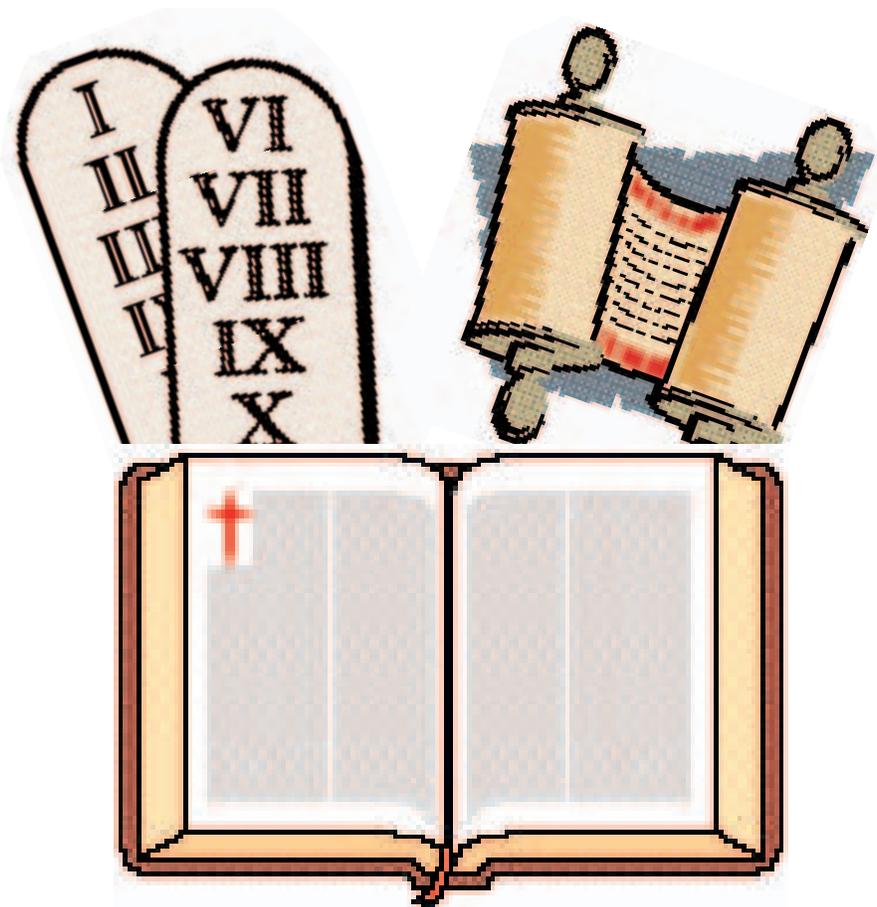


Hebraic Home Fellowships Must Produce Godly Generations

*Training Succeeding Generations to Follow Jesus
Is An Inter-Generational Responsibility*

Part 4

Our Father's Goals & Objectives For Home Fellowships



Introduction to Part 4

In Part 3 you learned about the tribal understanding that undergirds the Bible's concept of "Church." The *extended family relationships* of the Church which Jesus is building serve a far greater purpose than for people to just experience relational closeness with one another. Through intimate fellowship with our Father and His Son, Jesus, as well as with each other, you're called to fulfill KINGDOM purposes and goals.

Home fellowships are much like a military squad. The members *do* become close friends as they serve side by side, but they "enlisted" to fulfill a purpose far greater than their friendship. The extended spiritual family of a home fellowship serves their glorious and beloved King to advance His Kingdom.

As with soldiers, the extended family of a home fellowship realizes that their very lives may be at stake as they fulfill their mission in times of battle. Only by mutual interdependent cooperation can "soldiers for Jesus" accomplish their fellowship goals and purposes in the Kingdom and bring glory to their King.

It's the "death-to-one's-self" heart that enables a military unit to effectively fight their battles to victory. For example, military Special Forces units have this one element in common — they are *dead to themselves*. For followers of Jesus: Completing the mission and caring for the well-being of those in *our* spiritual care are more important than focusing on preserving our own earthly lives in complacent comfort and acceptance by the world's standards. We who are in Christ need to be like-minded according to His Spirit and life-extending to others.

Think about Jesus' instruction to His disciples to be "salt of the earth" (see Matthew 5:13). Salt served many vital purposes among the Hebrew people. It was a flavoring agent, a medicinal element, a preservative, a required part of the grain offering, and a very necessary nutrient for life in that hot climate!

Much of the salt came from the Dead Sea, where it was harvested in clumps with the sandy dirt still attached. When the user reached the part where the salt mingled with the dirt, he threw it out. It was less than useless because when salt is ground into the earth, plants have a hard time growing. That's why enemies sowed with salt the fields of those they conquered so that the vanquished couldn't grow crops.

In the spiritual dimension, the *salt* of our righteous lives brings healing, zest, and preservation of the soul — as long as our "salt" doesn't lose its flavor! If by compromise with the world's ways some "dirt" pollutes our relationships and fruitfulness for our Lord in His Kingdom, then our so-called religious works are useless. Actually, they're LESS than useless because our sinful compromise brings down the name of Jesus among unbelievers and inoculates them against Him and His holy and gracious gift of salvation.

"Salty" righteousness is worked out in our lives as we stay repentant. The "clean hands and pure heart" of walking in obedient trust through the Spirit of Christ produces the holy boldness that's needed to extend our God's KINGDOM. As you'll see, the first of four objectives of a home fellowship, *upholding communal righteousness*, is the crucial foundation for all the other objectives to bear fruit that brings our Lord praise.

Hebraic home fellowships *serve the interests of God*. Note the key distinction between Hebraic and Hellenist gatherings.

- **Hebraic home fellowships are extended spiritual family working together through the power of God's grace. Every activity and purpose is evaluated by whether it is pleasing to God, aligns with His Word, and fulfills His purposes. Staying "salty" is key!**
- **Hellenist small groups rely on manmade techniques and programs. Need for God's empowerment may be taught, but it isn't considered necessary. Success is evaluated by numbers and participant comfort levels, not by God's standards and purposes. Compromise with the world is tolerated.**

Because the United States is an Atomistic, individualistic-oriented nation, *communally* preparing succeeding generations to follow Jesus is going to require dramatic change in people's attitudes and lifestyle in order to accomplish this objective.

