

TODAY!

What Would Jesus Be Doing If He Were You?

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

Insight 12. Collectively Becoming The Family Of Lord Jesus (Part 1)

In this first of several Insights we'll personalize and interweave the “vertical” and “horizontal” dimensions we introduced in Insight 11. Joining with others as extended family of our Lord Jesus encompasses many *heartfelt choices you purposely make together*. Becoming a *collective expression* of His family of brothers and sisters and deepening those relationships as His body *together* entails a common goal that's essential to being “family.” It's the *motive of heart* our Lord requires from each one He counts as His family:

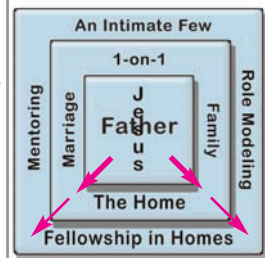
“Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

He offers you His Kingdom and His righteousness by grace! As you hold His goal at

the forefront of your lives individually and collectively, keep reminding yourselves that you are “the church,” the *ekklesia*, the ones our Lord has called out of the world's ways to be His family. He's recruited each of you to mutually participate in His kingdom as His servants, and to uphold in each other His righteousness as His ambassadors.

If you keep our Lord's goal preeminent in your home life and fellowship, He'll connect you with other “family” members or He'll have you lead others to become an expression of His family. And

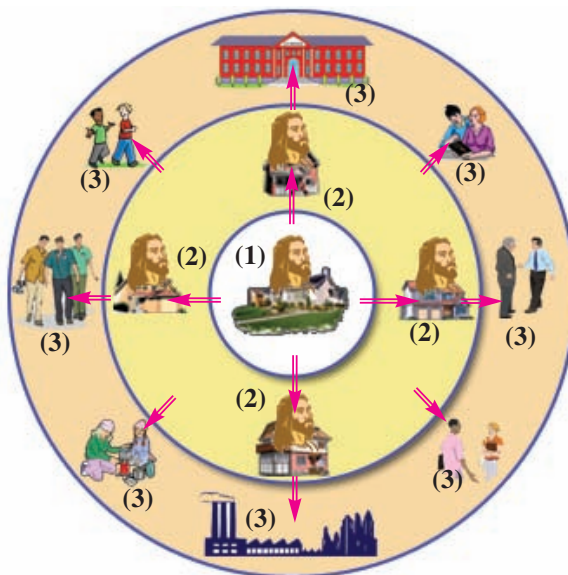
The Essential Relational Priorities For Becoming The Family of Jesus



The Relational Priorities Of Seeking And Serving His Kingdom

(1). **vertical** Jesus Christ is your Lord and the Head of your home as you and your family live righteously in love—putting His commands into action and repenting whenever you sin. Your home is the *basic building block* for spiritual development, and is designed to be His lamp of Light (Luke 11:33) in the middle of spiritual darkness as you lovingly disciple your children.

(2). **horizontal** You pray for and reach out from your home to your unbelieving neighbors through inviting them *into your home* whether for meals or other social activities in which you “live” Jesus in word and deed. Jesus commanded His own, “As you go through life, make disciples” (Matthew 28:19). That's relational! With Lord Jesus as YOUR Head and High Priest, your neighborhood is your “Jerusalem” (Acts 1:8).



(3). **horizontal** From your gathering of homes living rightly for Jesus that form in your neighborhood you grow relationships with unbelievers in your workplace, school or other pursuits and help them encounter Jesus. You disciple them to establish outposts of righteousness in their neighborhoods. These other neighborhoods are your *Judea and Samaria* to help them reproduce (Acts 1:8).

keeping our Lord's kingdom and righteousness as your first priority, whenever people ask you about your faith, tell them, **"I follow Jesus as my Lord."**

**A Kingdom Family Is A Collective,
Militant, Spiritually Empowered Body
Living Righteously In Jesus
As They Bear Each Other's Burdens**

Becoming an authentic spiritual family who live His Kingdom, deprogramming from the Hellenist religious system will take collective effort and mutual reliance on the Word of God and the Holy Spirit to help you develop a *kingdom understanding*.

First you need to rid yourselves of the **individualism** that permeates much of Christendom. Individualistic people study the Bible for personal edification, but they give no thought to how His Word applies communally to everyone they fellowship with as extended family.

To be a *family* of Jesus takes **mutual** discussion, **mutual** application, and **mutual** commitment to make our Lord's commands your **mutual** way of life. Collectively you are helping each other become more like our Lord Jesus as you *collectively* fulfill our Father's will. *Each* of you rids yourself of individualism in order to take on the love and mind of your King in coming alongside each other to serve in His Kingdom.

A religious leader from a large denomination once told us, **"We can't have our people trusting Jesus as your writings call for. That would cause mayhem! We need to control and direct the actions of the people in our congregation."**

His statement echoes so many in Christendom who *don't trust themselves to*

trust Jesus. They want *others* to tell them what to believe. This sin of unbelief and doubt tags our Lord a liar regarding the authority He's given each of His family:

"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 18:18-20).

