

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,

Please take your time reading this letter. The demonic opposition to writing it has been tremendous. This is a message the enemy has not wanted you to have.

Can you imagine yourself being part of the Church of Satan?

During my quiet time with the Lord the other morning I heard Him ask, "Mike, what do you think the 'synagogue of Satan' means?" As I listened, my Lord explained it to me. (The passage of Scripture to which He was referring was Revelation 3:8,9: *"I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the **synagogue of Satan**, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you."*)

"The 'synagogue of Satan' is now the 'church of Satan'. The 'church of Satan' are those who call themselves by My Name but live under the control and influence of demonic spirits. By not ridding themselves of these spirits in My Name, they serve the interests and purposes of Satan. He thought only of *himself*, and this is the identifying characteristic of his church. Everything these people do is self-seeking and benefits only themselves. They sin readily without

regard that their fellowship with Me has been severed.

"As you have traveled to share the message of Restoration, I have often told you which demonic spirits were in operation among the people to whom you spoke. Even when they heard, very few did anything to rid themselves of the demons. These people have chosen to belong to him—to the 'church of Satan' which predominates in the United States."

Brothers and sisters, the apostle Paul understood the choice each of us must make between Jesus and Satan: *"You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"* (1Cor. 10:21,22).

Satan's influence and control over the church in the US is evidenced by a recent poll done by George Barna, the Christian pollster. His results indicate that in each of 150 lifestyle areas, including divorce and abortion, "the church is no different than the society around them."

Friends, something is wrong! With an estimated 600,000 congregations, the "church" in the US embraces the *same values* as the demonic systems of Satan. No wonder we can't affect the moral direction of the US. The church and society are *the same*.

Identify & Renounce the Demons

A suggestion: As we've traveled I've been pierced to my innermost being by not only the strong presence of these demonic influences in so many congregations, but also how blinded people are to their control.

For your own edification, please make copies of page 37 of our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds* if you have it. Take time when your faith community is gathered together to ask each person to fill in that page by placing a check mark next to each symptom which reveals the presence of a demonic stronghold. This will give you feedback as to the level of demonic control and influence in your fellowship. Try the same thing with your family and relatives. (Think of the freedom and effectiveness for the Kingdom that will come when you are wholly available for our Father's use!)

Are there other factors that have enabled Satan to exercise such influence over congregations? Yes: the demise of the authority and influence of older people.

How To Build Satan's Church: Demean The Old, Entertain The Young

Satan has focused a lot of energy on undermining the vital role and influence of the older and wiser in our homes and faith communities. A people devoid of wisdom is naive and prone to stray from the narrow way of truth. Look

Equipping the Church to Go Back for its Future

around you. Satan has conquered² the church in the US with false, insidious doctrines that lure churchgoers into religious practice that focuses on ease, entertainment, and self-fulfillment. It has lost its salt, and in its impudence is not worth the dung heap. The need for men and women of years and wisdom, mighty in the Lord, has never been greater.

Learning From The Elephant

A recent television broadcast on the *Dateline* program remarkably illustrated the devastation that's caused when mature influence and guidance are absent. In Africa 20 years ago, the National Park Service was faced with a ruinous overpopulation of elephants. To keep the animals from plundering valuable crops and defoliating the land, the naturalists killed all the adult elephants, preserving only the young. As these youngsters matured, the male calves in particular grew violent, attacking and killing both rhinos and people. Their fierce and fearless behavior was totally abnormal for this species. It was as though the restraint common to elephants had vanished or had never even developed.

When the naturalists discovered the havoc being caused by these young elephants, they moved quickly. Each miscreant elephant was issued a "rap sheet" similar to that of a street criminal to identify those with aggressive behavior. When an individual accumulated too many points against his behavior, he was destroyed. But that didn't solve the underlying problem.

After much study, the naturalists realized that male elephants, young ones especially, have such high testosterone levels that they require the restraining behavior of older males to keep them in control. It was the mature males who taught the young to spar with one another to relieve their sexual ten-

sion. In essence, the older males taught them a pecking order of *deference*. Desperate to restore order to this unruly community of young males, the naturalists brought in adult males. Within a short period of time, deference was established and more orderly behavior restored.

For animals as well as people, it takes tremendous time, patience and, let me emphasize, correction to remove impudence and to pass along the skills necessary for offspring to mature successfully. God has designed each generation to be dependent on preceding ones for lessons of wisdom in order to succeed.