Remember some of the symptoms of an Atomistic Society from Part 2:

- Ties within the family unit disintegrate, and *obsession with individualism* develops.
- Individual *rights* are emphasized rather than family responsibilities and the good of the whole.
- *Unabashed selfishness* is normative.
- Atomistic people resemble a swarm of antagonistic insects engaged in *conscience-less* combat to maintain their *status quo*.
- Commitments and responsibilities are regarded as *infringements on personal freedom*, disregarding the needs or suffering of others.

Most of the people in your home fellowship are the product of Atomistic influence as well as public education. Unless they've been "deprogrammed" from the insidious influence of Humanism which permeates this culture, they still see *themselves* as the center of their world rather than God.

Probably few of your extended spiritual family have experienced cooperative endeavors which involved *collective accomplishment* of a common goal unless they've served in the military or taken part in team sports or similar activities.

At the retreat center we administrated from 1983-93 we set up a confidence course with various elements involving ropes, pulleys, tires and barrels. The course was designed so that no one could complete an element without the help of other people. Our goal was to train guests to cooperate by *discussing together* how to complete an element until



they came up with a plan and then executed it.

For instance, we hung a tire from a tree about five feet off the ground. We told the group that they were on a sinking ship and the tire was a port hole — the only way they could get off the ship.



We'd then encourage them as a team to discover a solution to get everyone off the ship. Then, they'd carry out their plan. For the vast majority, *cooperative discussion* and *communal accomplishment* were foreign practices. Often many would grow frustrated, especially if it took a while to plan or execute the task.

After completing several elements on the confidence course, though, most of the retreaters would start to unite in their attitude and want to help one another achieve the goal. The exceptions were mostly people who were use to getting their own way working alone. They were uncomfortable in cooperative projects. Usually it was the *oldest child* in a family who was the least cooperative. The give-and-take that was necessary in these group situations irritated them.

You'll find in *Our Father's Goals and Objectives for Home Fellowships* that a Hebraic home fellowship is a *communal endeavor* of serving our Lord in His Kingdom. Built on the Trustee Family style, the extended spiritual family of a Home Fellowship calls for *self-sacrifice* and *self-denial* — elements which are foreign to those influenced by Humanism, and whose motivations align with the contemporary Atomistic culture.

Elders and others in the fellowship family who are determined to see the Kingdom advanced will need to earnestly solicit everyone to do their part in fulfilling our Father's goals and objectives. There are no spectators or "lone ranger" Christians in the Kingdom! The fellowships of God are like the human body, with all the parts fulfilling their responsibilities in mutual regard for each other.

[For more on mutual participation, see our book *God's Instruments For War: Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare.*]

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Part 4

Our Father's Goals & Objectives For Home Fellowships

Your life is a pilgrimage that's intended by our loving God to fulfill great purposes by His grace at work in you! Our Father has outlined in His Word three very special goals for your relationship with Him:

- to increasingly *trust* the Lord you love,
- to bear much fruit for Him,
- to grow in the character of Jesus.

Don't feel overwhelmed by this privilege! Through His indwelling Spirit, our Father gives you both the *will* and the *power* to do His work. **This is called grace.** But His work is really a way of life, the same life Jesus would live if He were you:

In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matthew 5:16).

Any motivation or activity that settles for less than glorifying our Father makes that endeavor an *idol*.

When your life is joined together in unity with your extended spiritual family in a home fellowship, you are equipped *collectively* to bring our Lord praise! As Paul reassured the believers in Rome,

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 15:5,6).

• **Authentic fellowship** finds load-bearing believers throughout the week *encouraging each other* as you wholeheartedly trust God together, following our Lord Jesus and carrying each other's burdens. You're being built up to testify of the powerful love of Jesus through word and deed for a very specific purpose. Our Father wants sons and daughters who have tasted His power as they've walked in loving, obedient trust. They yearn to

reach out to others to draw them to Lord Jesus, and to train successors in the faith!

• **The authentic ministry** that was embraced by our Hebraic forefathers takes place as a Christ-follower *comes alongside* someone to help him/her to lovingly trust their Lord in all circumstances. You may not have all the answers as you minister, but you know the One Who does, and *He never fails!* Point the way to Him and bear the burdens of the one you're ministering to through prayer and action.

And, as a wise person once said, "Always be prepared to BE the answer to prayer if the Spirit prompts you to!"

- Describe your pilgrimage with Jesus thus far in terms of how your trust has grown, your fruit has brought Him praise, and how your character has been transforming into Christ's likeness.

- How in the past have you experienced authentic fellowship and authentic ministry? Are these taking place now? In what ways?

Our Father's Purpose for Home Fellowships

Numerous passages support the reasons our Father calls His people into true fellowship in Jesus as they grow in relationship with one another.

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1. Your fellowship with others must *spur you on to glorify our Father* through praise, worship, and a lifestyle that yields glorifying testimony of praise to Him. [See Matthew 5:13-16.]
2. Your fellowship with one another should result in *progressive growth in Christlike character* in each person as you walk in the scriptural “one-anothers”. [See 1 Corinthians 11:1; Philippians. 2:5-11.]
3. Your fellowship must provide the corrective/confrontational means to *assist each other to enter the narrow gate*. [See 1 Thessalonians 5:12; 2 Timothy 4:2; also, our book, *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*.]
4. Your fellowship must strive *to extend the Kingdom of God on earth*, pursuing the lost so that they too may enter Covenant with our Father in Jesus. [See Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8.]

Because of the pervasive influence of Hellenism within Christendom for centuries, many have lost sight of God’s goals for biblical fellowship in homes as *extended spiritual family in Jesus*. Please, indelibly blaze these loving objectives of our Lord into your heart:

- *to spur you on to glorify our Father through love-grounded, obedient trust*
- *to encourage progressive growth in Christ-like character by one-anothering*
- *to help each other enter the narrow gate by walking in Jesus’ steps together*
- *to extend the Kingdom of God on earth that others might respond by grace.*

These four goals call for *cooperative interdependence* among those in your home fellowship family — followers of Jesus *together* who are deeply committed to each other and who *collectively* desire to glorify our Father. [For more on spiritual cooperative interdependence, see our book, *God’s Instruments for War*.]

The human body is interconnected in a way that parallels our Lord’s design for His Bride — spiritual *body life*. Each part of the body serves the other parts, and collectively the parts serve the whole. If you truly yearn to serve our Lord through these goals, make sure you’ve humbled yourself to *need* others and to *serve* others as extended spiritual family!