To bind refers to what you *don't* do that would violate God's commands and will. *To loose* is to make as your way of life the Christ-like motives and actions found in the Bible. Jesus is bestowing on you the responsibility to take God's commands and apply them *individually and collectively* to your lives. That is, out of love for Him as your Lord, they are your *way of life* as you serve as His ambassador.

This is how you're a living reflection of Christ to others as you personify the Spirit of Jesus within you. A biblical command is only mere words to you unless people can see it as your way of life. And along with this authority to apply His commands, Jesus promises to be with you when two or three come together in His name to "bind" or "loose."

As His family He commands His followers to use His Word to address every concern and situation in your lives. Each *application* of the Bible (Hebrew: *halakhah*) that you collectively establish is saying, **"This is the Word of God on this matter."** If you truly want to understand the heart of someone who claims to follow Jesus, discover the biblical applications he has established for himself, his family, his business, his personal world. *How* he lives determines *who* he really is.

"The kingdom of God is within you"
(Luke 17:21).
The Kingdom is a way of life that emanates from the heart of His own and is evidenced in our daily lives.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it"
(Luke 18:17).

The **authority of the Bible** is demonstrated when an individual, family or fellowship family **studies** the Bible and **applies** it for themselves as the Holy Spirit directs. *Applying God's commands* to your life through His indwelling Spirit is "**doctrine**" as the first followers of Jesus understood it. Each time you apply God's Word to a given situation, you're reflecting your determination by grace to keep God's commands. That's why Paul could define "**doctrine**" as a **way of life**, putting sound instruction *into practice*:

"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you" (Philippians 4:9; also Philippians 3:17; 1Timothy 4:12).

"Watch your life AND doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because IF you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers" (1Timothy 4:16).

In the Kingdom of our Lord, the Bible isn't presented as an academic subject to optionally obey. Our Lord Jesus Himself used the Older Testament in His parables to reveal to His audience *how His Father wanted them to live* in ways that were pleasing to Him. God intends that His Word be used to reveal *His perspective*—His wisdom of living through and for His Son—on *ways His people should live* as they address everyday situations according to His will.

Four Recommended Steps For Establishing Biblical Applications

1 Prayer. To establish a *biblical application* for a certain issue in your life, begin with prayer. Ask the Spirit of our Lord Jesus for a spirit of wisdom and revelation (see Ephesians 1:17).

2 Bible passages. Next, ask His indwelling Spirit to bring to mind any verses or passages that would apply to your situation.

Some verses will be more pertinent to the issue than others. That is, one or more of the verses are more foundational and pointed. Other verses will add understanding to the foundation, so pursue those too.

And please, don't try to apply anything to your situation until after you're positive that you've examined all the biblical references His Spirit wants you to use. When you've taken the extra time to investigate all the biblical leads prompted by His Spirit, you'll experience His peace. That's when you know you can go on to the next step.

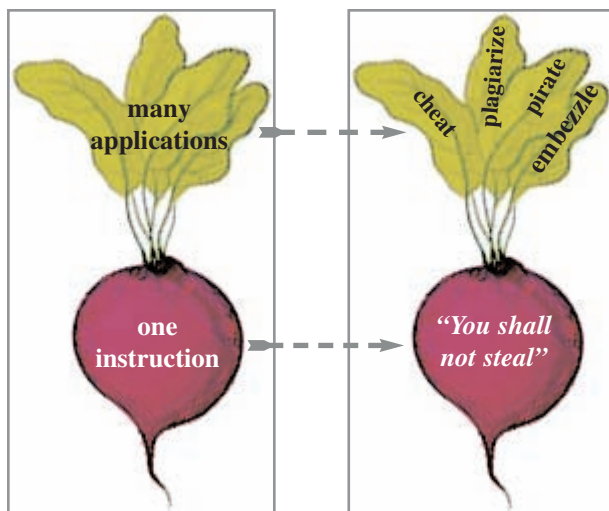
3 Biblical application. Equipped with the relevant verses, you're now ready to specifically consider *what to do* about your issue or concern.

Your goal is to apply your Father's instruction(s) and commands so that *you'll do the same thing Jesus would do* if He were you. This removes your own preferences and rationalization.

Make sure you don't get into "*if/then*" *reasoning* as you try to apply the Word to your situation. The normal tendency of our sinature is to question potential outcomes and consequences: "*If I do this, what will this decision cost me?*" "*If I do this, how will it affect others?*" "*If I do this, what changes will I need to make in my life?*"

No matter how strong the urge to pursue the "ifs" of your decision—don't! You need to first determine in your heart that you do have the correct biblical application for your situation. Our Lord's Spirit will again give you peace, a '**witness in your spirit,**' if you've discerned correctly our Father's instructions.

