

Cyber Truths By E-mail

30. Obedience May Mean: *“Pack Up And Go!”*
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Restoration Ministries International

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

email: Mikedowg@aol.com
Web: www.Restorationministries.org

Dear Friends,

Are you assured in your heart that Jesus is still recruiting people to serve Him today? ***“Come, follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men”*** (Mark 1:17). When our Lord was on Earth, those who responded to His call left everything to obey His bidding. Look at the immediate response of Andrew and Peter: ***“AT ONCE they left their nets and followed Him”*** (Mark 1:18).

When Jesus recruits someone for His particular purpose, He also *prepares* them before He uses them. This season of preparation lasted three years for the Apostles. (Sue and I also went through our own time of preparation before we were ready to share these Hebraic truths.) Our Lord most often takes those He intends to prepare to new geographical locations, especially if they’ll be hindered in their spiritual growth by staying where they are.

Could Jesus be recruiting you? We’ve recently encountered many who are eagerly intent on following Him being brought to new places so that He can prepare them for His purposes. But this teaching e-mail has come about because so many others are missing His call by *squandering their time*. They’ve chosen not to be immediately obedient, and are confronting negative consequences because of their delay.

To leave a place in order to be about what Jesus desires, especially a home in which you’ve been surrounded by your biological relatives, can be very difficult. We’ve heard from a number of Christians over the years who hung around a spiritually stunting situation for too long, rationalizing their delay for what seemed in the natural to be the right reasons.

Like the man who told Jesus he had to first “bury his father” (the dad actually wasn’t dead, and probably not even ill; otherwise the son would have been with him!), our excuses *seem* justified. But ***delayed*** obedience to follow His call is ***disobedience***.

Compromise with delay when you know what He’s directing you to do reminds us of this anecdote related to us by a friend who was there:

At a 1993 conference in Houston, Texas were gathered various individuals whom our Lord had called to start home churches. Some of the conferees had previously been clergy or other types of leaders in big congregations. Rather than leaving behind their comfortable but self-satisfied organized systems as they’d been directed by our Lord, these leaders had tried to introduce the home church or cell group concept to their congregation. *None* of them had succeeded.

When asked what they would have done differently, their basic response was, “If we had it to do over again, we would have *left* the congregation system and begun a *new work*.” Each of these leaders had run up against a demonic power base that resisted any change. The ensuing controversy and division had exacted a devastating emotional toll on these leaders that ultimately caused them to finally leave.

We share this because many of you are trying to mature as followers of Jesus while living near your unbelieving or nominally “Christian” relatives. Some of you are in lukewarm or “seeker friendly” congregations that make people feel comfortable in their worldly lives but don’t serve the Kingdom interests of Jesus.

You may be one who has received a call from the Spirit for a season of preparation for a “new work” in Jesus, yet you’re hanging around too long for the wrong reasons. Whatever the nature of your fear or reluctance to follow Him, your unwillingness to just get up and move is going to cost you dearly. Please read on....

“I have no command from the Lord, but [we] give a judgment as [those] who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy” (1 Corinthians 7:25)

For over 30 years we’ve observed people who are hungry to mature in Jesus while still living near biological relatives who aren’t followers of Jesus. But their

efforts to grow in Christ have been checkmated by those who've boxed them in to the way they've always known them.

You may have experienced this yourself. When you've wholeheartedly yielded to the Spirit of Jesus and been born from above after a lifetime of following the world's ways, *you're different*. But your relatives are offended by that change and certainly aren't applauding you for it! As Peter noted, "*They think it strange that you don't plunge with them into the same flood of dissoluteness, and so they heap insults on you*" (1 Peter 4:4).

Those we've talked with in this situation had to move away for a season until they were transformed into the character and motivation of Jesus. Does this surprise you? Then consider this: Both biological families and lukewarm congregations are connected through the *familiar strongholds* the people have in common.