Now that we’ve addressed the goals and purposes of a home fellowship, let’s touch on four specific objectives for individuals, families and home fellowships that enable you by His grace to meet our Father’s goals:

1. **Uphold communal righteousness.**
2. **Develop load-bearing relationships.**
3. **Multiply through actively sharing the Gospel.**
4. **Prepare succeeding generations to follow Jesus.**

The first three objectives will be covered here in Part 4. Objective #4 is discussed in Part 5, “*Home Fellowships: Communally Preparing Succeeding Generations To Follow Jesus*”.

Objectives may be viewed as specific indicators that help you discern obedience to God. *Love-grounded, obedient trust* as a way of life applies to both yourself, your family and your faith community. Are you on the path prescribed by God in His Word? You really don’t want to wait until you stand before the Judgment Throne to find out that you’ve disregarded our Father’s scriptural goals and lived in self-gratifying compromise with the world. Paul warns us, “*If we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment*” (1 Corinthians 11:3).

The four biblical objectives for true fellowship are not merely vague ideas to consider then stash away. They represent four foundational practices that fashion a home fellowship into the righteous, extended spiritual family that God ordained it to be:

- **God-centered rather than man-centered,**
- **fulfilling His goals rather than meeting man’s desires.**

Are you eager to restore the goals and objectives that were so tenaciously embraced by the called-out ones who first followed Jesus? This calls for a love that is commensurate with *their* love for Him, regardless of personal cost. This kind of love comes only through yielded dependence on the Spirit of Christ.

The remainder of this article on home fellowships offers some considerations to help you *collectively carry out* the objectives that enabled fellowship in homes among the earliest followers of Jesus to be so interpersonally intimate and spiritually powerful. As you reflect on these objectives, evaluate your own faith practices, both individually and communally. Ask our Lord to help *you* see these restored in your faith experience as you lovingly serve your King!

The first objective, **Uphold Communal Righteousness**, is the underpinning for the rest. Take your time to completely understand *why* it's so important. If you're unconcerned about righteousness in your Christian walk, nothing else will go well for you.

Home Fellowship Objective #1: *Uphold Communal Righteousness*

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God"
(2 Corinthians 7:1).

*Can you describe the innate weakness of humanity? Our Father, the Creator of mankind, is all too aware of our primary frailty: *Man is bent on sinning.**

Because of their decision to rebel against God, not even Adam and Eve were able to raise their children in the Garden of Eden. Their deliberate choice to sin severed their intimate fellowship with God and brought uncompromising consequences: The couple was cast out of the home in which they'd

enjoyed such loving intimacy with their Father. No childish laughter rang in Eden. Thorns made food-gathering difficult. Their first son, Cain, born in pain, murdered his godly brother.

The first family's sin was just the beginning of mankind's intentional violation of all that was good — and God grieved.

*The Lord saw how great man's wickedness on the earth had become, and that every **inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.** The Lord was **grieved** that He had made man on the earth, and His heart was **filled with pain** (Genesis 6:5,6; see also Genesis 8:21).*

You might think that with the coming of Jesus, humanity could better discern good from evil. But human nature hasn't changed, "*for all sin and fall short of the glory of God*" (Romans 3:23).

A Warning. A heresy that's been creeping around western Christianity proposes that man is evolving into a holier, more ethical human being. Read Matthew 24 to see how this world comes to an end — certainly not through the goodness of man!

Communal Responsibility For One Another

Our Hebraic forefathers in the faith were impacted by a truth that's been lost to most people today: Sin and failure to repent don't affect just the individual guilty party. None of us lives in a spiritual vacuum. **Know this: Unrepentance by one person within a home fellowship will hinder the prayers of everyone in that fellowship family from being answered.**

Do you realize that most commands in the Newer Testament are written in the *plural* rather than the singular? Scriptural directives are proclaimed to the *collective body* of followers of Jesus.

True, each follower of Jesus owns his or her loving responsibility to God to obey His

Word in His Spirit's power. But because of their *communal awareness as extended spiritual family*, the early followers of Jesus were deeply concerned with more than individual righteousness. As a pulsating spiritual body they understood the need for *corporate righteousness*. They knew themselves to be *mishpachah* [mish-puh-KAH], extended family who are responsible for one another as brothers and sisters in fellowship.

Those of us who are the product of Hellenized Christianity may think that we can hide our "secret sins" and hurt only ourselves in so doing. Not so! The Bible reiterates that unrepentance by one brings terrible consequences on the heads of others. In God's sight, we *are* our brother's keepers!

The Hebrew Scriptures recounted that God prevented the entire nation of Israel from conquering the tiny city of Ai because of the hidden sin of one man, Achan (see Joshua 7). King David's sin of counting his troops (see 2 Samuel 24) brought three days of plague upon all the people. Jonah's insubordinate retreat from God's purposes wreaked havoc on all the ship's storm-tossed sailors (see Jonah 1).

God upheld His same standard of righteousness for the fledgling Church by taking the lives of Ananias and Sapphira (see Acts 5:1-11). The consequences of that deceptive couple's disobedience thrust holy fear on all who heard of their deaths, a reminder to not mistake God's love for toleration of sin.

And isn't winking at sin epidemic in western Christendom today because people fear being called *judgmental* or *legalistic* if they confront the unrepentant as God's Word calls for?

If you were among the earliest followers of Jesus, you'd grasp right away the importance of God's standard for relational accountability. His standard encompassed the responsibility to uphold "*communal righteousness*." It was on the basis of *communal responsibility for righteousness* that Jesus could command the church to confront sin:

- *If your brother [a fellow follower of Jesus] sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you [without slandering him to anyone, even as a "prayer request"]. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.*
- *But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'* [With the presence of witnesses the situation becomes a "legal" matter to be weighed according to God's law.]
- *If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church [the "called-out ones" who know him well as his fellowship family in homes]; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector [Recognize that he indeed is not walking as a follower of Jesus and needs to turn from his sin and receive forgiveness from our Father.] I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*
- *Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. [The ancient sages taught that where two or three were studying God's Word, the Holy Spirit was present to help them apply it according to God's will.]*
- *For where two or three come together in My name [the principle of two or three witnesses to confirm a matter as of God], there am I with them (Matthew 18:15-20; see also 2 Corinthians 13:1).*

The above passage applies more specifically to the close relationships of families and home fellowships than to the larger congregation gathering. Why? Because it takes *ongoing personal contact* to recognize unrepentant sin in someone else. This is especially true in the case of attitudinal sins such as bitterness or unforgiveness.

