

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

Most Americans assume that democracies are the highest form of government. But are democracies really *biblical*? Or, can democracy in the US be a symbol of our own rebellion against God? *"When a country is rebellious, it has many rulers"* (Prov. 28:2).

If only our Reformation forefathers had restored all the foundations of the early Church that had been lost. If this had occurred, we would probably not now have a government that finds its moorings on the whims of public opinion rather than on the will of God and His Word. The Christian reformers gave us *sola fides, sola scriptura, and sola gratia*—salvation by faith alone, by scripture alone, and by God's grace alone. But they gave way to fear when they failed to restore older men to pastoring our faith communities.

As we wrote in *Pastoring By Elders*, we're referring to:

The Destructive Effect of Bancroft's Rule #3

This Rule has not only maintained the clergy dominance in the church, it may have affected the very nature of government in the US. Each group of Bible translators of the various versions are directed by certain rules to guide their inter-

pretive efforts.

The translators of the 1611 King James Version were required to follow *Bancroft's Rules to Be Observed in the Translation of the Bible*. Rule #3 states, "The **old Ecclesiastical Words** to be kept, viz. the Word *Church* not to be translated *Congregation, & c.*"

An unfortunate result of applying this particular rule is that it perpetuated a clergy class within the church, permitting and encouraging younger men to assume the role of pastor over God's people. Because of education and seminary training, young men were thrust into positions of nurture and spiritual oversight that had biblically been exercised by mature men of wisdom and experience who'd already raised godly families. Even the very word "elder" denotes age!

By this act they nullified the biblically-Hebraic basis for "pastoring": *shepherding* in the context of older men caring for God's flock. Contemporary use of the word "pastor" often refers to an occupation assumed by younger men (and now women).

Regrettably, the true shepherds whom God has called to "pastor" His Church in the intimate manner He has prescribed are most often prevented from doing so by young clergy who

have no biblical basis for the position they occupy.

To undergird a clergy/laity distinction in the New Testament, translators not only of the King James Version but of virtually all commonly read translations used the word "pastor" in Ephesians 4:11: *"It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be **pastors** [shepherds] and teachers."* Had the Greek word used here, *poimen* (poy-men), meaning "shepherd," been translated as such, this passage would have kept continuity with the other New Testament passages that refer to the shepherding role of the elder, *presbuteros* (prez-boo-tair-oss). The inaccurate translation creates a false distinction between the Greco-Roman ecclesiastical position of "pastor" and the Hebraic biblical function of "shepherding by elders."

The *Hebraic understanding* of elder-shepherds has been lost to the Church for centuries. Remember, the disavowal of Hebraic practices and the severance of Hebraic roots occurred primarily after Greek philosophers converted to Christianity.

Ask yourself:

- How was the *function of elder* understood by Paul and the

other Jewish believers of the ² first century Church?

- Was it really God's intent that *pastoring by elders* devolve into the younger clergy role of today?

Shepherding by Elders

Proven leadership was key for the men of Israel who wished to be elders. The Hebrew word for elder, *zaken* (zah'-ken), connoted men who had proven themselves worth following. Over the course of their lives these men exhibited servant-like character qualities that took into consideration the welfare of others within their family, clan, and tribe. Because the nation of Israel saw itself as a singular "extended family," each body of elders possessed an inherent interest in the directions and decisions that were made: their own kin would be affected.

The role of elder was the pinnacle of a man's life — a life's goal to which men who sought wisdom aspired. *Zaken*, by definition, means "gray-bearded," and suggests wisdom gained by many years of life experiences.

When the forefathers of this country were framing the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, they were constructing something entirely different from the monarchical governments of Europe. The monarchs had no identity with the people they led. They were in a class by themselves. Monarchs did not come from among the people. They were, in effect, *outsiders who ruled*.

The preamble to the Constitution refers to "**We the**

people." These words were not a European concept either in government or in church. While it represented scriptural truth, the church itself at that time was in many ways a monarchy like the governments of Europe. Even today, many congregations are "ruled" by a "clergy-monarch."

But "we the people" was a common phrase among the seven nations of Indians in the 18th century Northeast. These nations were guided by the wisdom and counsel of older, wiser men who had proven themselves to be reliable tribal leaders. These older men came from "among the people." Their tribe was an *extended family* who intimately belonged one to another. Historians recognize that the government system of the Indian nations exerted some influence on the formation of our government.

In the framing of the US government, the rule by the older and wiser men wasn't as seriously considered as it might have been because of the influence of the Greek-influenced church and the effects of Bancroft's rules. If collegial pastoring by older, wiser men had indeed been restored to the Church by the Reformers, would the criteria for men holding office in the US been different? Would the influence of the Bible's requirement for older men to lead God's people, combined with the eldership model of the Indian nations, have encouraged the founders of this country to require that the *older sages lead*?

The Problem is not the US, but us!

Brothers and sisters, it isn't

just the current administration that is evil.

- John F. Kennedy did many of the same things the current man in office is doing.
- Because of political concerns, his successor Lyndon Johnson informed the North Vietnamese *beforehand* where our planes would attack next. How many of our men never returned because their Commander-in-Chief betrayed them to the enemy due to political expediency? How many widows and orphans did that man create through this misguided policy?
- Richard Nixon never even finished his term...

We need to take our eyes off this nation. The focus must be *we Christians*. *We Christians* need to repent for our rebellion. Not having older, wiser men to pastor and nurture God's people has resulted in younger men assuming the position reserved by God for the real elder. The life expectancy and time of service of young clergy has grown shorter and shorter. Clergy die 10 years earlier than other occupations. In some denominations, a young clergy person doesn't last in the pulpit more than three years. "***When a [congregation] is rebellious, it has many [pastors]***" (Prov. 28:2).