If you're trying to follow Jesus with loving determination and obedient trust, the demons are well aware of not only you as an individual but your family going back for generations. They can agitate and influence your relatives to thwart your obedience, since these folks know what "buttons" to push to make you lose your Kingdom focus.

In fact, it is for this very reason we wrote our **Going To The High Places study guide** based on Hannah Hurnard's classic, *Hinds Feet On High Places*.

In the study guide we describe how each of us must leave what we call "The Valley of Our Strongholds" so we can journey to our spiritual "high places" of intimacy with our Shepherd and fruitful Kingdom living. The journey refines our yieldedness and responsiveness to the Holy Spirit, enabling us to be transformed into the likeness of Jesus and to carry on His Kingdom purposes.

Another reason we recommend that you go through the *Going To The High Places* study guide is so that you can experience all the dignity our heavenly Father desires for you. That sense of divine dignity evidences that you've been to the "high places" and are dwelling in the "shadow of the Almighty" (see Psalm 91:1,2), prepared to fully serve.

Do you see? Through unconfrosted generational strongholds, your family relationships are threaded with demonic influence. Since birth you and your relatives have been shaped and affected by a lot of lies and worldly input.

These tainted values and lifestyles are still held dear by your family and relatives who aren't free of stronghold influence. The demons will use them to frustrate you and beat you back into submission to the old ways. And sadly, over time many who tried to follow Jesus and grow in His likeness instead gave in to the unrelenting family pressure.

This situation parallels the key character in *Hinds Feet On High Places*, Much Afraid. She lived in the valley with her family, the Fearings. They emotionally beat her down to fit her name.

The Shepherd invited Much Afraid to leave the valley and journey to the "high places". It took five of the twenty chapters in the book before she finally left the valley behind, and her fearful reluctance almost caused her to miss the Shepherd's timing.

When Much Afraid reached the high places after many preparatory experiences, she was renamed Grace and Glory to reflect the transformation that had taken place in her. It was then that she was spiritually equipped to go back to the Valley of the Fearings because she was no longer like them. She had the dignity of God in her heart.

This same pilgrimage is necessary for each of you if you want to experience the transformation our Lord Jesus desires. You need to leave behind all that hinders and press on into that which will prepare you for Kingdom service in His Spirit!

We highly recommend both *Hinds Feet* and our study guide if you yearn to mature in the character and motivation of Jesus. They're valuable discussion tools for those close to you in the faith to help you leave the "valley" of your family strongholds and receive the transformation you need for Kingdom fruitfulness. **(The study guide is a free download from our website. Click on "High Places".)**

**When Our Lord Calls You,
Obey Immediately!
*Don't Listen To The Amasa Spirit.***

Immediacy is a critical feature in your obedience to the Spirit of Christ in you. This factor may not have occurred to you til now, and your spiritual growth has been stunted as a consequence. Keep in mind that when you've heard our Lord's call *or* have a heart conviction about what you should do, a certain unclean servant of Satan comes to dissuade you.

Many years ago noted Bible teacher Bill Gothard first made us aware of the *Amasa spirit*. This demonic entity shows up right at the moment God is calling you to a particular task, or when you're convicted to take an action.

The nature of this spirit's working is found in 2 Samuel 20. King David commands General Amasa, "*Summon the men of Judah to come to me within three days, and be here yourself*" (v.4). However, we're told, "*But when Amasa went to summon Judah, he took longer than the time the king had set for him*" (v.5)

So King David sends out another general, Joab, to fight. On the way to battle Amasa finally shows up, only to be stabbed to death by Joab.

Over the years as Mike was a consultant to seminaries and to religious leaders, he observed this spirit operating when God was directing the individuals to take specific action. The Amasa spirit leaves chaos and disheartened people in its wake whenever it's given in to. It's as though you missed an important flight you needed to be on, and there isn't another flight available.

We'd like to relate the Amasa spirit to something Mike learned years ago:

When I was in the Navy there was one particular situation that was an automatic career killer. It was called "Overcome By Events", or OBE for short. Every commanding officer in the military is responsible for both the *operational readiness* and the *morale* of his or her unit.