4 Action to take. Only after you mutually have a '**witness in your spirit**' to affirm you've correctly discerned your Father's instructions



for your situation is it time to take the next step, *applying grace*.

Grace is the power and desire from the Spirit *to follow through* on your biblical application no matter what it costs you. Remember, you are applying your Father's instructions to your life *because of your love* for Him.



The goal of your obedient trust isn't right behavior for its own sake. If you're taking action hoping to gain your Father's favor, you'll end up proud and self-righteous. You may even look down on others who don't live or think the way you do.

But if you desire to obey Him out of *love and trust*, His grace will enable you to keep your new conviction. So continue to pray for grace to follow through. And repent that you haven't sought this newfound Scriptural application before this time; you've missed out on a particular area of wisdom and blessing!

A few special notes:

- If this method of *exploring, discussing and putting God's Word into practice* hasn't been part of your mutual faith enactment before as extended family in Jesus, it will take time and absolute trust in our Lord's Spirit being with you in the process. Be patient with each other! Each of the four steps is important. Go over them, discuss

The Bible:
one interpretation, many applications.

Our Lord's commands

 His Spirit will guide your application


The Kingdom way:
Followers of Jesus actively *seek to apply* their Father's righteous instructions. And they know that the Spirit of their Lord is THE Source to guide them. When they choose to mutually bind or loose our Father's instructions to their own lives, our Lord's Spirit in their midst gives them *understanding to apply it*.

What you retain when you study, discuss and apply God's Word

90%	hear	see	discuss	demonstrate
70%	hear	see	discuss	
50%	hear &	see	(concurrently)	
30%		see		
10-20%	hear			

them, and demonstrate them in your lives until you're so used to each one that you don't even have to think about them!

- The process of establishing biblical applications requires *honesty and transparency* among those who are involved. Sometimes the process surfaces someone's fear that others in your faith family will judge them if they bring up an area of darkness they struggle with. That's why it's vital that you have strong mutual trust in each other as brothers and sisters.

- When it comes to taking action, you may find that the person or persons the Spirit is directing may hesitate to respond. Depending on how costly or inconvenient the step they need to take is, something may hinder their resolve to follow through.

For example, what if the situation you're trying to help someone with is unforgiveness? Two passages that may apply are these:

“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you **do not forgive** men their sins, **your Father will not forgive your sins**” (Matthew 6:14,15).

“In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. **This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart**” (Matthew 18:34,35).

What if someone in your faith family has deep, unresolved resentment against a parent? Do you just keep urging them to forgive? Or, as a loving load-bearer who cares for them as an authentic brother or sister, do you help them peel away the issues that are hindering them? What if he or she needs your help to be a reconciler and go with them? Would you do that?

Sometimes it's not just the authority of God's Word alone that stirs people to obey the Lord they love. There may be times when your *mutual commitment* to help each other live as Jesus would is needed in order for someone to face their hindrances. This requires relational confidence in each other along with an earnest desire to please your Father. NEVER underestimate the *power of grace* and *our Father's ability to go ahead of you* in a particular situation.

Finally, when it comes to taking action, don't be surprised if certain things surface, like past hurts or someone's own sin nature and/or resistance to the Spirit. Or, a person may agree to take action but later not follow through. Once a decision is made based on the Scriptures you've used and there's a **'witness in your spirits'** that you've determined the action He wants taken, it needs to be done.

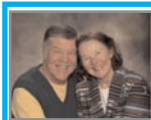
Our Father is giving that individual

the grace and power to obey Him (Philippians 2:13), and refusing to do His will is disobedience that's sinful in His sight. Keep in mind the amazing gift we in Christ have been given by Him to bind (prohibit) and to loose (allow) what accords with Kingdom purposes: “*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*” (Matthew 18:18).

When two or three of you in agreement bind or loose whatever is called for based on your Father's instructions, you're collectively attesting, “**Thus says the Lord.**” Someone who chooses not to follow through in what the Spirit has shown you puts the rest of you in a position of confronting him or her as Matthew 18:15-17 directs. And if you refuse to confront in love, then you've joined them in their sinful rebellion!

Our Lord Jesus has given each of His followers the authority to apply His Father's instructions and commands, and the power of His Spirit to do that. To not act on the mandate our Lord has given you and to not follow through on the application of His Word that His Spirit has revealed are rebellion against Him.

For further study on biblical applications, see our book *Christian Halakhahs—Loving Jesus Through The Way You Apply His Word* (free at our website) <<http://www.restorationministries.org/pdf/books/ch/ChristianHalakhahs.pdf>>



Our Experience

In the many decades we've been discerning and applying our Lord's commands along with others in our various faith communities, His Spirit has always given us unanimous agreement about the specific action He wanted us to take. There was always a spirit of peace and joy knowing we were doing His will!