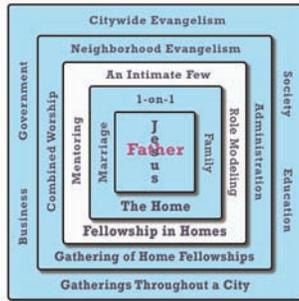


# Preparing Home Fellowship Families for the Dark Days of Chastisement

## Lesson 4

Topic 1. The Battle Cry of Jesus

Topic 2. The First Called-Out Ones Fellowshiped in Homes



*“Your people will rebuild the ancient ruins and will raise up the age-old foundations; you will be called **Repairer of Broken Walls, Restorer of Streets with Dwellings**” (Isaiah 58:12)*

### 1. The Battle Cry of Jesus

*“On this Rock **I** will build My Church, and the gates of hell will not withstand it”*

(Matthew 16:18).

If you're to understand why our Lord Jesus purposes that His followers fellowship in homes, you need to fully realize the intent of His proclamation in the verse above and why its message is so essential for His people in all cultures and ages. By the third century Hellenism had infiltrated and overcome the Hebraic understanding of the Scriptures. Then the organizational structure of the Roman Empire became the model to create and enforce a man-made religious system built on ecclesiastical hierarchy.

Even as the rich and powerful commandeered control of the system, the common people in the pew were denied access to a relationship of spiritual intimacy with the Lord. The Bible itself was confined to the “dead language” of Latin known only to the educated few.

By the Reformation era, divine unrest stirred in the hearts of those who were seeking a personal walk of obedient trust in Jesus, wanting *Him alone* as their Head. Among these were the Pilgrims and Puritans who were determined to cast off

the shackles of ecclesiastical authority enmeshed with political power.

### The “Rock” is our Lord Jesus

In the context of this verse Jesus was speaking to Jewish people who knew the Older Testament well. His message conveyed to them that He was not only the prophesied Messiah, the Son of God, but also the “Rock” of the Hebrew Scriptures. This metaphor is used throughout the text to honor God: “the Rock eternal” (Isaiah 26:4); “the Rock, your fortress” (Isaiah 17:10); “the Rock of our salvation” (Psalms 95:1). Other “Rock” references appear in Deuteronomy 32:4,15; 2Samuel 22:32,47; 23:3, and elsewhere.

Most importantly Jesus intentionally identifies Himself with that title which *His Father* had been known by, a point Paul speaks of explicitly:

*“And [our forefathers] did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and **that Rock was Christ**” (1Corinthians 10:4).*

Our Lord Jesus is KING of kings and LORD of lords (Revelation 19:16). He is the ONLY Head of those who put their trust in Him as their Lord. Both individually and collectively His followers render

account to Him as the Rock upon which their faith is founded. Because Jesus *is* the Head of each one who belongs to Him as His chosen brother or sister, through His indwelling Spirit He develops and matures in each of us two particular life purposes:

1. That we become more like Him through lifelong sanctification as He renews our minds, our attitudes and behaviors.
2. That we love Him and serve Him in extending His Kingdom by discipling others to be obedient family in Him.

These two purposes are clearly articulated by Paul as a *mutual* endeavor and life journey for all who know Jesus as their only Head:

*“...we will in all things grow up into Him Who is the Head [sanctification], that is, Christ. From Him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work [each individual uses his spiritual gifts to serve Him as we serve one another]”* (Ephesians 4:15,16; see also Colossians 1:18, 2:19).

#### **Thoughts for Group Discussion:**

1. How do you describe who you are spiritually when you talk with unbelievers? Is it as a follower of Jesus? Or, do you describe yourself by your particular denomination or church you attend?
2. On one occasion our Lord Jesus left His mother and brothers standing outside while He spoke with His followers inside the house. He told those with Him, *“For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother”* (Matthew 12:50). Is He placing spiritual family above biological relationships? Why do you think He said this? How does it apply to your own spiritual identity?

#### **Proverbial Wisdom**

The *ekklesia* are those Jesus has called out of the world system as His own. Yet being *called out* to serve God isn't a Newer Testament phenomenon. The first person God *called out* to live in trusting obedience to Him was the Hebrew, Abraham (Genesis 12:1). God gave the Patriarch an eternal covenant (Genesis 12:2,3), and Lord Jesus was called his promised seed (Galatians 3:16). The Gospel was told to Abraham in advance (Galatians 3:8); everyone who trusts in our Lord becomes Abraham's child (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7). Think about this.

Before the first coming of Jesus, people in the **Hebraic Stream of Judaism** yearned to walk in the relational intimacy and obedient trust in God which had been lived out by Abraham. All of the faith practices seen among the followers of Jesus in the Newer Testament were already part of the faith enactment of the Hebraic Stream **before** His incarnation. Eagerly awaiting His arrival, these faithful only needed His atonement for their sins and the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. These were the first who became His *called-out* followers.

Over 200 years before the coming of Jesus the rabbis of the Hebraic Stream were teaching, *“You must be born from above.”* They met in one another's homes to *discuss for application* how to live out God's Word. The concept of “church” as a “holy building” was adapted from Hellenist paganism which influenced 4th century Emperor Constantine to build the first one. The church/building connection was carried on by subsequent religious hierarchy to solicit funds to erect elaborate edifices in the mode of pagans and enhance their own prestige.