First, you need the personal courage and commitment to care whether a brother or sister is walking in freedom or is burdened by bondage to sin. *Second*, a home fellow-

ship of committed, extended spiritual family is small enough to recognize when everyone's prayers are going unanswered due to an individual's unrepentance.

[See *Restoring the Early Church, Chapter 11 "Promoting Righteousness"; Discussing How To Restore The Early Church, Lesson 45*; or our video, *Jesus In Your Home: Fellowship In Homes: Segment 3*.]

If you hold onto unconfessed sin, you have no fellowship with our Lord. You also have no true fellowship with anyone else who is walking uprightly in the Spirit of Jesus:

If we claim to have fellowship with Him while we are walking in the darkness, we are lying and not living out the truth. But if we are walking in the light, as He is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of His Son Jesus purifies us from all sin (1 John 1:6,7).

The precondition of our fellowship with each other is repentance and restoration of fellowship with our Father and His Son, Jesus.

Our merciful and gracious God provides the means to restore fellowship and righteousness when they've been sundered by sin: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).*

David, a man after God's own heart, was an adulterer and murderer. In order to restore fellowship the Lord sent the prophet Nathan to rebuke him. His heart broken and repentant before his God, David confessed his sin. Forgiven and cleansed, his intimacy with God was restored.

The Prayers of the Unrepentant Are Not Heard By God

The ceiling might just as well be brass for those who pray with unconfessed sin, presumptuously expecting that God will answer them anyway.

Peter affirms *righteousness* as God's prerequisite for answering prayers: *"For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and His ears are attentive to their prayer, but*

the face of the Lord is against those who do evil" (1 Peter 3:12).

Even the uneducated blind man whom Jesus healed reminded the haughty religious leaders of our Father's condition for answering prayer: *"We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the godly man who does His will" (John 9:31).*

To reinforce righteousness as God's prerequisite for answered prayer, James refers back to Proverbs 15:29: *"The Lord is far from the wicked but He hears the prayer of the righteous."* The following passage identifies the vital link between *confession* and *righteousness* for today's followers of Jesus and their faith communities:

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit (James 5:16-18).

Since Elijah *"was a man just like us,"* should we expect any less results from our prayers? Is your faith community collectively walking the path of righteousness and repentance so that you all are *available* as Elijah was to pray when called upon? Through your *answered prayer* our Father is glorified!

Confession and **repentance** within your home fellowship family are key to maintaining ongoing prayer that brings divine answers:

- **Confession** acknowledges that sin has indeed occurred.
- **Repentance** prompts you to turn away from that area of sin and turn toward our Father through Jesus to receive forgiveness and restoration of fellowship, and to live according to God's way.

The family-style commitment of early Church home gatherings bolstered commu-

nal responsibility for keeping God's commands. Jesus defined the nature of His spiritual family when He declared, "*For whoever does the will of My Father in heaven is My brother and sister and mother*" (Matthew 12:50).

The earliest followers of Jesus were well-acquainted with the character and awesomeness of the God of the Hebrew Bible (the Older Testament). From His Word they understood God's critical conditions for answering the prayers of His people: the *righteousness* that comes by His grace, and the *trust* in His faithfulness that His Spirit gifts us with. Grateful awareness that their righteousness came *only by the blood of Jesus* impelled them to live by His Word.

Our Father's Blessing for the Righteous: He Answers Their Prayers

The earliest followers of Jesus drew near to God to worship Him as *living sacrifices* and to have their *prayers answered*. This may sound like a small point, but think about it:

It wasn't the act of praying, but answered prayer that brought miraculous responses and got the early called-out ones noticed.

The book of Acts begins with a small band of disciples who "*all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers*" (Acts 1:14). When Peter and John were released from the Sanhedrin's detention (see Acts 4), they went directly to their fellow believers to testify and to rejoice! "*After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly*" (Acts 4:31).

When these people prayed, something happened! Miraculous answers to prayer abounded as they trusted wholeheartedly in the One to Whom they prayed. Peter, chained and imprisoned by Herod (see Acts 12), experienced miraculous release from prison as a result of people interceding together in a home: "*When this had dawned on him, he went to the house of Mary the*

mother of John, also called Mark, where many people had gathered and were praying" (v.12).

Think about Paul and his numerous calls for prayer: "**Pray continually**" (1 Thessalonians 5:17); "**And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints**" (Ephesians 6:18); "*With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of His calling, and that by His power He may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith*" (2 Thessalonians 1:11).

Paul wasn't asking that mere words or rote repetition be lifted to God. He was earnestly seeking the response that God would give in answer to the prayers of the righteous.

You Must Pray Unceasingly Because Prayer Is Spiritual Warfare

When the Holy Spirit confirms a matter for you or your home fellowship family to pray about, you need to intercede until the answer comes. Prayer in the early Church entailed *spiritual warfare*. The example of the prophet Daniel from the Hebrew Bible demonstrated that *persevering prayer* and *trust* in a loving Father were key to God's response. When you pray, you're continuously *entrusting* your petition to our Father until His response is received.

Scripture reports that God answered Daniel the day he began to pray. A *demonic delay* hindered the response from reaching him, however. Satanic forces opposed the ministering angels who were bringing God's answer (see Daniel 10; Hebrews 1:14).

Urged on by unrelenting trust, righteous Daniel prayed for twenty-one days until the heavenly messenger, with the help of the archangel Michael, broke through with God's response. Don't give up crying out to our Father for that which accords with His will!

Centuries later, Jesus voiced the parable of the persistent widow (see Luke 18:1-8) to encourage His followers to pray without ceasing: "*And will not God bring about justice*

for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night?" (Luke 18:7). Casual "one-shot petitions" are as fruitless as a basketball that bounces off the rim. That's more like wishful thinking than trusting reliance on the All-Powerful to intervene!

Satan realizes the power of communal righteousness combined with prayer that perseveres until the answer is received. If he can't hinder your prayer through unconfessed sin, he'll discourage prayer by instilling doubt and unbelief that your Lord will ever answer you.

This is why the relational righteousness of your fellowship family in Jesus who are in close-knit commitment to one another is critical: to encourage each person to persist in prayer.

