

Discussing How To Restore The Early Church

Returning Intimacy and Power to the Father's Children

*"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 18:19,20)



SECTION 5 - LESSON 34

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth

A Closer Look at Males:

- *Mike's Pilgrimage To The Hebraic Foundations*
 - *Rites of Passage*
 - *Stages of Male Development*
- *Growing Wise and Remaining Teachable*



Restoration Ministries International

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Section 5 Lesson 34

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God was using problems in our ministries to get all of us men back to our marriages!

Before Sue and I went to Israel I'd let ministry become my idol. As I reflect back, I can see that I worshiped what *I* was doing for God. As with any idol, our Lord lets you be brought down by whatever you worship or put your trust in besides Him. (You may remember the "idols of the heart" we discussed in Lesson 26.)

He confronted idols in a mighty way when He responded to the Hebrews' cry for freedom from Egyptian slavery. Each of the 10 plagues was a direct attack on one of the gods in whom the Egyptians trusted. With the final plague of the Passover, the Lord declared, "*I will bring judgment on all the gods of Egypt. I am the Lord*" (Exodus 12:12).

Please understand, God didn't recruit me as a man who had it all together to share the Hebraic foundations, but one who felt like a complete failure. I trust this will encourage any of you reading this who feel you're beyond the miraculous intervention of God. Please bear with me as I give you some more insight into the man who was brought to Israel.

This year, 2006, it will be 12 years since we returned from Israel with the

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth — A Closer Look At Males:

Mike's Pilgrimage To The Hebraic Foundations

From Mike especially for men:

How would you respond if someone kept asking *you*, "**Why can't you love your wife?**" This happened to me during the most difficult period of my life. I'd been in the Wounded Warrior stage for almost 4 years—emotionally hurting and feeling betrayed by just about everyone I knew.

My seminary training had dutifully prepared me to place ministry above my marriage and family. Most of the clergy I counseled for over 10 years kept that same priority. My counsel was sufficient to get them back into the fray, much like a trainer works to get his boxer back in the ring for the next round. Yet, we all had it wrong!

foundations of the Hebraic Restoration. We'd been married for almost 24 years when our plane touched down in Tel Aviv. For weeks prior to our flight the emotional atmosphere between Sue and me couldn't have been colder. Because of the work around farm equipment at our retreat center, I seldom wore my wedding ring. As I boarded the plane for Israel, I put that ring on my finger, crying out to Jesus to save our marriage.

And here was the strange part:

We'd been given prophecies that the two of us were going to come back to the U.S. with a prophetic message for the Church. That same word was confirmed to us again while in Jerusalem.

Picture two emotionally broken people who had been certain that ministry demands came before our marriage. We were staring down into a very real possibility of divorce. To hear that we were going to be coming back *together* to the States was astonishing enough, never mind with an assignment from our Lord!

We can look back *now* and see how our Father was preparing us. He needed empty vessels to receive His message and to share the relational priorities He is restoring to His children.

Let's go back to the period *before* we got on the plane to Israel:

Three years earlier, in the midst of what many would call a "successful ministry", I'd been given a prophetic word that set the stage for future preparation. See if it's the sort of word *you'd* like to receive!

7/23/90

Hearken to My voice, My little one. For I the Lord am here to refine by fire. For My servant Mike shall be

broken. I have prepared the fires that I shall make him walk through, and they shall be used to crush the flesh in him.

And I promise you that the sweet and fragrant aroma of Jesus shall pour forth as he is tempered and tried by My Spirit. And My anointing shall rest upon him in purity and power, and great prophetic words shall be uttered through his mouth. But the testing that is coming upon him shall scathe him and be painful as I flush out all that is not like Me.

The next three years were brutal for both of us! False accusations and betrayals by church leaders whom I'd helped in my years of counseling left me bruised and shaken. But our Lord wouldn't let me defend myself.

Our friend Bert Schlossberg, with whom we would live outside Jerusalem for three months, had moved to Israel with his family about five years before our visit. Before he left the U.S. he anchored in me a key truth that was to become part of my very core:

“Mike, you can never walk in the fullness of Jesus until you wash the feet of Judas.”

