

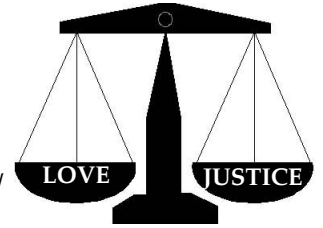
# Y e s h u a

# 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.*

UPHOLDING HUMAN  
DIGNITY



**Matt. 25:31-46**

## The Battle for Your Thought Life

Dear Friends,

In our last two newsletters, respectively, we articulated the Covenant Gospel embraced by the earliest church, then stressed the *determination* you need to live out this Gospel. We appreciated the feedback concerning the Gospel of the Covenant offered in our March-April 2002 newsletter. It affirmed what many of you knew from your own reading of the Scriptures: *Born again people can become Covenant-breakers.*

In this newsletter we want to discuss with you the most frequent area we've encountered that keeps people from completing their Covenant pilgrimage. The battle ground is their *thought life*. Your soul, that is, your mind, will, and emotions, is a battlefield between the Holy Spirit and demonic forces. Who controls or influences your mind, will, and emotions governs and guides the direction of your life.

Jesus' teachings reveal your thought life, where your decisions are made, as the origin out of which sin is committed, be it your own fleshly wickedness or giving in to the temptation of the Adversary. The Lord redefines the sinful *acts* of murder and adultery as sins of your *thought life*—bitterness and lust. James hammers home the issue of our thought life when he warns, *"Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death"* (1:14,15).

Satan is well-camouflaged. He keeps you unaware of how crucial the battle for your soul

**Yielding to the Holy Spirit is *brand new* for each of our Father's children.**

is. If you don't realize what you are losing, you won't fight with intensity. He looks for a foothold because your carnal, sinful nature more nearly identifies with him than with the Lord's Spirit. *"So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature. For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want"* (Gal. 5:16,17).

Yielding to the Holy Spirit is brand new for each of our Father's children. We must learn to hear His voice,

His soft prompts, and how to live empowered by Him. Last week I received a phone call from our friend, Barry, in Abilene, TX. He related the demonic opposition that he and his Sunday school class had faced as they read through our book, *God's Instruments for War*. They recognized that Satan didn't want them to *live empowered*.

You know that the Holy Spirit is winning the battle as He produces fruit in you — *"love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Gal. 5:22,23). You aren't who you use to be, and the character of Jesus grows increasingly evident in both your inner person and your outward choices. Remember, *"For in Christ Jesus ... the only thing that counts is trust expressing itself through love"* (Gal. 5:6).

From our Father's vantage point, the battle, when fought as He commands, draws us closer to Him. We begin to understand our Father more and experience the reality of His love. As the Spirit continues to win the battle, we begin to seek less for ourselves in prayer and more that will bring glory to our Father. In essence, yearning to glorify Him epitomizes our love and trust.

When Satan is winning the battle, you'll encounter increased oppression and tolerated sin. People who shrink back fail to experience the love of our Father or the love of others. Ultimately, they'll find themselves hitting the wall next to the narrow gate. The Bible is very clear about the nature of this battle and our personal responsibility to turn from tempting thoughts as well as sinful actions. We cover the topic extensively in our book, *Demolishing Strongholds*. The war can be either won or lost, and many who fail to fight it in accordance with His Word are *"taken captive to do [Satan's] will"* (2 Tim. 2:26).

### First, Demolish the Strongholds

When you entertain thoughts and participate in activities that are **contrary to the will of God**, you open yourself up to demonic inhabitation **in those areas**. When these thoughts and activities become **habitual**, you allow a **spiritual fortification**, a **stronghold**, to be built around that spirit and its influence. You become so accustomed to responding to the "voice" of that spirit

