

"Follow our way of life as we follow the way of our Lord."

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

The apostle Paul never apologized for exhorting fellow followers of Jesus to pattern their way of life after the way he followed Jesus. For instance, Paul sent Timothy to the Christians in Corinth to remind them of Paul's way of life in Christ Jesus (1Corinthians 4:17). And the writer to the Hebrews urged them to follow in the faithful footsteps of the ones who were leading them (Hebrews 13:7). Personally we're so grateful for the sustaining mercy of our Lord throughout our long lives together in good times and in trying times—especially because He has used the life lessons He has taught us so we'd then pass along to others a way of life in Jesus with all its victories and shortcomings!

With that in mind, you might think the title of this email is arrogant. But we've totally depended on the faithfulness of our Lord Jesus as we've pressed on in His strength! And the "way of life" part means that living in and for Jesus as LORD isn't a convenient, Sunday morning weekly event. It's trusting Him to live your life through you as your way of life! How did our Lord pass along His "way of life" standards? He used role modeling with His disciples through direct experience. He also used simulation, as with parables so His listeners could envision themselves in the scenario. It's with this intent that we hoped to role model for you His way of life for us: that through our testimonies of the Holy Spirit's divine involvement retold in our Sagas, you'd be purposeful and intentional in walking a Holy Spirit impelled way of life yourself.

Attached is our final Saga, ***Our Lord Closes One Door As He Opens Another***, which highlights our ***way of life*** at the retreat center. There's so much more we could recount for you in how our love-grounded, obedient trust in our Lord Jesus testifies to the grace and working of His indwelling Spirit ***in*** and ***through*** and ***around*** us (John 10:25). But the Holy Spirit has shown us that these Sagas we've written for you are enough.

If you've spent years being taught at in pews and indoctrinated in scribal theology, then our testifying to our ***way of life*** under the Lordship of Jesus may be something you don't want for yourself. It may seem threatening to your own complacent, don't-rock-the-boat way of life. (Sadly for us, even our relatives shut us off when we tried to tell them the miraculous interactions with our Lord which we've been telling you in these Sagas.) You may also have a mental barrier to accepting that ***our Father is restoring*** the faith practices embraced by our Lord's first followers through love-grounded obedient trust. It's been hard for many Christians to realize how far from the Lordship of Jesus that ***Hellenism, Romanism*** and ***Nicolaitanism*** have taken Christianity. Y

Take to heart for yourself that our recurring interaction with the Spirit of our Lord is the living reality which the Newer Testament describes as confirmation that we belong to our Lord Jesus. We aren't special! Rather, we are the norm of belonging to our Lord Jesus: we don't blindly adhere to scribal theology and passively treat our heavenly Father and His will with ***"benign neglect"***. Father's glory and doing His will through the Lordship of Jesus is at the heart of our faith walk — the same faith walk He calls for in your life as you bring Him glory through your obedient trust in doing His will through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We strongly encourage you to read the Newer Testament *as if you were reading it for the first time*. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you to determine if your way of life is the way of life our Lord requires of you as His own. Confirming that your life pleases our Lord Jesus is a good thing! (These particular passages—Matthew 7:16-26; James 1:22; 2Corinthians 13:5,6; 2Peter 1:10—all confirm that it's your obedient fruitfulness that counts for eternity.) Rather than your own self-evaluation or how other Christians see you, ask the Spirit of our Lord to attest to your spiritual status in Jesus. With all the competing gospels and creeds in Christendom that people have created, what assurance do you have that you hold to the truth that will get you through the narrow gate? *"Thus says the LORD: 'Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart is far from the LORD'"* (Jeremiah 17:5). Ask the Holy Spirit yourself...

We'd like to remind you *again* about the heart of the matter in our way of life. It's why few who are the product of scribal theology find it easy to understand what we write. One of the major hurdles we face with Christians is that so many are **outcome-based** — every choice and decision they make originates in their mind, will, and emotions, and must have a positive or pleasing outcome for them. They can't grasp the wonderful nature of living **obedience-based** — trusting that the Spirit of our Lord provides the necessary guidance (*rhema*) to our spirit, and the **grace with purpose** so we can actively do our Father's will. **Obedience-based** and **outcome-based** have nothing in common. The first is pleasing to Jesus and His Lordship in your life. The latter may please you but blinds you because the crowds around you each Sunday think they're okay with our Lord even if He ISN'T Lord of their lives. We fear for their eternal future.

