellenist system offers personal prestige, while the Hebraic relational framework requires humility of heart.

Try to picture this: When you encounter the Hebraic foundations, you're probably still looking for an established systematic approach like what you've been used to for much of your life. It's like the irrigation canals of Egypt. I'm sure these ditches gave the Israelites a certain confidence that they could use them to water their crops whenever they needed to.

But God took them away from those convenient canals! And YOU must let go of the religious systems and programs that you feel good about managing or that allow you to BE managed. You need to trust in the spring and fall rains that our Lord sends! You and your household need to *collectively* fall upon Him to guide you into how He wants you to incorporate the Hebraic foundations into your lives.

If you don't seek our Lord hungrily with a dependence upon Him for guidance, you're consigned to labor in vain and be frustrated. And, like so many who have been trained in "spiritual Egypt" (Hellenist Christianity), you'll

call the "pros" for answers when things go wrong.

Please, learn a lesson from the Israelites. There ARE consequences when you decide to not seek guidance and confirmation from God.

Do you recall the Gibeonite ruse in Joshua, chapter 9? God had told the Israelites to annihilate the people in the land. But as they drew closer to the land God had promised them, they missed an important step: "*The men of Israel...did not inquire of the LORD*" (Joshua 9:14). They sinned through giving way to deception and independence, and made a treaty with the heathen Gibeonites.

This same thing is happening to so many who have departed established religion in order to form house churches. You aren't personally seeking what God wants for *you and your family!* So many head off to conferences where some "know-it-all" shows you a neat way to "do church" in your home.

But we've met some of these key speakers. Their approaches are all too often man-centered and programmatic. They appeal to the Hellenized minds of men who desire to be *in control*. In essence:

All you're doing is leaving the kingdom of your clergy for a fiefdom in your home.

But all of this ends up ultimately in failure with discouraged people who, over time, enter then leave your little fiefdom. Living room doors revolve as fast as church building doors do.

This is what the noted house church speakers *aren't* telling you: about all the discouraged and disillusioned people who thought "having church" in homes would end their dissatisfaction.

And, you then discover that those who still sit comfortably in their pews are mocking you for your failure.

Until you *collectively* seek God's specific guidance for you and your family, coming before Him in humility and dependence, you're no different than a pew-sitter, no matter *where* you meet.

Mike: I'd like to share an anecdote that the Holy Spirit brought to mind the other day. This initiated His revelation for this lesson.

I was a helicopter pilot in the Navy, flying supplies to our ships in the Gulf of Tonkin during the Vietnam Conflict. On one deployment I often flew with a particular young copilot, Tom, who had a wonderfully investigative mind.



One day we finished a mission and had some time to kill before our next assignment. Tom said, "I've been studying the radar systems on some of these destroyers and fast frigates out here, and they have *blind spots*. Would you mind if we showed that destroyer over there his blind spot?"

I gave him permission to contact them and asked if they'd like to have us simulate surface and air attacks on them to test their personnel. The captain agreed. So we "attacked" them. Through different

approaches and angles of attack, Tom was able to reveal blind spots in which they were vulnerable. They were very appreciative, and over time we were able to help other vessels the same way.

Tom would often come up with other pieces of information that were helpful not only to our own mission, but to those of others. I liked to turn him loose whenever possible to unleash his special talent!

One day we received orders to fly north and help resupply ships that had come secretly from the East Coast of the US around South Africa. No one knew why they were there. Vietnam, for the most part, was a West Coast-Navy war.

When our helo arrived to help the East Coast fleet, the ships were miles apart. Now, when we resupplied *West Coast* ships, they'd hold a distance just a few hundred feet from the delivery ship. West Coast ship captains knew this made for speedy operations.

As we began to help our sister squadron of two helicopters from the East Coast deliver cargo to the spread-out fleet, we soon became frustrated. This was going way too slow compared to what we were used to in delivery time. These East Coast ships were just too far apart!

After an hour of this, I called the control tower on the cargo vessel to ask how long they anticipated the entire operation would take. "Thirteen hours," they replied. "Would you like to know a faster way to finish this operation?" I radioed back.

A ridiculing voice came back. In Navy lingo I was told to shut-up and keep flying. About 30 seconds later the Admiral in charge of the whole group of ships radioed us. This had never happened to me before. He told us that the whole fleet needed to be on station to do their mission in 8 hours. Did I have a recommendation to make that happen?

I requested a few minutes to talk it over with my co-pilot. I turned to Tom and asked him to map out a formation for the ships that placed the furthest one no more than 300 yards from the delivery ship.

As fast as his pencil could move Tom set up a formation. I told him, "Give it the Admiral." Tom radioed the different positions for each ship in the formation. After a 5-second delay the Admiral announced to the fleet, "This is Gray Eagle. *Execute!* Out."

A whole bunch of ships started drawing in to their assigned positions. For the skipper of these vessels this proximity was very uncomfortable. Remember, they were used to being miles apart from one another! No less than a few walked out on the wings of their bridge to give us an obscene gesture.