***Preparing the Family of Jesus for the Dark Days to Come***

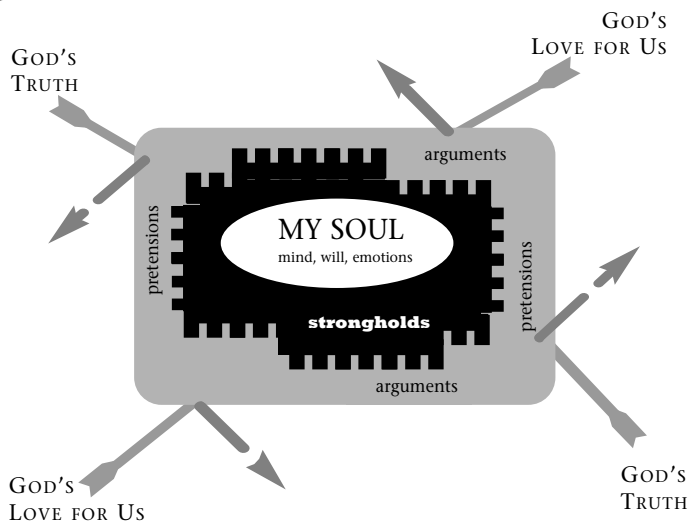
that it becomes an accepted part of your identity. And that voice sounds just like yours!

### The Definition of Strongholds

A stronghold is a demonic fortress of thoughts housing evil spirits that:

- (1) control, dictate, and influence our attitudes and behavior;
- (2) oppress and discourage us;
- (3) filter and color how we view or react to situations, circumstances, or people.

*“For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. And we will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete” (2 Cor. 10:3-6).*



The above passage summarizes a host of biblical issues and steps in dealing with demonic strongholds. The *arguments* and *pretensions* that make up a stronghold keep you from experiencing the love and truth our Father extends to you. Strongholds are, in effect, relationship killers—both between you and God, and other people with whom you desire relational intimacy.

### Only in the Name of Jesus

Followers of Jesus have been given Divine power in the Name of Jesus to deal with demons. He, alone, has the authority to make demons submit. Before Jesus sent out His disciples, He gave them *“authority to drive out demons”* (Mark 3:15). In Jesus we have the Name that is above all names. King of kings, Lord of lords—every knee will bow and confess Him as such. Don’t ever lose sight of the importance of the Name of Jesus,

### The Battle for Your Mind

- 1) *Satanic-inspired THOUGHTS* are introduced into your mind.
- 2) *Entertaining these thoughts brings on EMOTIONS.*
- 3) *Giving in to emotions eventually leads to taking some sort of ACTION.*
- 4) *Continual participation in this behavior causes you to develop a HABIT.*
- 5) *Once a habit is developed, a STRONGHOLD is built by that spirit.*

and Whom that precious Name represents. You will face Him someday. May each of us hear, “Well done, good and faithful servant!”

In recent decades, through much of what is called “Christian counseling,” Satan has minimized the importance of Jesus in favor of counseling techniques. Two testimonies will explain what I mean:

- Several years ago, because of our book *Demolishing Strongholds*, Sue and I were asked if we’d like to address the International Conference of Christian Counselors. We said we’d accept under one condition: that the person who asked us would provide names of those helped by his very popular counseling ministry, and we’d provide him names of those who have been helped through our book. He retorted, “What do you want to know that for?” We told him, “God judges everything by the *lasting fruit* it produces, while you and the other counselors would like to argue *technique.*” The offer was rescinded.

- Several years later, while doing a seminar in a small store-front church in Texas, we were invited to speak at a Sunday School class of the largest church in that city. The class had been going through a three-month curriculum on ridding themselves of demonic strongholds. As Sue and I shared with over 200 people how, because of the power and authority represented in the Name of Jesus, they could be free of these influences, many in the class broke into tears. We were filled with such compassion that we wished they would give up the worship service which was about to follow and stay there and become free! It didn’t happen. The teachers who had invited us were angry with us. They enjoyed their position and control in the lives of these people. We could identify with how Jesus must have felt when He confronted the Pharisees who enjoyed their prestige but still managed to make people *“twice the sons of hell.”*

### If You Don’t Take Your Thoughts Captive, Who Will?

After you have rid yourself of the strongholds in the power of Jesus’ Name, there is still an exercise no one can do for you: *“Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.”* If you yourself don’t do this, who will do it for you? Paul warns us, *“Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light”* (2 Cor. 11:14). Don’t you think he and his demons can mimic the voice of your mind? Sure they can!

