

Yeshua MISHPACHAH

A NEWSLETTER TO THE FAMILY OF JESUS FROM RESTORATION MINISTRIES

The Hebraic family is not simply an individual or private matter. Rather, it is an institution in which the whole community has a stake. Thus, the Hebrew word "mishpachah," meaning family, not only refers to parents and children, but to the whole extended family worldwide in the body of "Yeshua"—our Jesus.

Dear Friends,

When we think of the word "gatekeeper" we normally think of something agricultural. Jesus uses the term for himself. Today, gatekeeping has taken on a whole function of controlling how God's truth gets out to His people.

Who Are Today's Gatekeepers?

"Share this message"

"Tell my son that God has called him to be one of His apostles." That was the word Sue received in a phone call from my mother in early May 1996. I had been sick for over 6 weeks with allergies and sinus infections, often feeling almost suicidal from lack of sleep. In the middle of the night preceding my mom's call the Lord admonished me, "I have two things against you. You are not keeping a Sabbath and you are not worshipping me as you once did." I shared this with Sue when she awoke and she suggested I talk with two of the men in the men's group I was part of which was meeting that morning. As Ralph and Tom sat down to talk with me after the men's meeting, Tom began, "Mike, God never called you to plant churches. He called you to share the message the Lord gave you in Israel."

I had been struggling for two years to make the message of restoration happen by attempting to plant home churches so that we could show examples to those who wanted to see the fruit of the message. I was never successful because I had misunderstood God's calling for us. The biblical evangelist in the early Church was the church planter and repairer. Although I love to see people give their lives to Jesus, I am not an evangelist.

Two days after my mom's call, a

friend stopped by our apartment. "Mike, a year ago the Lord told me that he was going to use you to be one of his apostles. Today He told me to come to you to tell you this." If you have read *Restoring the Early Church*, you know that the synagogues preceding the church had apostles, evangelists, elders, and deacons. We believe the early Church incorporated these functions from the God-honoring Jews. An apostle is one who is "sent forth" on a specific mission. In the Church he has *power* through his anointing, but not ecclesiastical *position* imputed by the 4th century revisionists. In Israel the Lord assured me, "Share this message, and I will provide for you." I appreciate God getting me back on track (especially using my mother. Thanks Mom!).

Freshening the Cow

What are the roles of apostle, evangelist, prophet, pastor, and teacher as listed in Ephesians 4:11? This June, the Holy Spirit gave me an insight about the "equipping gifts" as they operate among different faith communities: "The operation of these gifts is like *freshening the cow*." As I shared this, I found that not many people knew what 'freshening the cow' is. For a period of time after a cow has a calf, it produces a great abundance of milk. But over time it produces less and less until the cost of keeping the cow is greater than the profit from the milk it produces. It is important to remind ourselves that the cow is healthy, but it is not fulfilling the farmer's purpose for keeping it. So, when the cow is ready to conceive, the farmer has her inseminated. This process is known as "freshening the cow". The birth of the calf causes the increase of milk production. The gifts of apostle, evange-

list, prophet, pastor, teacher when operating in God's timing are His means to 'freshen' home churches and congregations.

There is such a distortion in our understanding of these gifts in the church today. This is partly due to the fact that some have been out of operation since Constantine and others have been revised away from the biblical functioning of the Church body. Jim Rutz in his book *The Open Church*, writes: "The Reformation was a time of accumulating traditions—which evolved straight out of the circumstances of the hour." [Donald Dunn from New Zealand has said, "Religion is a mixture of true faith and the traditions of men." Think about this!] One of the traditions accepted in the Church is the modern-day pastoral role. The duties had come into being over a thousand-year period of evolution and tradition. These traditions had little to do with the Bible. Some of the duties expected of pastors in different faith communities are:

1. marry the singles
2. bury the dead
3. hear confession
4. bless community events
5. baptize the babies
6. visit the sick

Many of you who have read *Restoring the Early Church* or who have been on our mailing list from the beginning know that we espouse the biblical principle of **apperception**. Apperception is building our faith practices from the word of God. **The Bible gives us a complete understanding of the foundation and practices for the Church for all time.** God never intended for the Church to evolve and adapt customs and practices not supported in the Word. The Bereans were

Equipping the Church to Go Back for its Future

commended for their apperceptive² testing of Paul's teaching, discerning if it was in line with the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. [Have you ever taken the time to study the Hebrew Bible for the *real* Gospel that would have been recognized by the earliest followers of Jesus?]