The Epidemic of Impudence

To claim to be one of God's children and to go on living only for oneself is considered *impudent* by our Lord. It takes the input of one or more generations to remove impudence from the next.

Impudence is part of human nature—a product of our free will. Characterized by a variety of related symptoms, impudence is:

- obstinate, brazen, or hardened in attitude
- insulting, rude, scoffing; saucy, or presumptuous with "pushy" behavior.

An impudent person always returns to his same old ways no matter how much counsel he is given. When he hears advice, he always feels he knows better than the wiser ones who are trying to help. He never sees God in the events around him nor hears Him in the counsel of the wise.

Some of the most impudent people hide behind a veneer of overt friendliness. Are you one of these? Impudence appears often in the Scriptures and is summarized by a variety of persistently negative attitudes and behaviors toward God, His commandments, or His

purposes for His children. The consequences for impudence are disastrous!

Learning From the Impudence of Past Generations

Impudence and its consequences are recorded in the Scriptures as a warning for us today: "*Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did*" (1 Cor. 10:6). We see impudence in the first child born to mankind, Cain:

"Now Abel kept flocks, and Cain worked the soil. In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the Lord. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The Lord looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it'" (Gen. 4:2-7).

Would it be correct to assume that both Cain and Abel knew what God required of them? Cain not only refused to obey, but killed his brother who had. Just as with Cain, I believe we will soon see that the church of Satan, who claims the name "Christian", will be the persecutors of *those who follow Jesus and keep His commands* [see Rev. 12:17].

In what specific ways are you, your spouse, and your family forging ahead in obediently trusting God? Who is blessed by what you do? Talk about this.

God Deals With Impudence

The Hebrew Bible tells us that

our Lord viewed the Israelites as ³ *disobedient, obstinate, hardened, and stubborn*. What was it about them that would merit such words? Read Isa. 30:1,2; Eze. 3:7; 2 Chr. 36:11-16. The last passage ends with these words:

“But they mocked God’s messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.”

There is a time when God’s patience ends and there is no remedy for the impudent. Consider these two passages:

“Then the Lord said to me: ‘Even if Moses and Samuel were to stand before me, my heart would not go out to this people. Send them away from my presence! Let them go!’” (Jer. 15:1).

“The word of the LORD came to me: ‘Son of man, if a country sins against me by being unfaithful and I stretch out my hand against it to cut off its food supply and send famine upon it and kill its men and their animals, even if these three men – Noah, Daniel and Job – were in it, they could save only themselves by their righteousness,’ declares the Sovereign LORD” (Eze. 14:12-14).

Maybe you’re thinking, “Mike, God did that to the Jews. He would never cut Christians off.” God accused the Israelites of “being unfaithful.” Later in this letter we will deal with how crucial it is for us today to be found “faithful.” Let’s focus on the Bible’s criterion: *“Every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire” (Matt. 3:10; see 7:19; 12:33).* Many years ago a wise person gave Sue and me this advice for bearing fruit in our lives:

*Make Christ known,
and He will direct your paths.*

The Bad Fruit of Impudence: Fear and Worry

Sue and I get frequent phone calls from frazzled people often wanting a quick fix. Instead of spending quiet time before the Lord, their busy, impudent lifestyle has no time for Him. The result is fear and worry. When we point them to trusting Jesus, we hear tremendous hesitancy.

The writer to the Hebrews uses the impudence of the Israelites to warn us today of an impudent lifestyle:

“So, as the Holy Spirit says: ‘Today, if you hear his voice [yes, God still speaks to His children], do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion, during the time of testing in the desert, where your fathers tested and tried me and for forty years saw what I did. That is why I was angry with that generation, and I said, ‘Their hearts are always going astray, and they have not known my ways’ [they acted impudently].

So I declared on oath in my anger, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’ See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God! Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with trust” (Heb. 3:7-12; 4:1,2).

From the above passage we can see that impudence is connected with *rebellion*—the very character of Satan. We can also note that the people never learned the “ways” of God. Hearing is not the same as *doing!*

How can you keep from devel-

oping an unbelieving heart? *“Come to me, [live in union with Me] all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you [it is a way of living for my Father] and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light” (Matt. 11:28-30).*

This invitation from our Lord Jesus is for us to learn the means to rest and peace. Our obedient trust as we live in union with our Lord is the Sabbath rest spoken about in the Book of Hebrews: *“There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God’s rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience [impudence]” (Heb. 4:9-11).* No amount of counseling can give you the rest that only Jesus gives.