During those three years prior to our Father taking us to Israel I went through devastating emotional pain at the hands of men for whom I'd sacrificed my family to help in their ministries. Our Board of Directors sided with false accusations without even investigating them. As a friend confided, "I guess they felt that where there's smoke, there must be fire."

In September 1993, the Board ordered us to leave the center by year's end. I was

emotionally empty. When we left, it was months before I could even visualize the faces of the people for whom I'd cared so much. I could painfully identify with David's lament:

*If an enemy were **insulting me**, I could endure it; if a foe were **raising himself against me**, I could hide from him. But it is **you, a man like myself, my companion, my close friend, with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship** as we walked with the throng at the house of God (Psalm 55:12-14).*

If our Father hadn't shown me such unmerited mercy when He got me to Israel, Sue and I would be among the divorce statistics of so many who are, or who have been, in full-time ministry. It's as though the *Titanic* is sinking and God is rescuing those He can use later.

Two verses from the Book of Daniel were great encouragement that our suffering in His purifying fires would not be in vain:

Some of the wise will stumble, so that they may be refined, purified and made spotless until the time of the end, for it will still come at the appointed time (11:35).

Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. (12:3).

Our wonderfully caring Father brought me to my friend Bert, a Jewish follower of Jesus, the one man who could confront my rationalization and instill in me a Hebraic viewpoint of my marriage. And confront he did...

During the first few weeks of living with his family in Israel, I was often

asked by Bert, "**Mike, why can't you love your wife?**" I initially thought he wanted to hear why I was so hurt and how I perceived Sue had failed me. But he wasn't asking that at all!!!

Bert was really guiding me to *go vertical* and cry out to the Lord Jesus for the *agape* love that Sue deserved from me. Both Bert and our Lord knew that any love that was less than what Jesus would give me for my wife was carnal and selfish. I needed a love so divine that it didn't matter what Sue did. In essence, *His* love would keep my love for her from being based on her actions.

Do you remember in Lesson 30 we discussed God's longsuffering love and forgiveness for Israel, His Bride? I came to realize that this is His standard for *all* husbands: A divine love that is longsuffering and forgiving.

My Lord Jesus wanted me to see the love in His heart for Sue, and for me to be a vessel for her to experience it. In our Father's wonderful mercy, He sent me to a man who refused to listen to my Hellenistic rationalization and its daughters, **blame** and **excuses**.

In my distress, I wanted to take Bert *horizontal* and tell him how I'd been let down. But Bert sent me *vertical* and had me take it up with my Lord at the throne. We *all* need a load-bearing friend with that kind of confrontational courage to force us God-ward!

How do you feel knowing how messed up I was in my marriage? Are you encouraged, or do you find a certain disdain for me? Describe your feelings.

Do you have a “Bert” in your life who is willing to confront you, and are you willing to receive what he has to say? Yes or no? If yes, describe a few areas of your life in which he has confronted you. How did you respond? If no, why *is* there no “Bert” in your life?

If you’re married, how forgiving and longsuffering is your love toward your wife? Describe your basis for loving her. (Really think this through and then share it with her.)

Stop passing the buck!

In the years since we returned from Israel we’ve traveled the country sharing the message of the Hebraic Restoration. I can see how the suffering the Lord took me through has been used to help other men. His purpose wasn’t only for me to love Sue as He desires, but also to help other men who, through blaming their wives, were “*passing the buck*” of their personal responsibility.

Paul personally understood this preparation phase of suffering that looks ahead to usefulness to our Father’s purposes:

*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the **Father of compassion** and the God of all comfort, who **comforts us in all our troubles**, so that we can **comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God** (2 Corinthians 1:3,4).*

If you remember, in prior lessons we mentioned a statement which could encapsulate the earliest church’s understanding of marriage:

“If you want to know my love for Jesus, watch it in how I love my wife.”

The earliest Hebraic male followers of Jesus knew that a wife is the highest gift God could give a man. The foundation of a husband’s authority is summed up in the phrase, “**The buck stops with me**”, paraphrasing Ephesians 5:23.

In homes and faith communities our Father establishes men with authority as servant-leaders. Authority is the responsibility to *include* and *exclude*, to *commend* and to *correct*.

As we pointed out earlier, our Father will *not accept excuses* from us men when we fail to fulfill our responsibilities. And He will not allow those who exercise authority to *blame* the ones in their care when they themselves have failed. It robs the home of peace by creating hurtful apprehension.