The Gatekeepers

One of the primary issues facing the early Church was determining and confirming truth. This is referred to in some faith communities as "gatekeeping." In other words, who or what process should be used to determine God's truth? As we wrote on previous occasions, if a dispute over a decision was anticipated, the believers could cast lots to determine truth (see Prov. 18:18, 16:33). The usual method of confirmation came from two or three witnesses guided by the Holy Spirit (see Deut. 19:15, Matt. 18:16, 2 Cor. 13:1).

Elders, the biblical gray-haired *zakens* of the synagogue and early Church, were also gatekeepers: *"To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed. Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve"* (1 Peter 5:1,2). We know that Paul recognized the elders as gatekeepers when he sent for the elders of the church at Ephesus: *"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears"* (Acts 20:17,28-31).

Our research indicates that the true elders of the early Church were older, wise gray-haired men who met the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Gatekeepers are those who take upon themselves the responsibility as a position of control and power to confirm truth for others in the Church. One man has noted five contemporary gatekeepers:

1. Pastors
2. Seminaries
3. Parachurch ministries
4. Publishers
5. Media (such as TV, movies, radio)

Sue and I have encountered most of these in our ministry. When we sent the *Early Church* manuscript to publishers, we perceived pressure to water-down our message to make it more widely marketable. In the area of media, we have had several wonderful radio interviews, but still, an issue with many is marketability—money.

We have had no contact with seminaries and little contact with parachurch organizations. Wherever biblical pastoring has been present in a congregation, our apostolic message has been readily embraced. But wherever men have occupied the *position* of "pastor" but have lacked the important nurturing essence of a shepherd, our message has often been opposed.

The Apostle John, as part of his mobile ministry, encountered the same type of opposition we have experienced when he wrote, *"Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out...We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth. I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church"* (3 John 5-10). Sue and I have on occasion met the 'Diotrephes' of today.

What is a Shepherd?

When I was asked to be a counselor to pastors as part of our retreat ministry, I began to shepherd a flock of

sheep to get a feel for the heart of a shepherd. I can state emphatically, "No person can truly shepherd more people or sheep than he can individually know." The Bible agrees with my assessment: *"Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds"* (Pro. 27:23); *"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you"* (Heb. 13:17). In many churches today we encounter men in positions of leadership who know little about the believers who comprise the congregational flock, nor can they render account to God on behalf of the individuals in the flock.

A pastor of one of the larger churches in Connecticut [I will call it XYZ church] came on a personal retreat to our center for a few days. I was interested in how biblical processes operated on such a large scale so I asked, "How do you get people to participate in such a large congregation?" "We don't want participation," was his answer. He added, "As the church grows we hire new staff." He informed me that they currently had 21 paid staff. I asked him one more question: "How do you deal with sin in a church so large?" His reply, "I am unaware of any sin in our church." A few weeks later a friend who was pastoring a church near the Univ. of Conn. called me for some advice. "Mike, a young man who use to attend my church while a college student now attends XYZ church. He has been living in fornication with the worship leader for over three years and now the Holy Spirit is convicting him that he can't stay in this relationship. What should I tell him?" My reply? "Send him back to the pastor of XYZ Church. I'm sure he would like to know there is some sin in his church."

God addressed the problem of shepherds long ago through Jeremiah:

"The word of the LORD came to me: 'Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: Woe to the shepherds of Israel who only take care of themselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?'"

*You eat the curds, clothe your-*³*selves with the wool and slaughter the choice animals, but you do not take care of the flock.* [Today's application: "You take their tithes but care little for their individual needs."]

You have not strengthened the weak or healed the sick or bound up the injured. You have not brought back the strays or searched for the lost. You have ruled them harshly and brutally. [Appl.: "You send My sick to hirelings, that is, professional counselors outside the body. Where are the believers within the flock who can come in the power I have given to minister mercy, service, and exhortation?"]