Satan’s ‘User Friendly’ Church

In the desire to be “user friendly” to the world around it, Satan’s church has undermined the authority of the Bible as the only foundation for a life that is pleasing to God. The church of Satan has also discarded the biblical imperative to correct and rebuke when necessary. These are needed in order to focus a person headed down sin’s path back to obedient trust in our Lord, and to the commands and purposes in His Word. Paul emphatically reminds Timothy of the centrality of the Word of God and how to use it to prepare people for a life of fruitful obedience:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the liv-

ing and the dead, and in view of his⁴ over everything that is called God or appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage – with great patience and careful instruction.

Paul also forewarned us about the unconfrosted impudence of our day: “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers [slick, persuasive conference speakers] to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths [teachings that enable a lawless person, that is, a person who disregards God’s commands, to feel comfortable in his lifestyle]” (2 Tim. 3:16-4:4).

- When was the last time you were rebuked, trained, or encouraged by someone who rightly handled God’s Word?
- Would the person you were five years ago commend you for how your life has now become more like Christ? Has your family seen any difference in you?

Paul, along with other New Testament writers, foresaw this time and how Satan would separate the younger from not only older men and women but also from the authority of the Scriptures. This severance would reflect the days of lawlessness in which now live:

“Don’t let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed [People will oppose knowing and living out God’s commands. Those who try to will be branded “legalistic”, “intolerant”, “narrow-minded.”], the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself

up in God’s temple, proclaiming himself to be God.” Satan’s church will appear as if it is of God, but when tested it will be found to deny the God that both Testaments reveal Him to be. Its practices will please people but not God. Anyone who questions the biblical basis for lawless practices will be branded a “troublemaker.”

“For the secret power of lawlessness is already at work” [Through the pervasive influence of Greek philosophy and Roman organization, many of today’s hallowed religious practices and doctrines have no foundation in the Scriptures]; “but the one who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way.

“The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.” People will rush to whatever conference guarantees signs and wonders. This confirms the words of Jesus, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign!” (Matt. 12:39). Their adultery consists in devouring a gospel that denies the truth of salvation by obedient trust.

“For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness” (2 Thess. 2:3,4,7,9-12). Because of their impudence toward His Word, God hands them over to Satan, the “father of lies”, so that they will ultimately experience the oppression of soul that their self-seeking lifestyle produces.

Yet, if you are eager to “cross

the Jordan” [see the July 1999 Mishpachah Yeshua] be encouraged by these words from Jesus:

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world” (John 17:15-18). Your righteous walk of truth will impact the world to either accept or reject Jesus because it will be so counter to the prevailing lawlessness.

Parenting: God’s Primary Way of Removing Impudence

It is imperative to God that parents pass along to succeeding generations the way of life that will fulfill His purposes. He chose Abraham, the father of all who put their trust in Jesus, because He knew that Abraham would teach his children and his household the righteous ways of the Lord. Thus we see that not only the trusting obedience we enact in our own generation matters to God but also what we do to prepare the next generation to love and serve Him. (See Gen. 18:19; Prov. 22:6; and Eph. 6:4.)

The Bible is the written record of God’s commands and purposes. What the Bible bears witness to is that our Lord wants us to pass along to our children these irrevocable priorities:

- To live in a covenant love relationship with Him.
- To keep His commandments.
- To fulfill His purposes.

If God were to send Jeremiah to us today, his warning would sound something like:

“Parents, you do not teach your children my ways. You indulge the impudence of your children by becoming their friends rather than

fulfilling your responsibility to Me as their parents. You have raised a generation of hardened, mocking, God-denying fools. The church, likewise, fails to correct the unrepentant, and treats the unrighteous among them as one of the righteous.”

Called, Chosen, and Faithful

“They will make war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings—and with him will be his called, chosen and faithful followers” (Rev. 17:14).

Have you ever considered the distinctions between “*called, chosen, and faithful*”? The biblical evidence indicates that these words sum up the pilgrimage of each of us who would obey and follow our Lord.