[For more on the destructive force of apprehension, see our Teaching E-mails: **10. Apprehension: The Silent Destroyer (June 25, 2005)**; and **19. Replacing Apprehension With Love (December 22, 2005)**].

As people who have attended our workshops grasp the different facets of the Restoration, they’re confronted with the increased **relational commitment** required of them—a relational commitment to God and to their spouses and others with whom they have intimate fellowship.

How many times at the end of a workshop have I heard, “My wife won’t go for this,” or, “You don’t know my wife, she

thinks everything is okay the way it is,” or, “If we start upholding the righteousness that God requires, we’ll lose our friends!” When I hear their excuses and blame, I can hear myself when Sue and I arrived in Israel—*passing the buck*.

If this describes you, you need to go vertical and pray for God’s grace to empower you *both* to follow His commands no matter what the cost. If the litany of excuses or blame is allowed to continue, you’ve already lost. When I tried to open my mouth with excuses in Israel, Bert shut me down with, “**But Mike...**”

The man who blames his wife for why he can’t lovingly follow God’s commands sets his wife up as an idol—a god greater than our God. This man is setting her up for trouble because God will fulfill His words, “*You shall have no other gods before me.*” Through Bert, the Lord punctured my rationalization and its blame and excuses.

Sue and I are very aware of how humanly difficult it is for people to face the truths of the Hebraic Restoration. It is critically important that people shut their mouths before they cast blame or give excuses. Rather than reciting a litany of accusation as a “victim,” they need to be pleading for God’s help. In the years we’ve been sharing this message we’ve learned that *no human effort* can effect the changes our Lord desires to bring about.

We can affirm without any hesitation: **Keeping your mouth shut is the crucial first step.** The mouth can be an instrument of painful curse or or a well-spring of wisdom and blessing.

Consider a few “mouth” verses:

- “*When words are many, sin is not absent, but he who holds his tongue is wise*” (Proverbs 10:19).

- “*Even a fool is thought wise if he keeps silent, and discerning if he holds his tongue*” (Proverbs 17:28).

People reveal more than facts when they speak; their *inner motives* come through:

- “*Out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks*” (Matthew 12:34).

Oftentimes, people who are in the habit of speaking too quickly need the help of others to confront them. I have a method that gets other men’s attention. One particular situation several years ago illustrates that a man can be helped if another man puts up a *big enough stop sign*:

My wife was helping a woman who was having trouble in her marriage. One day Sue was on the phone with her. She put her hand over the receiver and told me that the woman’s husband was packing to leave her. I went into the bedroom to pray and discerned a prompting from the Holy Spirit. I asked Sue to ask if the woman and her husband would join us for dinner that evening. The couple agreed.

They met us at a restaurant. During the meal the husband kept bringing up past instances of how his wife had let him down. She finally stalked off to the bathroom in tears. Sue followed her.

Sitting alone with the man I asked, “Do you love your wife?” He responded that he did. I then asked, “Is there anyone in your life from whom you’re willing to accept direction?” He answered emphatically, “NO!!”

Next I asked, “Would you like my help?” Yes, he would. I said, “Every time you bring up anything negative from the past about your wife, you make out a check for \$100 to our min-

istry.” He blinked for a second, then wholeheartedly agreed to my terms. He really did want reconciliation with his wife.

At that moment she returned to the table and I told her what her husband had agreed to. Hope shined in her eyes. She was aware that her husband rarely listened to anyone, and that he was a notorious penny-pincher. His agreement to my terms showed her that he meant business in wanting to restore their relationship.

Delightedly, I never did collect a cent from them, and they went on to mend their marriage! Often, the *old patterns* need to be broken, and a challenge of accountability can help stifle an old response mechanism.

[We encourage you to read [Lifebyte 24, What’s The PROBLEM?](#) to help you “go vertical”, and to help you be a “Bert” to those who come to you for help.]

How would those who know you well describe your willingness to take responsibility for your actions, especially when you’ve erred? Do you accept responsibility when confronted, or rationalize and give excuses and blame?

“I Have Decided to Follow Jesus.”

The Restoration truths our Father has given us to share require a level of commitment greater than most people have considered. An old worship song, “*I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*”, articulates this determination well.