Operational readiness means that they are ready to respond when called upon. If the unit was unprepared when they were called to action, they were considered "overcome by the event". The event for which they were needed had come, and they weren't ready. I witnessed message traffic from officers which contained only the words "OBE" and knew that careers were finished.

How does this apply to you if you purpose to follow Jesus? Well, in Matthew chapter 25 we're told about the five foolish virgins who failed to be prepared with enough oil for their lamps before the bridegroom came. When he did arrive they were out trying to buy oil and were locked out of the wedding. Wouldn't you consider that *OBE*?

When the twelve Israelite spies returned to Moses after exploring the land of Canaan (see Numbers, chapters 13,14), ten gave a negative report out of fear of the people they saw. But two men, Joshua and Caleb, had confidence in their God and urged the people to go up and take possession of the land He'd promised them.

Caleb's trust to want to follow his God's command brought glorious reward: *"But My servant Caleb, because he has a **different spirit** in him and has **followed Me fully**, I will bring into the land where he went, and **his descendants shall inherit it**"* (Numbers 14:24). And, the obedience of Joshua prompted God to have him succeed Moses as Israel's leader.

There's another important lesson if God's people let themselves be OBE'd. When the Israelites gave way to fear of man and disbelieved God, they refused to go up and take the land. Consequently, God spoke through Moses that they would die in the desert as a result of their disobedience. Only their children would enter into the promised land.

Some who arrogantly trusted in their own ability and will, however, went up to attack the land's occupants *without* God's support:

*Nevertheless, **in their presumption** they went up toward the high hill country, though **neither Moses nor the ark of the LORD's covenant** moved from the camp. Then the Amalekites and Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down and **attacked them and beat them down** all the way to Hormah (Numbers 14:44,45).*

Wouldn't you say that because of their failure to *immediately act*, the Israelites were OBE'd?

God's Grace Is A Window Of Time In Which You *MUST* Act

Mature people who've followed Jesus for some time recognize that God offers His people a "window of grace", a specific measure of time if you will, in which He gives us the power and the desire to act. Whenever people in the Bible, through outright disobedience or what we call "fiddle-faddling", missed the "window of grace" God offered, they were OBE'd!

Over the years we've encountered a large number of Christians who misunderstood God's window of grace and were overcome by events that intruded on and interfered with His will being immediately obeyed. Their delay resulted in confusion and disheartedness in both themselves and in their family who were seeking God's direction.

Painful repercussion surrounds the misguided who mistakenly believe that when God is calling them to do something, His grace affords them the slack to do it on their *own terms* and in their *own timing*. Far from it!

The saddest part of their failure to act quickly is this:

**Their disobedience results in
NO testimony to our Father's glory.
And, they often defame Him
with their blame and excuses.**

In fact, these people become the biggest whiners! They're always complaining about their life circumstances or blaming others for their discontent. *This is only a mask to cover their failure to trust our faithful Father and obey His will.*

If this description fits you, we need to admonish you in Jesus:

As you see in the Bible, our God accepts NO excuse from those who miss His “window of grace”. And worse: By your words you’ve laid the blame on Him for the pain you’re going through. You brought down His precious Name in the sight of others through your resistant disobedience, and only compounded your pit of misery!

It was no small thing that you shipwrecked your faith, and have been floundering ever since (see 1 Timothy 1:19,20). You have no idea how our Lord grieved when you failed to trust Him. His response to stir you to return to Him follows His biblical pattern. Just as with the Israelites, He’s left you in the desert of chaos and disheartedness until you learn to absolutely trust Him.

We’d like to share a few personal testimonies of the beauty and joy of immediate obedience.

I left the Navy in 1978 while we were in San Diego to attend a seminary in Massachusetts. We had received a lot of confirmation from both the brothers on my ship as well as our congregation in town. After the moving truck had left with all our belongings, we went to stay with my sister for a night before setting off on our long journey across country.