Let's face it, today's church system emasculates fathers. Through age-segregated Sunday schools, youth groups, and college and career groups, older men and fathers have been discarded in favor of faithful women

filling the void and innovative³ of the clergy feel their families young seminary grads entertaining the young.

We thoughtlessly bring in young men and women from the outside to 'pastor' us, individuals no one really knows or *ever gets* to really know. We hire unknown youth pastors from the outside. Fathers find their influence on their children usurped by these younger men. And, youth pastors average less than a year in a congregation.

Promise Keepers has become popular among many men today. I would be a Promise Keeper except for one of the promises: loyalty to pastors. If by "pastor" Coach McCartney is referring to the older men whom the Bible calls to shepherd, I'd have no problem. But to be led by younger men whose own families are falling apart just isn't biblical. Somebody should ask them: "Why don't they recognize the *older men* who can reflect the *heart of the Father* with wisdom?"

Dr. James Dobson offered some tragic statistics in his Aug. '98 newsletter: "80% of pastors and 84% of their spouses are discouraged or are dealing with depression. More than 40% of pastors and 47% of their spouses report that they are suffering from burnout, frantic schedules and unrealistic expectations. We estimate that approximately 1500 pastors leave their assignments each month due to moral failure, spiritual burnout or contention within their local congregations."

Dobson continues, "The Fuller Institute of Church Growth found in 1991 that **80%**

of the clergy feel their families have been **negatively impacted** by the church, and **33%** consider the ministry to be an **outright hazard** to their families.... The majority of pastors are heavily in debt, due to college and seminary expenses. These and other problems often lead to serious marital conflict and family dysfunction."

Is the picture becoming clearer that the youthful clergy system in the church is *not* according to God's Word or His plan? To paraphrase Gamaliel's advice from the perspective of propping up younger men and women in the pastorate: "Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their position is of human origin, let it fail. If this failure of young clergy is from God, you will not be able to help these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against what God is restoring" (from Acts 5:38,39).

PRAY for the older, wiser men of God to rise up and serve so that these younger men and women can raise godly families without the stresses and pressures of service that they are not yet ready to walk in!

What humanist educator John Dewey did in the public school system has now been accomplished in the church. Dewey's *stated goal* was to separate children from the influence of their parents' Christian belief systems, and to impose socialistic humanism in its place. It was this system that first began dividing children into age groups to make them a behavioral model for each other. Rather than par-

ents being the prime influence in their child's life, *peer* pressure applied through *peer* groups has become the norm in the church.

Because of the disdain for shepherding by older men, it is tragic that the western church has cooperated with Dewey's goals through youth programs that remove the fathers and older men from their biblical roles.

The biblical model is for *parents* and *older men and women* to teach and mentor the younger. Yet without any questions asked, we separate children from the spiritual nourishment of their parents or extended spiritual family and wonder why there is a "communication gap" between the generations. Friends, none of this was in the church until this century!

We all want our children to eventually become mature adults. Yet our teenagers have more influence on each other than we do. Maturity is *delayed* through this ungodly pattern of peer dependency.

The end of adolescence arrives when an individual is able to assume complete responsibility for his or her life. In 1968 adolescence ranged from age 13 to 19. Today it extends from age 12 to *age* 33 in many cases! If we want our kids to become responsible adults, we can't afford to have them spending five days a week separated from meaningful contact with parents, and modeling their actions and attitudes after each other.

Studies of home schoolers have substantiated the importance of *intergenerational con-*

fact and role modeling. Teens⁴ men restored to God's Church. I who have been home schooled don't tend to suffer from the peer pressure concerns that bother many public and private schooled teens who are removed from their parents' presence and influence. They're more likely to esteem and respect those of advanced age and wisdom.

Sue's ancestor, Josiah Bartlett, was the second person to sign the Declaration of Independence. This is part of her heritage. Josiah was from New Hampshire, where the state motto is "Live Free or Die." It reminds me of Patrick Henry's famous words, "Give me liberty or give me death." To undo the last vestige of European monarchical rule, those men needed to take a stand with their lives, if need be.

How tragic that the church system of today not only appears helpless even to stem the tide of divorce but also represents a divorce rate that is 4% *higher* than that in the secular world! Sadly, clergy now lead the country as the occupation highest in divorce. What message of hopelessness does this pass on to the congregation? Where are the mature, older men to shepherd God's people?

I know from the phone calls and letters we receive that many of you feel incapable of confronting the control mechanisms that many clergy exercise over their congregations. Clergy are the last vestige of European monarchy left in the US.

My heart's desire is to see *collective leadership* of older

men restored to God's Church. I wish there really was a Declaration of Restoration for those of us who desire to see the intimacy and spiritual power of the early Church once again.

Please share this letter with your clergy. Ask them to show you the biblical basis for the position they occupy. Get them a copy of *Pastoring by Elders* and discuss it with them.

I most certainly am *not* against the well-meaning people who are being destroyed today in the role of clergy. I *am* against the system that convinces them that they have a right to usurp what God has given to older men of wisdom and compassion.

To improve the situation:

- We need to give our children back to their parents. We can *help* parents fulfill their God-given responsibilities, but we should never *replace* them.
- We must do whatever is necessary no matter what it costs us to see that qualified older men of wisdom are restored as the true shepherds of God's flock.
- We need godly older women once again as wise influences in the lives of youngerwomen.

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