Seize in your innermost being that Jesus is *your* Lord and you are a part of *His* church, the people He has called out to collectively serve in extending His Kingdom. When He is your Head, all you need is a home in which to gather with your extended spiritual family. Then your giving can be used to extend the Kingdom rather than to maintain an impersonal building.

## 2. The First Called-Out Ones Fellowshipped in Homes

*“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread **in their homes** and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And **the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved**”* (Acts 2:46,47; see also Romans 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Philemon 2; Colossians 4:15).

### “The Church” is the Collective Body

Our Lord Jesus mentions His “church” twice (Matthew 16:18, 18:17). The Newer Testament Greek word for church, *ekklēsia* (ek-leh-SEE-uh), means the “**called-out ones**”—people He has called to forsake the world’s ways, goals and values so they’ll live with Jesus as *Lord* of their lives (Romans 10:9-11). When you “*confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’*” you’re publicly acknowledging on an ongoing basis both to Him and to others you encounter, the One you love and serve.

Knowing Jesus as your *Lord*, the One Who has purchased you by His blood to be His own, is the only acceptable spiritual identity you can have if you belong to Him. Lordship describes not only Who you serve but also a sense of deep, intimate belonging.

If you do love and trust in Jesus as Lord of your life, then He has *called you out* of the world’s system and values to live in a whole new way—to do your part in His beloved family to extend His Kingdom. Wherever you are as His follower throughout the week, He wants to use you to permeate your community. You are His Father’s ambassador to reconcile others to Him (2Corinthians 5:18-20). And as our Father’s ambassador you’re engaged in a spiritual war for the souls of mankind against demonic opposition!

### *Proverbial Wisdom*

Our Father ordained fellowship in homes among His people long before the coming of our Lord Jesus. As far back as the Babylonian captivity the exiled Israelites began to meet in the homes of the prophets. Their nation had been banished from Israel because of the false teachings they’d succumbed to. In captivity those who were repentant wanted the truth so they could be restored to their God. That’s why they turned to the prophets.

The first Hebraic followers of Jesus were aware of this pattern and purpose, and they continued to meet in homes as fellowship families. They were an *alliance of the repentant prepared for spiritual warfare*.

### Thoughts for Group Discussion

1. Is the concept of “church” meaning you and your fellowship family new for you?
2. How much are you aware of one another during the week through prayer, phone calls, and other meaningful contacts?

Paul wrote his letters to the “*called-out ones*” who met in one another’s homes as extended spiritual family. They inherited their foundational understanding of meeting in homes from the **Hebraic Stream of Judaism**. The first followers of our Lord knew they were *chosen*—set apart to make disciples of others. And they clearly understood the need for the encouragement and spiritual protection of a home fellowship family. They were at war against the principalities and powers who held the unbelievers around them in captivity (Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:9; Ephesians 6:12).

*“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven”*  
(Matthew 7:21).

Individually and collectively, your unwavering confidence in *knowing* that you are chosen by our Lord **to do His Father's will** changes everything about why you fellowship together:

•“If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but **I have chosen [called] you out of the world.** That is why the world hates you” (John 15:19).

•“You did not choose Me, but **I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit**—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name” (John 15:16).

•“For we are God's workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do**” (Ephesians 2:10; see also Eph. 1:11; Philippians 2:13).

Our Lord continues to choose people to sacrificially serve His Kingdom purposes. But He has also called you to be *found faithful* (Matthew 25:21; Revelation 17:14). The mutual encouragement and support of those in a home fellowship family is our Lord's means to help you be found faithful in His service. You don't fellowship together so you can feel good about yourselves. You fellowship to sustain each other in the battle against the demonic forces and to collectively seek His will in how to effectively fight!

### The Purpose of a Home Fellowship from Our Lord's Vantage Point

1. Your fellowship with others must **spur you on to glorify our Father and Jesus** through praise, worship, and living testimony (see 1 Corinthians 10:31).
2. Your fellowship with each other must **spur your growth in Christ-likeness** (see Philippians 2:12).
3. Your fellowship must **spur you toward**

### Proverbial Wisdom

A home fellowship is **“an alliance of the repentant prepared for spiritual warfare.”** In our Lord's sight this is exactly how He sees those who belong to Him: **small warfare units fighting the spiritual darkness all around them in order to reach the lost.** A fellowship family united in Spirit to serve God's purposes is better able to permeate a community—their neighborhood, workplaces and schools—with the light of the Gospel. To be true to our Lord, a home fellowship can't exist just for social purposes with people complacently feeling good about themselves. Fellowship families must think of themselves **developmentally**: how to become more like Jesus; and see themselves **purposefully**: how they can collectively extend the Kingdom of God to those who have yet to know Jesus as Lord and Savior.

### repentance and the narrow gate

(see Matthew 7:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:12).

4. Your fellowship must **spur you to reveal Jesus to the lost** in your daily lives (see 2 Corinthians 5:18,19).

### Thoughts for Group Discussion:

1. Using the Bible, can you describe the purposes our Lord has for His called-out-ones? How would you explain to each other *why* He recruited *you*?
2. How have His purposes been achieved through each of you? Have you fallen short of why you were recruited? How?
3. How purposeful are you to carry out the will of your Father—the salvation of mankind? Do you need to repent, individually or collectively, for not being lovingly fervent in extending the Kingdom of God?

### Suggested Further Reading for Lesson 4

- Teaching E-mail 14. *Content & Context*
- Teaching E-mail 56. *It's Time For The Righteous To Take A Stand*
- Teaching E-mail 68. *What Do You Know About Satan?*
- Book: *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*

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