My sister and her husband lived near the beach and asked us to stay for a few days and relax with them. But both Sue and I sensed in our spirit that the Holy Spirit wanted us to be on our way the next day. As we drove off the next morning I began to be plagued by feelings of doubt about going to that seminary. With each mile they seemed to intensify.

That night in a campground in Utah we had a divine appointment with a

couple who needed to hear about Jesus. We were eager to share!

In Wyoming the following evening we found a campground in which you put your fee in the box and take a site. After dinner we took a walk around the campground and noticed that all the other sites were filled. Just as we were passing by the entrance, a station wagon drove in with a family inside. The Holy Spirit told me, “Go help them. They belong to Jesus.”

I ran up to their car and told them that all the sites were taken, but they could share our site since we were sleeping in our van.

They were grateful and drove to our site which was just ahead. As we reached the site we heard them praising God for answering their prayer for a campsite! That night in a conversation with the husband, I found that he’d researched the same seminary to which we were heading. It was as though God Himself spoke through that man, allaying all my doubts.

Note this: If we had left even *a day later* and not obeyed the urging of the Holy Spirit, we would have missed these divine encounters.

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We arrived to administrate and teach at a small retreat center/farm in Connecticut in 1983. The place was broken down, without heat or furniture. The Board of Directors gave us \$40 in cash and \$700 of unpaid bills and told us they would pray for us.

Money was very tight, and whatever we did receive we put into repairing the place. After 3 months of our being at the center, a Christian brother from Mike’s days in the Navy called. “Mike, I’ve

been praying for you and the Holy Spirit told me to tell you to get health insurance. Don't you have any?"

We didn't. We'd looked into it and knew how much it would cost. Our friend told Mike, "I'm going to send you money for three months of coverage." When we got the money we almost hesitated because there seemed to be more critical needs for the funds than health insurance.

But both of us knew about God's "window of grace" and we applied for health insurance. The day after the coverage went into effect Mike put a chain saw into his knee. A week later Sue broke her finger and had to go to the emergency room to get her wedding ring sawed off. Within a month our son required kidney surgery.

Immediate obedience became our byword for obvious reasons!

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Over the years we've chosen to take the early side of the window of God's grace. In a sense, if you like roller coasters as we do, it's a lot like being in the front seat, relishing our Lord's power and love through each bend in the ride.

Yet, one of the saddest parts of our 30 years of following Jesus is that we've had to witness so many who missed God's call altogether, not just delaying their obedience. In order to be true to our own call to share the Hebraic foundations we've had to leave many behind who decided instead to camp out in comfort zones of excuse, rationalization, or compromise.

In Section 1, Segment 4 of **Jesus In Your Home — How We Received This Prophetic Message** we share the following testimony so you can understand

why we need to press on beyond those who miss God's window of grace:

Our research on the earliest Church and the revelation that our Father wanted His *relational priorities* and *love-grounded obedient trust* restored was overwhelming for both of us. All we'd been taught in congregations and in seminary had nothing in common with what our research revealed.

We were so distraught over having believed so many lies that I'd often say that we could have floated Israel on the tears we'd shed there. Everything in our research contradicted all we'd ever been taught about spiritual life and practice. The more we understood the faith practices and relational priorities our Lord gave the earliest Church, the heavier our hearts became. Even though our Lord had shown us the Hebraic foundations and commanded us to go back to the United States to share them, I was emotionally reluctant.

When we arrived back in the States, we spent two weeks organizing our notes at a relative's house in Miami before returning to Connecticut. I continued to be haunted by the feeling of failure for having perpetuated a false system. I kept thinking of the 5,000 people who had come through our retreat center, and how I felt that I'd failed them by not knowing these key truths earlier...

On our last night at my cousin's house, I had a really intense dream. In it I was brought to Mount Horeb, the Mountain of Desolation in the Sinai.