**Strongholds are, in effect, relationship killers—both between you and God, and other people with whom you desire relational intimacy.**

When I learned that my mind has only one voice and that the other voice was a deceptive demon attempting to discourage me and get me to misperceive others, I began to fight the battle for my mind. I began taking my thoughts captive and bringing them into obedience to Jesus 12 years ago. I've enjoyed the freedom of hearing one voice in my mind throughout this time. Oh, the demons do drive-bys, but I realize now that I need to rebuke them by the authority of Jesus and ask Him to give me His thoughts. Sometimes I have to wrestle, but what delicious victory when Jesus prevails!

One beautiful thing has happened during these 12 years that can be your experience as well: I'm able to see everything around me differently. It's as if our Father lifts me out of what is going on around me and gives me His view on matters that affect me. The Mike who once listened to and believed the voices would not understand the Mike with one voice in his mind. Where the demons once agitated me, the Holy Spirit now has control.

### **Are There Consequences for *Not* Taking Your Thoughts Captive? You Betcha!**

When you entertain discussions with the demons you are getting yourself in trouble with your Father. Consider Paul's warning concerning the demonic connection to idols: *"Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. 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?"* (1 Cor. 10:19-22).

To paraphrase part of the above passage: *"You can't fellowship with the Lord and entertain demons too; you can't have a part in both the Lord's Presence and enjoy demons in your thought life. Don't arouse the Lord's jealousy. You're weaker than you think."*

Remember, as part of the Covenant you embraced, you promised to love the Lord. Your Father is jealous about His love relationship with you: *"...I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate [who refuse to love] me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments"* (Exo. 20:5,6). *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"* (Deu. 6:5). Entertaining demons in your

mind not only hinders your love relationship with your Father, but those inner conversations are *spiritual prostitution* in our Father's sight. Throughout the Hebrew Bible our Father accuses the Israelites of spiritual prostitution and adultery in order to convey His deep hurt in their rejection of Him by their worship of idols [demons]. At times they were so hardened in their idolatrous focus on demons that the Lord employed explicit words to convey how repugnant their acts were. Read Ezekiel 23 to grasp the graphic language He used to show Israel how their reliance on the Egyptians and Babylonians aroused His jealous anger. Can you imagine the intense love the Israelites rejected? Can you perceive how much pain our Father endured to have to speak such words?

Entertaining demons in your thought life has this same effect today. That is why Paul was insistent that we *take our thoughts captive*. Entertaining demonically-induced thoughts hinders us from growing in Christ-likeness. If you play with sinful thoughts long enough, you'll take action on them. You'll also arouse a Father jealous for your love, and may even *give birth to death*.

### **Well, Shut My Mouth!**

Someone close to us who is preparing for marriage asked Sue and me about taking our thoughts captive. We told him our personal *halakhah*: We don't share the details of our negative thoughts with each other. We only ask the other person to pray. Sue and I refuse to get between each other's relationship with our Lord. Explicit details drag each other down, while expression that she or I am struggling elicits loving prayer.

Two analogies illustrate the destructive nature of manipulating others to sympathize with you in your negative thoughts.

1. A person who has not taken his thoughts captive comes to you after he's listened to demons play mindgames in his head: *"Let me tell you what the demons have been sharing with me for the past 20 minutes as I've entertained their lies. I'm so depressed now. Would you pray for me?"* Instead, close down those thoughts through the power of Jesus!

Our Father loves you so intensely that when you discuss with others about your time entertaining demons, you arouse His jealousy.

2. Picture a husband coming home from work one day and saying to his wife, *"Honey, you should have seen the luscious woman who just got hired to work next to me. We had the most seductive conversation with each other. Maybe you could pray for us."* If you were his wife, how would you feel? Your spiritual adultery against God as you entertain demonic thoughts is just as ugly.