It is crucial for a follower of Jesus to determine the biblical differences between “*called, chosen, and faithful*.” In order to be found faithful we must rid ourselves of impudence. Those who are trying to cross the Jordan River come to understand more and more the importance of being found faithful. These people understand salvation as a pilgrimage that embodies all three elements. But for the many who are ensnared in Satan’s church system, biblical faithfulness is unimportant.

Consider for a moment the definitions of *called, chosen, and faithful*:

Called: a summons or invitation to a duty, a trust, or an office.

Chosen: selected from a number of possible choices.

Faithful: Two definitions:

1) Thorough in performance of duty; reliable, trusted.

A faithful person is known by his actions. This is clearly understood in the following passage: *“But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your*

faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith[fulness] by what I do...You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith[fulness] without deeds is useless?...‘As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead’” (James 2:18,20,26). If the life of the Spirit is indeed within you, actions prompted by Him will evidence His presence.

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? I will show you what he is like who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice. He is like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built” (Luke 6:46-48). House construction is costly and time-consuming. You want to make sure it’s built to last. If your life is built on the bedrock of obedience to the Word and trust in Jesus, your thoughts and attitudes as well as your actions will mirror Him.

#2) To be true to one’s beliefs.

This definition requires no action, only the personal conviction that what you believe is true: *“You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19).*

“But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete” (Luke 6:49). Remaining impudent to our Lord and His Word will only bring catastrophic consequences.

To be Called

“A summons or invitation to a duty, a trust, or an office”

In the parable of the Wedding Banquet (Matthew 22:1-14), Jesus discusses a king who invited

guests to a wedding. When he sent his servants out with invitations, some of the invited refused to come. Others mistreated the king’s servants. Those who abused his servants he destroyed. Then he invited others from the street corners.

When the banquet room was filled the king went in to see the guests. One who was found unprepared for the wedding was bound and thrown out. Using this parable as a future warning for all whom the Father would call to put their trust in His Son Jesus, the Lord says, *“For many are called, but few are chosen” (Matt. 22:14).*

The invitation to enter God’s Kingdom goes out to all the world. Some hear the “call” but fail to respond. Others mistreat the ones the Lord has sent. Still others are ready to fulfill the purposes for which the Lord has chosen them.

To be Chosen

“Selected from a number of possible choices”

The disciples readily understood the Lord’s sovereignty of choice: *“Have I not chosen you, the Twelve?” (John 6:70). God chose Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau. He chose the Israelites over all other nations: *“For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The Lord did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples” (Deu. 7:6,7).**

As you study the Scriptures, you will find that our Lord delights in helping the “underdog”: *“Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he*

promised those who love him?" (James 2:5). Each chosen person has been selected for *obedience to Jesus Christ*. This is crucial. Tragically, many do nothing but remain blindly satisfied that they are chosen. One denomination even calls themselves "the frozen chosen."

Jesus chose to set an example for us by suffering at the hands of the Satan's world systems: "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you" (John 15:18,19).

A good sign of your "chosenness" is that the world hates you: you are misunderstood and you are ridiculed. Many Christians never embrace this. They spend an inordinate amount of time and effort conforming to the lifestyles and values of the world in order to avoid the hatred of the world. This impudent spiritual stopping point makes them candidates for Satan's church. They can "go to church" and live like the world because *their values are the same*.

Paul affirms the preciousness of the chosen and emphasizes that "to be chosen" is a way of living, not just a state of selection. To be found "faithful", one had to live out his faith: "For we know, brothers loved by God, that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia" (1 Thess. 1:4-7).

Peter likewise understood the connection between being chosen and serving God's purpose: "[You] have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance—you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light" (1 Pet. 1:2,9). We are called to be priests unto God as a spiritual nation of followers of Jesus who live in grateful obedience to Him in a way that proclaims God's greatness!

Take time to read the Parable of the Sower (Mark 4:1-20). You'll notice the difference between those who do not go beyond "called and chosen", and those who press on to be found faithful:

"Some people are like seed along the path, where the word is sown. As soon as they hear it, Satan comes and takes away the word that was sown in them" (v. 15).

"Others, like seed sown on rocky places, hear the word and at once receive it with joy. But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away" (v. 16,17).

"Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful" (v. 18,19).

Each of these types of people fails to go on to bear fruit. Those who know them see no lasting evidence of changed lives, no difference in them than before they heard the Word.