As I stood on the mountaintop, I heard the Lord say, "Mike, I've desolated you for several years, removing that which was not like my Son. Listen! I never wanted you to know these truths

before this time. **Now, GO and FREE the captives!**" He then told me to wake Sue up and tell her about my dream.

As Mike woke me up, I was having a dream too! I was on a mountaintop that was a flat plateau. Behind me was darkness and steep, jagged rocks that represented my past. But ahead of me, light was growing brighter and brighter, like dawn! I heard a voice saying, "Press on into the light. **You can look side-to-side to see who's going with you, but you can't go back.**"

Mike and I both knew that God had given us these dreams to encourage us to press on and share what He is restoring.

***"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.***

***Whoever finds his life will lose it,
and whoever loses his life
for My sake will find it"***
(Matthew 10:37-39).

This exhortation from Jesus details the cost of *immediate obedience*. We know personally what it's like to leave family behind so we can answer His call. We know what it's like to pick up a cross that crucifies self-will and self-determination so we can follow our Lord.

The cover of our book, ***God's Instruments For War*** (next column), depicts how we perceive His grace at work once you've picked up your cross to follow Jesus. Notice the unseen hand *behind* the man that helps carry the cross.



A number of you we're hearing from are being positioned as part of a larger divine plan. You're being called to leave your biological relatives to go elsewhere without fully understanding why. No one who truly follows Jesus ever sees the whole picture when they obey that call! Much Afraid in *Hinds Feet* had no idea what her obedience to the Shepherd would entail or where it would take her. Yet that was the process of her maturation in obedient trust and preparation for Kingdom fruitfulness.

You may have children you're eager to raise to follow Jesus with all their heart, soul, mind and strength. To do this, you need freedom from resistant family strongholds so you can raise them as Kingdom servants who lovingly obey their King. **Go** and prayerfully find from the Spirit a place where you can raise your family to be light.

You fathers, don't make your job a more critical issue to determine where you move than your responsibility to raise your children to love and serve God. (See Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Malachi 2:15.)

Again, after 30 years we've encountered no one who has ever grown in Christ's likeness around their unbelieving or nominally Christian relatives. Nor

have they been able to raise their children to be totally dedicated to Jesus. *Compromise* has nipped at their heels.

“Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams”

(1 Samuel 15:22).

A warning: Too many who miss His “window of grace” are looking for God to outline and explain every step and detail that their obedience will call for. Only then, with their full understanding and decision based on every possible pro and con, they expect God to give them a big green light that says “Go!!!”

It NEVER happens this way. He’s training you up to walk by a faith that’s ever deepening with testimony of His power and loving orchestration. If you’re looking for something like the scenario above, you’ll certainly miss God’s will for you.

Realize that it *is* appropriate to be concerned about the feelings of those you’ll be leaving. But, never ever *fear* you’ll hurt their feelings. *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts [immediately obeys] the LORD is kept safe”* (Proverbs 29:25). Don’t let yourself get snared and thereby miss the window of God’s grace.

The poem below is very special to us. It clearly reveals the way of God, and the immediate obedience that’s required of you.

STEP BY STEP

*“As thou goest, step by step
I will open the way before thee”*
(Proverbs 4:12, New Translation).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.
Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning
Of My Command, but thou the light shalt gain;
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,
And as thou goest, all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,
One step is far enough for faith to see;
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thine adversaries counting,
Dare every peril, save to disobey;
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,
Having My promise, needing nothing more
Than just to know, where’er the future find thee,
In all thy journeying I go before.

Frank J. Exley

Our Lord gives His children only one step of guidance at a time. If you’re looking for the whole plan to be laid out for you, stop. That’s not His way! And your frustration will make you vulnerable to bad-mouthing God. *One step* is far enough for anyone’s faith to see. Take that step before you seek the next step on the journey.

If you’ve received God’s guidance to act, or have a conviction of what you must do to live obediently in His Word, then do it! Your family needs to see Him glorified through you in your loving, obedient trust.

As the old saying goes:
He who hesitates is lost!