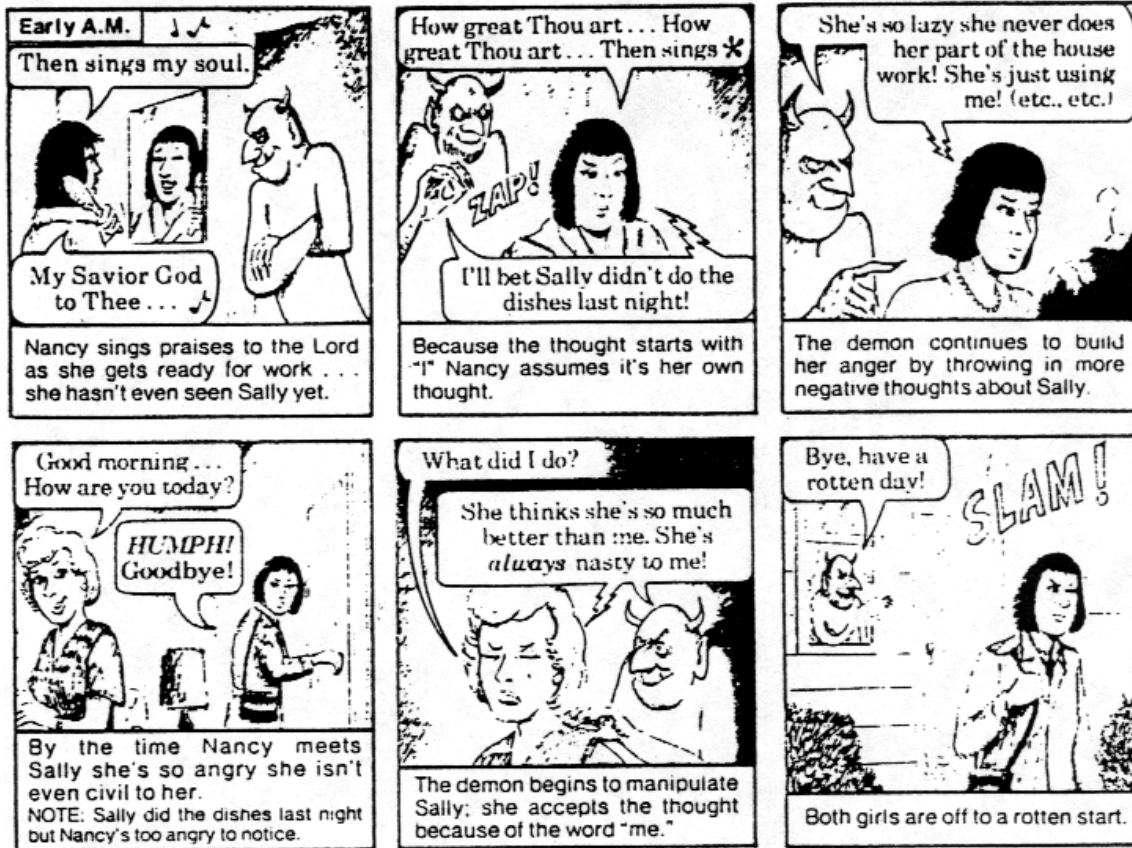
In too many ways Hellenistic psychology has become the panacea for those who refuse to *take their thoughts captive*. Remember, like all Hellenistic pur-

Have you ever wondered how a day that started out joyful could sour so quickly? These illustrations that were passed on to us several years ago can help explain.

When the fortresses of demonic influence — strongholds — have been built in our mind, will, and emotions, our

- HEARING from God is altered;
- BELIEF in God is shaken;
- DESIRES are distorted;
- ACTIONS are disobedient;
- RELATIONSHIPS are debased.

Figure I



Struggling in your own power to resist the Adversary's temptations doesn't work either.

Figure II





Follow the biblical pattern of James 4:7,8a: "Therefore, **submit to God**. Moreover, **take a stand against the Adversary, and he will flee from you. Come close to God, and he will come close to you.**"

Figure 111



suits, most psychology is *man-centered*, and personal satisfaction is its highest pursuit.

Hellenism: *God exists to love and to serve man.*

Hebraic: *Man exists to love and to serve God.*

"Christian counseling" pervades the religious scene. Much of it interferes with the individual's Covenant relationship with our Father. True biblical counseling holds a person accountable for his responses, and directs him toward the healing that only a walk of obedient love and trust in Jesus can bring. Sadly, much of counseling is technique-oriented or involves behavior modification, with little focus on the power of Jesus to heal, or the biblical steps of forgiveness and release of bitterness and unforgiveness toward others. The psychological method seduces your mind into believing that:

- Sharing the painful details brings me closer to others.
- Sharing what others have done to me helps you to understand me.
- Your understanding will ease my emotional hurt.