We are far from perfect in our lives! But we've chosen to walk in the obedient way of life of our father Abraham through the indwelling Spirit of Christ. This man, whose righteousness stems from his trusting obedience, is called the father of all who belong to our Lord Jesus: *"Understand, then, that those who have trust are children of Abraham"* (Galatians 3:7; see also Romans 4:16). What did God see in Abraham that we should follow? *"For I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD."*

Abraham carried out the will of God as his way of life even when His commands seemed unthinkable. And the Newer Testament commands followers of Jesus to live likewise in obedient trust. Please take our Lord's words seriously: *"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven"* (Matthew 7:21). In doing our Father's will, you're not trying to earn heaven. Rather, you're actively evidencing that you do belong to our Lord Jesus as His own. Your way of life will be a visible testimony that the indwelling Holy Spirit works **in** and **through** and **around** you. This is a scriptural reality and truth that you won't find in scribal theology. But you're getting it from a prophetic messenger of our Lord Jesus (1Thessalonians 5:19-22).

We prayerfully hope that these Sagas will inspire you to live the life our Lord Jesus promises His trusting and obedient family who do His Father's will. If this isn't you, or if these Sagas don't convince you about the way of life that's required of you if you belong to Jesus as LORD, then for you our Sagas are just fiction. But we know they're not fiction. And for the obedience-based we hope they strengthen your resolve in resolutely loving and serving our Lord Jesus.

Good Will Never Be Good Enough

During this recent Christmas season the media blatantly portrayed a Christ-less Christmas. We saw intense reinforcement of a value that falls far short of Jesus as Lord: **Goodness** through kind actions was portrayed as the "reason for the season". For several decades now in many corners of Christianity, the reason our Lord Jesus became man to atone for our sins has been played down. Now He is no more than a "Life improver". The reality of our wrath-deserving sin and the biblical mandate to live repentantly and apart from evil have been displaced by personal **goodness** by too many believers who want to feel good about themselves. **Goodness** is their reason for the season.

Some years ago we were speaking with a close relative about eternity. A staunch churchgoer, she stated unequivocally that **"all good people go to heaven"** no matter what they believe. Since then she's left earth and we don't know if she ever discovered beforehand our Lord's criteria for entering heaven. We mention this because social media has heralded "goodness" as the highest virtue in our society. Yet, goodness without our Lord Jesus has become so twisted that supporting the murder of unborn babies even while you rescue stray dogs makes you a good and acceptable person.

Multiple surveys reveal that Christians have the same low moral values as unbelievers. Viewing yourself as a "good" person blindly convinces you that you are acceptable to our Lord no matter how you practice your belief system. To restate this essential insight: Within Christianity, **goodness** has replaced the biblical truth of the utter depravity of humanity and our need to be covered by our Lord's atoning blood if we are to escape the eternal dire destiny that each of us deserves apart from Jesus. Throughout Christendom in this land, "Christians" evaluate themselves based on Satan's deceit that **"I'm basically a good person."** Rubbish!!!

We've purposely shared truths with you that will matter at the Judgment Throne. We've testified to the reality of the way of life of people who are indwelt by the Holy Spirit. If you think our love-grounded, obediently trusting way of life is optional for you, think again! Hearing from the Spirit and walking according to the way of our Lord for you and your household is non-optional in Father's sight. We leave you with the words of **Hudson Taylor**, who held nothing back in his loving service to our Lord as he labored in China as his way of life:

"I used to ask God to help me.

Then I asked if I might help Him.

I ended up by asking God to do His work through me." (See Acts 20:24.)

Please don't find yourself standing at the Judgment Throne having lived with any less loving zeal for our Lord than Abraham or Paul or Hudson Taylor. If you are born from above, then the Spirit has called you to a way of life that's marked with **grace with purpose**.

Mike & Sue
(Ephesians 1:17)