But there are also those who are found to be faithful:

"Others, like seed sown on good soil, hear the word, accept it, and produce a crop—thirty, sixty or even a hundred times what was sown" (v. 20). Fruitfulness requires a great measure of *death to self*: self-will, self-serving, self-fulfillment. But the crop that is produced proclaims your life-giving union with God!

Being Found Faithful

"Thorough Performance of Duty.
Trusted. Reliable."

To anchor the importance of being found faithful, Jesus relates the Parable of the Talents. The important criterion is what each person does with what he's been entrusted. Note that God does *not* compare us with others. Each person renders account for his own *faithfulness*:

"His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!' The man with the two talents also came. 'Master,' he said, 'you entrusted me with two talents; see, I have gained two more.' His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'" (Matt. 25:21-23).

To be found faithful by our Lord is determined by how we carry out the *specific responsibility* He's entrusted to us. Just because there is a long period of time before we must render account to Him does not mean that that time will never come:

"The Lord answered, 'Who then is the faithful and wise manager, whom the master puts in charge of his servants to give them their food allowance at the proper time? It will be good for that servant whom the master finds doing so when he

returns. I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions" (Luke 12:42-44).

Activity which benefits others is actually the outworking of our faithfulness: "Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). "Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you" (3 John 1:5).

Unlike a "faith" which simply believes, the faithfulness of which our Lord speaks is a way of life that can be imitated by others:

"For this reason I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church" (1 Cor. 4:17). "Therefore I urge you to imitate me" (1 Cor. 4:16). "We do not want you to become lazy, but to imitate those who through faith and patience inherit what has been promised" (Hebrews 6:12). Is your life a worthy role model for others to imitate? Ask our Lord what changes you need to make.

Faithfulness Being Part of the Vine

Please read John 15:1-8.

To be attached to the **I AM** as a branch on the vine requires a *living union* with Jesus. To *live in union* is to share a mingled oneness that parallels marital intimacy. Your very character grows to resemble the one with whom you are in *union*. This union becomes stronger as you grow in your knowledge of our Lord, keep His commandments,

and fulfill His purposes through the power of His Spirit. For this reason, the impudent can never live in union with our Lord.

Vine Talk

Union with our Lord gives us a *relational witness* that reflects connection with Him. Jesus fully knew and was fully known by His Father: "I and the Father are one" (John 10:30). Because of this union He could tell Nicodemus, "I tell you the truth, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony" (John 3:11).

When John and Peter were warned by the religious leaders to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, they replied, "For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20). And again, John emphasized this same witness of Whom he intimately knew, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:3).

When people speak about someone they know intimately and have experienced personally, their phraseology about that person is entirely different than if they were describing someone they have never met. Their words contain personal observations, experiences with that person, and vocabulary that reflects relational warmth. Without personal knowledge of our Lord, our phraseology becomes impersonal and our spiritual life relies on religious form, not relationship.

As Sue and I have encountered

faith communities on our travels, the *absence* of words that reflect an ongoing relationship with our Lord makes us very sad. Such great love offered, such little love experienced.

A Life of Union with the I AM

The Bible tells us the requirements for being found faithful, which bear repeating:

- To live in a covenant love relationship with Him.
- To keep His commandments.
- To fulfill His purposes.

The apostle John affirms the above as part of our union with Jesus: "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (1 John 2:3-6).

Please meditate on this passage:

"The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him" (1 John 3:3-6). Those who live in lawlessness, that is, outside of the commands in His Word, do not know God. They may practice the visible elements of religion but there is no testimony of a viable union with Him.

How does God affirm His part of the union with His children? He answers their prayers!

"I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him" (1 John 5:13-15). Peter affirms this: "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).

6. Is it easy for you to break into praise and worship all by yourself? Or do you need the crowd or a worship team?
7. Is our Father readily answering your prayers and receiving due praise for His answers?
8. Would the Lord consider you faithful?

Mike and Sue Dorigiewicz
(Hosea 14:9)

An Impudence Evaluation

1. Has your faith community established a biblical process for rebuking or correcting anyone?
2. Do you frequently carry out plans without confirmation of God's will? Do people who know you see a lot of 'dead ends' in your life?
3. Would your life be characterized by rest and peace, or are you harried and beset by fear and worry?
4. Are you a person who studies God's Word to know and apply it each day?
5. In your conversations, do you reveal a relationship with your Lord that displays your loving union with Him?