A home fellowship that continues to experience God-sized answers to their prayers is strengthened and encouraged by each answer. Answered prayer that brings glory to our Father becomes communally addictive! Each testimony of answered prayer is a bullet to pierce the resistant armor of doubt and unbelief of someone you share the gospel of Jesus with!

Through communal courage, your extended spiritual family can fulfill Objective #3, *Multiply Through Actively Sharing the Gospel*. Answered prayer is like artillery that blazes the way for the Gospel to be received by those who hear your testimonies and marvel at our Father's intervention.

Separate From the Unrepentant

Jesus warns with greatest seriousness both the religious compromisers of His day as well as those today who *exalt themselves* with self-motivated spiritual activities but *bring down* His holy reputation:

Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name drive out demons and perform many miracles? Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from Me, you evildoers!' (Matthew 7:22,23).

Jesus can't allow into His sinless, heavenly presence an unrepentant person who embraces wickedness behind a veneer of spirituality.

Your responsibility to God out of love for Him as well as love for your faith family calls for you to confront evildoers in your fellowship with the reality of their sin. If unrepentance continues, then those in Jesus must separate from that person in order to uphold His righteous character and standards.

Do pray in earnest desire that the offender might indeed turn from darkness and be restored to fellowship. (Naturally, as Paul wrote, that doesn't mean you shun those who don't claim to follow Jesus. Otherwise you'd have to leave the world! And how could you share the Covenant good news with them if you don't cultivate relationship?)

When all human confrontation proves fruitless in stirring the heart of an unrepentant person in your home fellowship to repent, Paul's instruction is clear:

When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. . . Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? (1 Corinthians 5:4-6).

If you remain unrepentant and cling to your sin, in time you'll influence others to tolerate unrighteousness or rationalize sin in their own lives. Handing a person over to Satan is part of God's mercy as an important last chance so that his *"sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."*

Understanding this truth is crucial. If you don't confront the unrepentant in your fellowship family, others will be influenced to harden their hearts and choose lawlessness. Equally as bad, everyone will become victim to unanswered prayer. Can you now appreciate the significance of upholding righteousness?

Home Fellowships Objective #2: Develop Load-bearing Relationships

The Influence of Relationships

“And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.”

(Hebrews 10:24,25)

Objective 2, developing and nurturing relationships in Jesus who are willing and able to bear the load for each other, is intimately connected to Objective 1, upholding communal righteousness within your fellowship family. Communal righteousness makes the second objective all the easier!

Within the context of fellowship, the Bible emphasizes that men and women are influenced either for righteousness or for evil by the close relationships they keep. *Right relationships* can spur you on to greater love, courage, and service for our Lord. *Wrong relationships* can deter you from the courage you need to accomplish His purposes in you and through you.

Wisdom literature of Jesus’ time advised people to consider carefully whom they chose to spend time with — someone with whom you could mutually press on in pleasing God:

“Associate with a godly person whom you know to be a keeper of the commandments, who is like-minded with yourself, and who will grieve with you if you fail.”

If you want to grow in Christ’s likeness, you need to pray that our Lord will unite you with the very ones who will spur you on as devoted spiritual family!

The following verses depict the influence your relationships can have on you.

“He who walks with the wise grows wise, but a companion of fools suffers harm” (Proverbs 13:20).

“A violent man entices his neighbor and leads him down a path that is not good” (Proverbs 16:29).

“Do not make friends with a hot-tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnared” (Proverbs 22:24).

“Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

“Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him” (Titus 3:10).

“You were running a good race. Who cut in on you and kept you from obeying the truth? That kind of persuasion does not come from the one who calls you. ‘A little yeast works through the whole batch of dough’” (Galatians 5:7-9).

The Bible repeatedly contrasts the life of the righteous with that of the unrighteous. The comparison in Proverbs is particularly poignant: *The wicked man flees though no one pursues; but the righteous are as bold as a lion* (Proverbs 28:1). The difference is easy to spot! Weigh the impact of this verse on your own relationships:

- Do those with whom you share intimate fellowship stir you to fulfill our Father’s goals and objectives? If yes, how?

- Who in your fellowship draws you to compromise with the ways and activities of the world? In the time you’ve known these individuals, have they grown closer to hungering for the Lordship of Jesus, or have you become more lukewarm in your earnestness for Him? Explain.

Here's a thought to anchor: The extended spiritual family of a home fellowship is a *spiritual warfare unit*. Through the combined prayers of bold, righteous people, much can be accomplished in the Kingdom of God. With this in mind, many biblical examples warn against the negative influence of companions who entertain unrighteousness when courage is called for.

Interpersonal influence impacts for good or for evil those in a home fellowship family who are prayerfully trusting God as they engage in spiritual warfare. Heed this admonition to our spiritual forefathers.

When you are about to go into battle, the priest shall come forward and address the army. . . He shall say: 'Hear, O Israel, today you are going into battle against your enemies. Do not be fainthearted or afraid; do not be terrified or give way to panic before them.' Then the officers shall add, 'Is any man afraid or fainthearted? Let him go home so that his brothers will not become disheartened too' (Deuteronomy 20:2,3,8).

The Bold Attract The Bold

Choosing to walk in righteousness helps you to personally support one another so that you can courageously carry out the other KINGDOM objectives and purposes of our Father. Righteousness is the most potent of spiritual "glues." Next to love, boldly living as Jesus would in the power of His Spirit is one of the most important gifts we offer to both God and one another.

Biblical men of courage attracted one another. Jonathan's devoted trust in his Lord spurred his armor-bearer to accompany him on a valorous attack against their enemy. *"Jonathan said to his young armor-bearer, 'Come, let's go over to the outpost of those uncircumcised fellows. Perhaps the Lord will act in our behalf. Nothing can hinder the Lord from saving, whether by many or by few'" (1 Samuel 14:6).*

Marvel at what God does when He finds even one or two bold people: *"Then Saul and all his men assembled and went to the battle.*

They found the Philistines in total confusion, striking each other with their swords" (1 Samuel 14:20).

David, too, was consumed by courageous regard for his God's honor: *"David said to the Philistine, 'You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied'" (1 Samuel 17:45).*

From the time David and Jonathan met, these two valiant men were drawn to each other: *"And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself" (1 Samuel 20:17).* The courage these men shared produced an intense devotion that was eulogized by David: *"I grieve for you, Jonathan my brother; you were very dear to me. Your love for me was wonderful, more wonderful than that of women" (1 Samuel 1:26).*

People who are courageous for God attract other courageous people to themselves. The prophet Samuel describes the "men of valor" who joined David. Three mighty men in turn attracted thirty others who embodied courage beyond the average (2 Samuel 23:8-12).