So they were scattered because there was no shepherd, and when they were scattered they became food for all the wild animals. [Appl.: They became vulnerable to false gospels and to sin because no load-bearers were there to point the way to trusting in the Chief Shepherd.]

My sheep wandered over all the mountains and on every high hill. They were scattered over the whole earth, and no one searched or looked for them. [Appl.: "My people now wander from church to church and no one cares enough about each one to ask 'Why?'"]

"Therefore, you shepherds, hear the word of the LORD: As surely as I live, declares the Sovereign LORD, because my flock lacks a shepherd and so has been plundered and has become food for all the wild animals, and because my shepherds did not search for my flock but cared for themselves rather than for my flock, therefore, O shepherds, hear the word of the LORD:

This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am against the shepherds and will hold them accountable for my flock. I will remove them from tending the flock so that the shepherds can no longer feed themselves. I will rescue my flock from their mouths, and it will no longer be food for them" (Eze. 34:1-10).

Jeremiah's Words Being Fulfilled Today

While I was counseling pastors for almost 10 years, one denominational leader admitted that 50% of their clergy were involved in adulterous affairs.

The leadership hoped to keep it from the "laity." Another denomination had paid over \$400 million dollars in out-of-court settlements due to clergy misconduct. One church leader who had read *Restoring the Early Church* told me, "We cannot have our people trusting Jesus as you call for in your writings. If we let them trust Jesus we will have mayhem. We need to control and direct our people." The retired superintendent of this same denomination came to me and confessed, "In what others would see as 35 years of a successful career, I found in retirement that I had never known Jesus Christ." He recognized it because he didn't even know how to talk with Jesus. The saddest comment he made was, "You don't get to the top of my denomination by knowing and following Jesus, but by directing and controlling people."

During one meeting with a large group of clergy, I found that over half of their wives were seeing professional counselors for help. What does this indicate about the man's ability to lead and care for his own household?

I am certainly not against biblical pastoring. I am grieved, however, by a demonic system dominating the Church today that has no relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

Are the Sheep Innocent?

As with the shepherds, the Lord doesn't let the *sheep* who enjoy irresponsibility and interpersonal disregard get away without chastisement:

"As for you, my flock, this is what the Sovereign LORD says: I will judge between one sheep and another, and between rams and goats. Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet? Must my flock feed on what you have trampled and drink what you have muddied with your feet? [Today's application: "You slander, gossip, and judge each other."]

"Therefore this is what the Sovereign LORD says to them: See, I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. Because you shove with flank and shoulder, butting all the weak sheep with your

horns until you have driven them away [Appl.: "You don't care for the least of your brothers and sisters."],

I will save my flock, and they will no longer be plundered. I will judge between one sheep and another" (Eze. 34:17-22). You can well see that our Lord grieves when those called to come alongside as shepherds fail in their responsibilities, and when the sheep live with little regard for each other.

Join Us in Hating the Nicolaitans!

Will you join us in confronting a demonic system that keeps God's people from *personally* relating to Him? It is a system of control and power that some men usurp and others hide in. Most Christians today are so used to a clergy-laity arrangement in their congregations that they are amazed or even angered when it is questioned. In the letters written to the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, two churches are confronted with the issue of the Nicolaitans: In the letter to the church at Ephesus we read, "*...you have this in your favor: You **hate** the practices of the Nicolaitans, which I also **hate**" (Rev. 2:6).* These are incredibly strong words. Can you imagine being the object of something God hates? Again to the church at Pergamum John writes, "*Likewise you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. **Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth**" (Rev. 2:15,16).* The Ephesians hated the Nicolaitans as God did. But some of the Pergamum residents embraced that teaching. What an awful place to get yourself into. How would you like to be someone God Himself must fight against? But this is exactly what we see the Lord doing in the Church today. We have become so proud in the system of manmade tradition that our Lord must oppose it.

What God hates and the thing He is prepared to fight against is the system of the Nicolaitans. [Here we want to acknowledge the research of F.W. Grant (1834-1902) in his work *Nicolaitanism: The Rise and Growth of the Clergy.*] Nicolaitans were not a religious group. The word 'Nicolaitane' in Greek means "conquering the people."