In a little over two hours the entire operation was completed. Tom and I landed aboard the cargo vessel to refuel before flying back to our own ship. The Officer-In-Charge of our sister squadron on that ship stepped into my cockpit and gave me one of the toughest chew-outs I ever had in my career.

Landing on our own ship, we were ordered to the bridge. There was a message waiting from the Admiral. He commended us! It seems the ships under his command had been ordered to enter Haiphong harbor to suppress anti-aircraft fire. Then Navy planes could drop mines to stop the North Vietnamese from receiving supplies.

I was elated to hear this! For three deployments I'd watched so many Russian ships enter that harbor with war supplies that ultimately led to the death of American men in country.

The admiral also ordered the helicopter detachment on the East Coast cargo vessels to contact us for further training. Several weeks later we met with their crews — and there was a lot of humble pie swallowed by these guys. Their "miles apart" delivery system may have worked well for them in the

Atlantic and Mediterranean where ships were concerned with submarine attacks by the USSR. But we were in an entirely different environment in the Western Pacific.

Speedy resupply was crucial. A war was raging, and Army and Marine troops were dependent on the carrier aircraft for bombing, and the gunfire support of the destroyers. Men died if we were slow in resupply.

[See also our **February 1999 Newsletter: Counterfeit Church**]

I hope you men, in particular, are getting my point in this anecdote. When *something new* is taking place, a combination of people brings about successful outcomes. All I did was help Tom help the Admiral complete his mission.

If I could have gotten the Admiral and Tom and the other helo detachment together *before* the resupply operation began, it could have gone smoother. But the nature of things precluded that.

But there is nothing precluding *you* from openly seeking God's guidance through mutual discussion with those who are pressing on with you as you follow Jesus.

Keep in mind this essential counsel:

Make plans by seeking advice....wisdom is found in those who take advice.... Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed (Proverbs 20:18; 13:10a;15:22).

• Are you more likely to contact someone *after* you've made a mistake and things don't work out as you expected, or, do you seek advice and confirmation *before* you start? What do those who know you well think?

- Describe your process in making major decisions.

We're told, "*Commit to the LORD whatever you do, and your plans will succeed*" (Proverbs 16:3). How well are you in doing this routinely?

What do those who know you well think?

Trouble-shooting manuals tell you what to look for *before* you contact a service department about your equipment. We have a few suggestions for you to check *before* you contact anyone outside your extended spiritual family about problem situations.

We've written several times about biblical criteria for fellowshiping with others. These are principles by which the earliest followers of Jesus lived as they walked in fellowship with one another.

Are these principles part of *your* life?

1. Fellowship with others *spurred them on to glorify our Father and Jesus* through praise, worship, and living testimony (1 Corinthians 10:31).

- Describe the nature of your praise, worship and living testimony. Are they acceptable and pleasing to our God?

2. Their fellowship with each other *spurred their growth in Christ-likeness* (see Philippians 2:12).

- How are you and those who fellowship with you growing in Christ's likeness? What can you specifically see has changed in you because of their mutual concern for your spiritual development?

3. Their shared fellowship *spurred them toward repentance and the narrow gate* (Matthew 7:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:12).

- Are you a repentant person? Are those who fellowship with you of the same mind? How confident are you that you are going to make it through the narrow gate? What indicates that you are currently headed for it?

4. Their fellowship as extended spiritual family *spurred them to reveal Jesus to the lost* in their daily lives (2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

- How motivated are you and those you fellowship with to come alongside those who are heading for hell? What specific things have you and your extended spiritual family been doing to reveal Jesus to unbelievers?

We frequently teach how crucial *communal righteousness* is for true fellowship.

- How critical is communal righteousness for your fellowship? Is it a core criterion for your extended spiritual family? How are your prayers being answered by our Father? Really... Cite a few God-sized answers.

The Hebraic home fellowship was based on 24/7 load-bearing relationships.

- What is the frequency of contact those who fellowship with you have with you during the week? Cite how you are in contact with each other.

We've written in this Lifebyte about the importance of *mutual discussion* that leads to establishing biblical application for a life situation.

- How well are you all doing in this process? Cite a few biblical applications you have collectively agreed upon.

We've encouraged you about your need to seek *rhema*, that is, God's specific guidance for you. Often *rhema* comes through a prompting in the Scriptures or through spiritual gifts such as prophecy, a word of knowledge or wisdom.

- Is God's *rhema* part of your guidance? Cite a few examples of how He gave you specific direction.

We're confident that if you'll make these processes which God ordains a way of life for yourself and those with whom you fellowship, you won't have to contact us or anyone outside your extended spiritual family.

The two of us were told by our Father to "Share this message!" We understand His words to mean that we are to convey the processes of relating to Him that the earliest followers of Jesus embraced. In that way He can restore the spiritual power and relational intimacy that they enjoyed.

We are not answer-people to help get anyone out of problems when they're clinging to the forms and programs of Hellenism. These words of Jesus have dramatic meaning when it comes to leaving Hellenism behind and making Hebraic obedient trust a way of life:

"No one sews a patch of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch will pull away from the garment, making the tear worse.

Neither do men pour new wine into old wineskins. If they do, the skins will burst, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined. No, they pour new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved"

(Matthew 9:16,17).