Now consider God's perspective and purpose for your home fellowship family in light of earliest called-out ones:

- **Righteousness produces holy boldness.**
- **People who are valiant for God attract others of courage.**
- **Together those who live righteously in Spirit-graced courage extend His Kingdom on earth.**

The writer to the Hebrews unites *courage* with *encouragement* to keep Christ-followers from stumbling into sin's trap:

But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are His house if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast. See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God.

But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first (Hebrews 3:6,12-14).

Who Are Your Spiritual Family?

“Now that you have purified yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply from the heart”

(1 Peter 1:22).

Relational fruit is produced when extended spiritual family members uphold righteousness in their daily lives in love-grounded, obedient trust. Your relationships deepen through heart-prompted service to each other. This supportive love in action is called “load-bearing”, and is demonstrated by the 54 “one another” passages found in the Newer Testament.

In the Hebraic pattern of gathering together in homes, believing households joined with other families and individuals to fulfill God's goals and objectives as His beloved children. Each was strengthened in these gatherings as *brothers and sisters*, zealous to bear much fruit in His Name. As you explore the biblical understanding of “family”, you'll better understand the quality of load-bearing that is developed and nurtured in a home fellowship family.

Two thousand years ago when Jesus walked the rocky paths of Israel, families functioned much differently than they do in the US today. Our Lord was building upon the truths, promises and commands of the *Older Testament* as a *continuum* of what He was revealing and expanding under the new covenant.

Because western society has become so fragmented, the idea of “family” has devolved into a very small unit, be it a husband and wife with or without children, to the worldly/pagan concepts of family that range from homosexual unions to various individuals choosing to live under the same roof.

[See Appendix B, “*The Atomistic Family*”, at the end of Part 2 for further description of the state of current western culture.]

However, when you look at “family” from the context of its meaning in the biblical languages, your perspective is defined according to the purposes of our Father. The *mishpachah* (mish-puh-KAH) we mentioned earlier refers to an ever-growing circle of relatives in Jesus who *share the same blood tie through HIS shed blood*.

Broader in scope than the traditional English meaning, Hebraic “family” reflected a subdivision of a clan, a tribe or of the nation itself. The Hebraic *mishpachah* was not simply an individual's identity as a parent or a child; family represented kinfolk collectively responsible for producing Godly progeny. The whole community had a stake in this relationship!

It takes *tribal* thinking to fully appropriate this responsibility. Tribalism isn't a primitive step backward for God's people today, but a *vital step forward* if you yearn to recapture the relational intimacy that's been lost.

Now consider “family” as it pertains to the covenant in blood that followers of Jesus share through His atonement. From a spiritual sense, we *share the same blood tie through the indwelling Spirit of Jesus with all who are in covenant with Him!*

The responsibility to help one another walk uprightly rests in the communal context of *spiritual family and clan*. This relational responsibility is the primary means by which the fellowship family fulfills the 54 “one-another” directives given to followers of Jesus. In fact, almost all of 1050 commands in the Newer Testament are addressed to the plural “you” — to a *faith community* rather than to a specific individual.

Remember that others in your home fellowship are *spiritual relatives*—family you look forward to being with, family with whom you're developing an ever-deepening, load-bearing relationship as you serve our King.

If you don't see them as *kinfolk* you really care about, your home fellowship will be shallow and impersonal. Your times together will degenerate into religious form and ritual, or social entertainment. Without loving intimacy, you'll fail to multiply through bearing witness to the power of the Gospel to change lives.

No Spirit love = no transforming life.

Spiritual Family: Supports Personal Responsibility, Confronts Irresponsibility

Out of relational commitment to each other, the extended spiritual family in a home fellowship must always support the *home of each person* as the *basic building block* for spiritual development. Your home fellowship should never try to compensate for irresponsibility in individuals or families who have no desire to wholeheartedly to serve King Jesus.

A home fellowship is a faith community of individuals and families who are *committed to Jesus and to one another. Collectively, you're as strong as the weakest home in your fellowship.* If an individual or family are choosing to live irresponsibly, it's appropriate and biblical to come alongside to help those who are weaker to develop reliability. But never step in to *take on* responsibility that is rightly theirs.

Unconfronted irresponsibility will burden into an ever increasing burden on others, creating and increasing apprehension in your fellowship family. Appeasing irresponsibility *perpetuates the sin* that has fed it, thereby hindering your prayers from being answered. And dependence on our God to answer prayer as *each of us walks in holiness* brings about the kind of testimony that furthers His Kingdom.

[See *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation* for more on confronting issues that need to be addressed so that apprehension doesn't rule.]

Home Fellowship Objective #3: Multiply Through Actively Sharing The Gospel Of The Covenant

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore [as you're going] make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age'"
(Matthew 28:18-20).

Our Father's heart aches for the lost. He yearns for them to grieve over their separation from Him because of their sin and respond to His Spirit's loving call to repent. He extends both the opportunity and the power to turn from their sin in humility, and to come to Him for forgiveness and reconciliation through Jesus' sacrifice.

YOU and those in your extended-family faith community are the representatives of Jesus in the flesh. YOU are the "Good News with skin on" to bear witness to what you've seen and heard in His loving power! Your local "arena of operations" is your community, workplace and neighborhood.

[To learn more about the extended spiritual family of home fellowship, see *Restoring the Early Church*, Chapters 11 and 12; *Pastoring By Elders*, Chapters 13-15; and Section 4: Home Fellowship, in our *Jesus In Your Home* video series.]

To get started in sharing the Good News — or to build upon what you've already been doing to reach others for Jesus — consider the proven suggestions below. As testified by evangelist Ed Silvano, this approach is Scriptural and has worked wonders in neighborhoods throughout Argentina. Watch our Lord show Himself strong as He works in and through you and your fellowship family!

1. Create perimeters of holiness around each home in your faith community.

Remember that the first objective for fellowship in the face-to-face environment of a home is to uphold righteousness through His Spirit and walk in fellowship with our Father and His Son, Jesus. Again, the early Church understood that God answers the prayers of the righteous. Upholding righteousness is the responsibility of each home!