On face value nothing seems wrong with the above logic. It seems innocent to tell someone else the thoughts that demons have induced. Psychology has

bred a host of 'would-be Christian counselors' who believe they are helping as they mercifully listen to the negative thought life of others. Yet, when hurts from the past that only our Father can heal are shared, a breach of relationship with Him takes place. As He did with Israel, He'll turn you over to your "lovers." Deluded, you'll find yourself going from person to person with the same bitter stories. Equally as sad, you'll find too many ready to listen and to take up an offense against a person they've never met. Few if any will bother to call the supposed offender to verify your story.

It's easy to share under the guise of intimacy the demonic thoughts you entertain. But in time you'll schluck the people who listen: "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that **no bitter root** grows up to **cause trouble and defile many**" (Heb. 12:15).

People who have been taken captive by Satan through strongholds and are losing the battle habitually tell others about their demonically-induced thoughts. Satan has a legal right to this area of their soul. Especially with bitterness, he wants to defile as many as possible.

Sadly, too many people derive a perverse satisfaction from listening to the bitter woes and negative

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thoughts that others haven't taken captive. Satan then uses the listeners to entice others into sinning through slander and gossip. The Bible doesn't lie: "*The words of a gossip are like choice morsels; they go down to a man's inmost parts*" (Pro. 26:22).

Listening to bitterness and resentment only makes you a partner in the prostitution of the person speaking. Your empathy only serves to keep the person from humbly seeking the healing Jesus gives. As Paul asked earlier, "*Are [you] stronger than [God]? You, the listener, end up becoming a robber. You steal from the Lord. Those sins of the person sharing belong to Jesus as the sin sacrifice. He, not you, died on the cross so that that person could be forgiven. You rob the person of the forgiveness Jesus would give if he or she repented. Think about this.*" The Lord's words to the Israelites may apply to all those who turn to man rather than to Jesus for healing: "*You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them*" (Matt. 13:14,15).

***"We will be ready to punish every act of disobedience, once your obedience is complete"***

The 2 Corinthians passage quoted earlier ends with the above verse. It seems strange until you have walked free from strongholds for some time and seriously applied the personal calisthenic to take your thoughts captive and bring them into obedience to Jesus. When you are clean of strongholds and are fervently taking your thoughts captive, you can caringly confront others about sin. You'll find deep inside that you care so much for a person gone astray that you can confront him or her in loving rebuke. When they repent, they are then available as fit vessels to serve our Father's purposes. This is the beauty of it all. The litmus test is the *love in your heart* for the person you confront.

Before the strongholds are gone and the Spirit of Jesus has exerted sufficient influence in a person's mind, people with the *same spiritual strongholds* are the first to find fault with each other. It is one of the easiest mechanisms Satan uses to agitate people against each other. Deceit often hinders the accuser from seeing his own faults.

Also, *stronghold projection* can hinder relationships:

- A person plagued with unresolved bitterness projects that others are bitter toward him/her.
- A person filled with jealousy or envy thinks others view them the same way.

An important observation: Wherever you find fear and insecurity plaguing someone, you'll usually find

*unresolved bitterness* at the root. As needy as a person who comes to you sharing his fears and insecurities sounds, make him face and repent of the bitterness that is the root. I personally believe that our Father turns a bitter person who has failed to grasp how much He has forgiven him over to the demons of fear and insecurity to be tormented until he does choose to forgive. Then our loving Father can forgive him. Again, don't ever get between our Father and His rebellious child!

### **Some Warnings to Consider**

**1. Parents.** Be careful not to get between parents and their children in the gossip and slander they try to tell you. "*See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse*" (Mal. 4:5,6). In our last newsletter we mentioned a prophetic sequence beginning with the work of "Elijah."

Get both sides together before you listen. So much God-desired reconciliation between parents and children is hindered by well-meaning yet misguided counselors who hear only one side of the story.

**2. Marriages.** If you are a woman having problems with your husband, pray and fast before you talk to anyone else. Don't immediately get on the phone to share your woes. Isn't there a God who sees? If need be, go to a godly older woman, or better yet, ask another couple to sit down with you and your spouse. Be sure not to share your problems with men, especially with male clergy. As surveys have shown, pastoral marriage counseling too often leads to unfaithfulness, either emotionally or physically.

Stay away from female counselors who aren't ministering with their husbands. You will only find the rift with your husband growing because her example may lead you toward what she perhaps has in her own marriage — *relational independence* rather than *mutual interdependence*. We've seen too many women turn away from their husbands for the short-term gain of self-gratification rather than committing themselves to be peacemakers in their homes.