The last part of the word (laos) means⁴ as He brought hope and healing that changed lives!
Do seminaries influence shepherds to fit into the Nicolaitan system? Yes, they do! Personally experiencing the Vietnam conflict and watching numerous war movies led me to a little scenario to test the hearts of people. With different groups of people at the retreat center I would simulate dropping a hand grenade in their midst. I would tell them that they had 3 seconds to respond, and I would count off:

A lesson for us today: We in the Church often have a difficult time wondering why more Jews didn't give their lives to the Messiah. Picture how hard it was for them to give up centuries of practicing the Day of Atonement in which an unblemished goat was offered for their sins, and to put their trust in the shed blood of Jesus. How do you change centuries of tradition? Even God had to destroy the temple following the ascension of Jesus so that they would not have a place to keep that tradition alive! Isn't this what we, the followers of Jesus in the US, are facing today? We have had the Bible in English for over 4 centuries. Why hasn't the priesthood of **all** the followers of Jesus occurred before now? Our answer: **The Nicolaitan subjugation!**

Which Body Part Are You?

When I was a counselor to pastors I used to question them using Paul's body part analogy in 1 Cor. 12. "As a pastor, what body part most represents how you see yourself?" Quite a few would answer "hands". I found these to be the ones always introducing new programs to their people. Their thinking: "Busyness is Godliness." Yet Jesus tells us, "*The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent*" (John 6:29). The next most often mentioned area was "the head". These men exerted power through a combination of flattery and intimidation. Some enjoyed tremendous longevity in their churches because they had driven away those who would not yield to their 'headship'.

When a man pastoring a church told me he was "the heart," I had hope. The heart is an internal organ assisting all the parts of the body to do their job. One medical study has found that the heart actually produces hormones which influence the rest of the body. Think about the "heart nature" of Jesus

"1...2...3...**BOOM!!!**"

Over half of the teenagers and women would jump on the hand grenade.

About 1 out of 10 men would jump on the hand grenade.

Not one clergyman ever jumped on the hand grenade. Every one fled!

***"I am the good shepherd;
I know my sheep and my sheep know me...
I lay down my life for the sheep"***

As today's "gatekeepers", what are seminaries instilling in their candidates? Every seminary graduate I interviewed admitted that his seminary had trained him to protect himself from being hurt by his congregation. By limiting themselves from intimate involvement with those in the congregation they kept themselves from the pain that often comes with close companionship. How can you die for people you are protecting yourself from? Think about this!

Thoughts for You to Ponder

Who should be the gatekeepers in the church today? What means do **you** use to confirm God's truth? Who should have the privilege of ministering communion? Who should baptize? What is the role of the apostle, evangelist, prophet, pastor, and teacher in the Church today? Can we ever be equipped to fulfill our Lord's purposes without them? Will we ever obtain unity in the faith without them?

Some of you may read this letter and think that I am anti-pastor. Far from it! The exercise of Godly pastoring by those whom God has given the spiritual gifting and to whom He has

given loving concern for His people, is sorely needed today. What I am writing about is the thing God hates—the *Nicolaitan system* which is behind the clergy-laity distinction in the Church today. This system of practice is what is hindering the priesthood of all the followers of Jesus from becoming the norm in the Church today. I am encouraging any who are occupying *sacerdotal positions* between God and any of His people to renounce this activity before God has to get them out of the way. Prayerfully coming alongside fellow believers to nurture and prompt them toward obedience in Christ is far removed from acting as intermediary between God and His child. I personally believe that the tremendous rise in clergy misconduct and burnout is God's removal of grace from those who lord it over the sheep positionally. God warns all to flee their participation with the demonic system of the Nicolaitans!

If you are hiding in the Nicolaitan system with your religious life filled with activities and yet have no ongoing intimacy with Jesus, you are in sin. Don't force God to fight against you. Paul warns Timothy that in the last days there will be those "*having a form of godliness but denying its power.*" He goes on to warn, "*Have nothing to do with them*" (2 Tim. 3:5).

God is still speaking to the Church today through Jeremiah:

"My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water" (Jer. 2:13). We have forsaken the Church Jesus would build if we would but wholly trust Him. And we have created our own religion, a mixture of faith and tradition that follows the principles of worldly management systems rather than the exercise of Spirit-empowered gifting.

God keep you,

Mike & Sue Dorigiewicz