From our Father's vantage point, much of the Church today represents disjointed, self-serving POW camps which pose no threat to Satan's domain. When you create a perimeter of righteousness around the homes in your faith community, you put Satan on guard. The enemy all too clearly recognizes that through righteous, effective prayer, our Father's will can be accomplished and His Kingdom expanded through His Spirit-empowered children.

Why is it vital that you and your family erect perimeters of righteousness?

- Perimeters *secure a sanctuary* of spiritual refuge and nurture in your home. Righteousness produces peace among your family members, and peace is the necessary environment for love to grow.
- Those within the perimeters *experience unity* as they pay the price of forfeiting their own inclination to sin in order to please their Lord and grow in the character of Jesus.
- By upholding communal righteousness within the perimeters, *prayers will be answered* and testimony to His faithfulness will pour forth.

It's important for each person or family to establish *halakhahs* (HAH-luh-kuz) of righteousness for their home. *Halakhahs* are the specific applications of obedience you've established through prayer and Bible investigation.

[For more on applying God's Word to your everyday decisions, see our book *Christian Halakhahs*.]

When you've determined the biblical parameters for yourself and your household, scrutinize your home for any unholy items or practices. Sinful reading or internet materials, offensive television programs, unholy music, even occult relics can hinder your intimacy with God and the effectiveness of your prayer. So will alcohol or drug abuse, rage, or excessive self-indulgence of any kind.

Prayerfully examine your attitudes and behavior toward each other in your family. *Is your home a sanctuary and refuge of love and peace for each family member and visitor?* If not, identify and confess your sins, and turn away from them to the choices our Lord Jesus would have you make so that righteousness is the hallmark of your home.

2. Guard your perimeter to protect it from infiltration.

Guarding the perimeter of your home calls for diligence, particularly on the part of fathers and elders. When holy perimeters have been established, Satan will try to infiltrate them by any scheme or temptation possible. Sin will seek you out like never before as an active demonic weapon. Satan has been watching the powerful effect of righteousness among Jesus' followers for generations. He won't sit back without trying to seduce you individually or collectively into sin or alienated relationships.

Satan's most common weapon of war against followers of Jesus is *unforgiveness* — bitterness. That's why Jesus warned, "*For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you*" (Matthew 6:14). That seed of unforgiveness can fester into a cancerous root of bitterness if you don't confront it right away. By *not* confronting unforgiveness, you're welcoming into your fellowship family someone whom our Father hasn't forgiven.

People who are plagued by ongoing bitterness may appear to be needy and ask for your help. But in time they'll defile others in your faith community through their refusal to renounce that unforgiveness and walk in holiness, without which they *won't see the Lord* (see Hebrews 12:14). That's why this command is so forcefully worded:

Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled (Hebrews 12:15).

God *has* offered the power of His grace for us to forgive in the manner through which He forgives. When a person chooses instead to arrogantly hold onto bitterness against another, he is nullifying the forgiveness our Father has extended to him. And if you step in to *listen* to one-sided slander shared by a bitter person against another, both you *and* the bitter individual become a source of defilement to others.

How can you recognize bitter people? They are generally so self-focused that they have little room for the needs and interests of others. Because of past experiences, they resent any form of correction, even if it's lovingly shared. Not having tasted restoration with the ones they blame or hate, bitter individuals *agitate others* who are in troubled relationships rather than encouraging them to seek forgiveness and reconciliation.

[For more, see the April 2001 *Mishpachah Yeshua* newsletter, "The Preeminence of Jesus"; also Lifebyte 40. **Do You Confront For Jesus? Or, Placate For Satan?**]

The world's way is to retaliate. But God urges His people to respond otherwise so that your response will align with His gracious purpose and will:

Do not be conformed to this world. Keep letting yourselves be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you will know what God wants and will agree that what He wants is good, satisfying and able to succeed. (Romans 12:2).

Notice that it's within *your mind* that you formulate the thoughts that will determine your actions. Be vigilant in your thought life! "***We take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ***" (2 Corinthians 10:5b). If you give Satan a foothold from which to operate, he can use you for *his* evil purposes and schemes.

When you're captive to Satan's will, you're not available to love and serve God. People who choose to cling to their bitterness, or any sin for that matter, need to "***come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will***" (2 Timothy 2:26).

[For more on dealing with captivity to spiritual forces, see our book *Demolishing Strongholds*.]

Don't underestimate how critical a secure perimeter is for effective spiritual warfare. If you are an elder leading a home fellowship family, encourage your flock by example as well as word to walk in holiness, forgiveness and repentance. Continue to emphasize that each person make a habit of cleansing their homes of unholy items and practices.

Wherever you detect tension or apprehension in marriages and other relationships within your extended spiritual family, visit them in their home. Come alongside them with your spouse to help them restore intimacy before Satan can establish a foothold.

How essential to be ever mindful of personal righteousness and the power of prayer to release God's intervention! If an elder is diligent and vigilant, then the faith community he's gatekeeping will function from a position of strength. The perimeter will be secure.

3. Expand your perimeter.

In keeping with our Father's goal to reconcile the lost, expand your perimeter. *Pray* for your neighborhood, school, workplace.

Establish personal relationships with unbelievers to reach their hearts. Those in your faith community should be *using their homes* as the primary place to represent Jesus to their world around them.

This is where *outreach* comes into play as you invite unbelieving acquaintances to your home to spend time socially with some of your home fellowship family. Together you're getting to know them and showing them the joy of relating to one another *because you care*.

Inviting a person into your home is one of the most powerful actions you can take to affirm him or her.

There is no biblical basis for bringing unbelievers into your home fellowship *worship times* in the hope that they might get saved. *Your relationship* with that individual is the key for his eyes to be opened to the holiness of God as he sees Jesus working in and through you by your testimonies.

As your relationship with him grows, you can *keep praying* that God will be working through encounters and circumstances in his life so that he'll see his need for forgiveness through Jesus and respond to the Spirit's beckoning. Those personal times of sharing with him *outside* the fellowship gatherings will prepare your curious friend to become a sincere seeker. During this time you can share the powerful truth of the Gospel of the Covenant with him.

When your unbelieving friend yields to Jesus as Lord of his life, the effort you've expended to befriend him will be even more appreciated when you can share true spiritual fellowship. People need to be connected to *other individuals*, not to a congregation per se. A home fellowship family is a series of inter-connected relationships, and your friend will be initially connected to the others *through you*.