Rather than seeking others to take sides with either of you, maybe you both need to renew your own commitment to your marriage covenant. Before anyone else gets involved, sit down and discuss which issues of your covenant are problematic. The Hebraic perspective looks at an issue as "WE have a problem WE need

to address.” The Hellenistic viewpoint accuses, “YOU have a problem that I want solved.” Once you have talked with each other for clarification, you may agree to ask a godly couple for help if necessary. Remember, our Father is FOR your marriage! When each of you is walking aligned with His will, He is then free to weave your hearts together to fulfill His purposes for you as a couple.

**3. Let Go of the Future.** Any anxiety about or conjecture concerning your future is stepping on God’s domain. You don’t step on His turf or sit on His throne without ramifications. Let go of any concern and take your thoughts captive until the trust of Jesus controls your heart. Stepping into God’s domain or infringing on His character has a bad ending.

**4. Release all Bitterness.** The poem below was given to me by our dear friend, Frank Murray, shortly after I had been wrongfully fired from a job. He told me, “You have to see this as the hand of God or else you will become embittered.” As we knelt together he read this poem to me, penetrating my wounded heart.

#### STEP BY STEP

“As thou goest, step by step I will open the way before thee”  
(Proverbs 4:12, New Translation).

Child of My love, fear not the unknown morrow,  
Dread not the new demand life makes of thee;  
Thy ignorance doth hold no cause for sorrow,  
Since what thou knowest not is known to Me.

Thou canst not see today the hidden meaning  
Of My Command, but thou the light shalt gain;  
Walk on in faith, upon My promise leaning,  
And as thou goest, all shall be made plain.

One step thou seest — then go forward boldly,  
One step is far enough for faith to see;  
Take that, and thy next duty shall be told thee,  
For step by step thy Lord is leading thee.

Stand not in fear, thine adversaries counting,  
Dare every peril, save to disobey;  
Thou shalt march on, all obstacles surmounting,  
For I, the Strong, will open up the way.

Wherefore go gladly to the task assigned thee,  
Having My promise, needing nothing more  
Than just to know, where’er the future find thee,  
In all thy journeying I go before.

Frank J. Exley

May God deliver you from all your strongholds and fill you with the truth of His Spirit!

## May Jesus Reign in Our Hearts

No one who truly follows Jesus can handle more than one step of faith at a time. And because of your intimacy and trust in Him, you don’t need more than one step. Our Father and His Son, Jesus, know Who they are and the confidence we can have in the Bible’s revelation of them. The Godhead is the only reality. Everything else is untrustworthy. The Lord isn’t giving us a vain command when He says, “**Take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.**” Our Father understands far more than we do where this discipline ultimately leads—It leads to the sanctification of our souls—fleeing the earthly and embracing the heavenly.

Don’t think that Sue and I are removed from the abusive attacks Christians can use to hurt one another. We receive some very scathing correspondence. Each time, we battle through the sting until our motives and actions are redemptive. Christ must prevail before we act. It’s grievous at times to recognize how far *His* thoughts and actions are from *our* initial responses.

Much of what we have been writing is captured by the prophets of previous millennia: “*Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. ‘For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,’ declares the Lord. ‘As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.’”* (Isaiah 55:6-8).

Join us in your determination to bring glory to our Father. Scrutinize yourself to see if there is anything hindering you from following in Jesus’ steps in the freedom of love and obedient trust. Permit the Lord to give you His thoughts, for His wisdom is THE solution to all your problems. Don’t permit anyone to cut in on your relationship with your Father.

Joyful in His faithfulness,

*Mike & Sue*

*The power of the righteous consists not in their number but in the grace of the Spirit. There were twelve apostles. How little leaven! But these twelve turned the world upside down. Let only ten change, and soon they will be twenty, the twenty will become 100, the 100 will become 1,000, and the 1,000, a whole town.*

*Just as the lighting of ten candles can give light to a whole house, so it is with spiritual acts. Let only ten change and we can start a fire that will give light to all.*

John Chrysostom

**Do not be afraid to go back and Demolish Strongholds whenever anything is blocking the Truth and Love of Jesus in your life.**