Jesus calls everyone who is known by His Name to bring sinners to repentance and reconciliation with His Father so they can live in covenant union with His Spirit.

Relationships with unbelievers help you establish beachheads in enemy territory as you pierce the darkness with His light. To wage effective warfare:

- **Make a prayer list of the unbelievers with whom each person in your faith community has contact and is burdened for their salvation and life in Jesus.**

- **As a faith community, intercede for each unsaved person on a regular basis. Weaken the power of the enemy through prayer for those people. Ask our Father to bring about the encounters and circumstances in their lives that will begin to incline their hearts toward Jesus and respond to His grace.**

- **As a follower of Jesus, you have authority over the unclean spirits that will try to interfere with the salvation of the ones for whom you are praying. As you pray, bind the spirits in the name of Jesus. You can experience the same faith-filled confidence as your forefathers in the Kingdom: "Lord, even the demons submit to us in Your name!" (Luke 10:17).**

- **If you have the courage, ask your faith family to put a sign in their homes to indicate that theirs is a house of prayer, and that you will pray for any of the needs in their neighborhood. Then be sure to follow through and PRAY!**

Ask each fellowship family to keep a prayer notebook with four columns in it: date, petitioner, prayer request, date answered. Have each one ask the neighbors they encounter for specific prayer needs that they can note down and pray about. (They should urge those neighbors to let them know when and how the prayer was answered so they can write that in the notebook and give our Lord the praise!)

As your faith family walks through their neighborhood, they can intercede for these people and renounce in the authority of Jesus the spirits that interfere with our Father's

purposes. Consider the same plan for your workplace and the community groups and activities in which you participate.

4. Destroy Satan's perimeter by multiplying your faith community.

Any goal that *doesn't* include provision for new faith communities to be formed is an exercise in selfishness and, ultimately, futility. Plan ahead for new faith families that could accommodate new followers of Jesus.

Our Father, in the name of His Son Jesus, has given His people the power and authority to plant new faith communities. Shepherds of extended spiritual families need to be purposely training successors to protect, train, nurture and equip the new flocks that are birthed.

The size of a home fellowship is limited by the elders' ability to render account to God for the people. "Obey the ones leading you and submit. They keep watch over your souls as men who must give an account. Obey them so that they may do this with joy, not groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you" (Hebrews 13:17).

Home fellowship families which become too large foster impersonal forms of control. Rather than leading and nurturing brothers and sisters, the elders see themselves as *managing a group*.

As your faith communities multiply, they can remain affiliated and coordinated through the relationships of the shepherds and the friendships that exist among the believers in the multiplied groups.

Keep in mind that as your faith community expands, you are developing clans of extended spiritual family or kinfolk. The different home fellowships can gather corporately for any number of purposes, be they social and/or spiritual, just as extended families do.

Revisit these four steps:

- creating your perimeter,
- guarding it,
- expanding that perimeter,
- destroying Satan's perimeter

Then you can be confident that the roots will go deep and the believers will be nurtured in safety to become fruit-bearers themselves in the Kingdom of God and bring Him praise!

Summary of Part 4

The biblical goals and objectives unfolded in Part 4 can become part of your life only as you *pray* and *discuss them with others*. The objectives must extend beyond your intellect into your *heart's motivation* so that you'll yearn to live as Kingdom people and to glorify our Father.

When you're concerned that with loving-trust you're walking in obedience to our Father's will, you overflow with desire to uphold personal as well as communal righteousness. This is your vital link through the Spirit with both God and with one another. Habitual *unrighteousness* is like severing your own aorta. You can't go on living!

As many others have sadly discovered, don't just go out and try to find a group that's living out our Father's goals and objectives. You, and hopefully a few others, are going to have to prayerfully see these goals and objectives become part of your *own lives*.

Our Father isn't recruiting people into the Hebraic Restoration who are interested in just *teaching* these truths. The truths He's revealing have to be *lived* in your own life before you can share them with others!

While we've been writing our books, articles and newsletters, we've had to *pray about* and *discuss how to apply* the different things we present. It was during this process that we found *ourselves* being changed — first in heart, then in action. Doing the research in Israel on the early Church was one thing. Just uncovering historic information didn't change us. But as we wrote about

these restoration truths, our much-needed *prayer-based discussion* caused us to apply the foundational principles of the earliest Church to our own lives.

Obedient trust in our beloved Lord Jesus that's walked in righteous relationships mirrors the lifestyle of our forefathers which brought such glory to our Father. You may not initially be able to give every goal or objective the level of commitment our Father desires. But don't overlook any of these objectives. They all work together. By His grace, over time you'll find, as we have, that they become as natural as breathing.

And remember, prayerfully discuss with your loadbearing relationships that which you read!

• Review the four goals and purposes for fellowship together:

1. Your fellowship with others must *spur you on to glorify our Father* through praise, worship, and a lifestyle that yields testimony of praise to Him.
2. Your fellowship with one another should result in *progressive growth in Christ-like character* in each person.
3. Your fellowship family must provide the corrective/confrontational means to *assist each other to enter the narrow gate*.
4. Your fellowship family must strive to *extend the Kingdom of God on earth* — pursuing the lost so that they too may enter Covenant with our Father.

• Does your fellowship family meet these criteria that are dear to our Lord's heart? If no, in what ways does it fall short? Discuss which purposes the Spirit is stirring you now to walk in by His grace.

• Evaluate the effectiveness of your fellowship family in serving the Kingdom interests of our Lord through these objectives.

1. Uphold communal righteousness.
2. Develop load-bearing relationships.
3. Multiply through actively sharing the Gospel.
4. Prepare succeeding generations to follow Jesus. (See Part 5.)

• How are you personally, and your fellowship family collectively, living these objectives? In what ways are you and they falling short? Discuss how the Spirit of Christ in you would have you respond to each of these.

We encourage you and those you fellowship with as extended spiritual family to seriously discuss and pray about any resistance to carry out your Kingdom responsibilities in the grace He's given you. You don't want to show up at the Judgment Throne and give our gracious King excuses why His purposes and will weren't your responsibility.

Through your prayerful discussion you're bringing Jesus into your midst to guide you:

"I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by My Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in My name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:8-20).

Your prayerful discussion with the intent to apply and carry out the will of our Lord is what will enable you to fulfill your part of expanding His Kingdom in the power of His Spirit.