*I have decided to follow Jesus
No turning back, no turning back.
The cross before me, the world behind me,
No turning back, no turning back.
Though none go with me still I will follow,
No turning back, no turning back.*

This song may become the theme song of the Hebraic Restoration! Those who have pursued and applied the truths which our Father is pouring forth around the world know they can never go back. The ever-increasing love and intimacy with their Father is *too precious* for them to turn back.

We’re often asked, “How well are these truths received?” Well, that depends! In one of our newsletters we mentioned a study of how change occurs within a given group. The study categorized five types of people you’d typically find in a congregation:

1. **Innovators** (2% of a congregation)—people who hunger for God and are willing to pay any cost to serve and obey Him because of their love for Him.
2. **Early Adapters** (12%)—people who enjoy relationships with innovators and also have the confidence of others to be an influence in their lives.
3. **Early Majority** (33%)—people who don’t want to be the first to change nor do they want to be last.
4. **Late Majority** (33%)—people who wait for institutional endorsement before considering anything new.
5. **Laggards** (20%)—people who won’t allow themselves to be changed no matter what you share. Sadly, in many Nicolaitan congregations laggards exercise great influence among the leadership and are easily threatened when someone proposes change.

Generally, only people from the first three groups attend our workshops. Those within these groups seem to respond to the Spirit's prompting with the courage to *press on together* into all that our Lord would have for them. We encourage the innovators to be patient with the *early majority*, who may appear hesitant as they look back to see if anyone else is coming with them!

Let's use a parallel with the sheep flock we tended at our retreat center. As the shepherds we were like the *innovator* as we led them to better pasture. We knew they'd find something tasty and refreshing there, even if meant they had to leave the familiarity of the old grazing area.

The ewes without lambs were the *early adapters*, easily able to keep pace with their shepherd and comfortable because they knew they could trust us to do well by them.

The ewes with lambs were like the *early majority*. As shepherds, we had to move the flock slowly enough so that a ewe with lambs wouldn't have tension between her flocking instincts as the other sheep moved ahead and her mothering instincts as her lambs dallied.

You need to consider these differences if you're going to go on together in the truths our Father is revealing!

Using the five categories we mentioned above, where would you categorize yourself? Your spouse? Others who are close to you in your faith pilgrimage?

How do you feel about where you and those close to you in the faith are? Would our

Lord Jesus be pleased with your choice? Yes or no? If no, what do you need to change?

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth — A Closer Look At Males: *Rites of Passage*

“When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me”
(1 Corinthians 13:11).

When a girl enters puberty, her menarche and the physical changes that occur during that stage of development identify her with all other women. She may still be emotionally immature, but that monthly responsibility and the effects of hormonal infusion are significant signs that she's becoming a woman.

Puberty doesn't have the same significance for males in our culture. There is no right of passage or commonly accepted line of demarcation from boyhood to manhood.

[Mike]: My rite of passage came when I went home on leave from the Navy just before going to Vietnam. My Dad had me put on my uniform. Then he took me to the local Polish-American Club. My uncles, who had been instrumental in my growing up years, and all my Dad's life-long friends were waiting there. Some had served in the military as far back as World War I.

They all stood and toasted me that I

might have a safe return. These men understood that it was now my turn to lay down my life as a man. From that day onward my Dad treated me differently. Although I still gave him deference as my father, he treated me like a *man*.

During our decade at the retreat center I'd often ask men when *their* father started to treat them as a man. The responses were often painful. Many men, especially those who hadn't done time in the military, *never* felt as though their fathers treated them as men. Some of these men were in their 50's!

Something needs to change, particularly within the family of Jesus. A boy is not a man, but when and under what conditions should he be accepted as one?

Christendom has done a poor job in dealing with this issue. There are too many "adult boys" whom no one prepared to be men. To the emotional pain of many women, these overgrown adolescents have married but have never learned to be responsible nor to sacrifice self for the sake of others.

We'll discuss this more in a later lesson on parenting. But stop for a moment and consider the Jewish rite of *bar mitzvah* for males. At a *bar mitzvah*, a boy becomes a "son of the commandments." He is now personally responsible for keeping the teachings of God (*Torah*).

It takes a great deal of time and effort for mature men to guide and mentor the young man to prepare him for this event. During this period his study of God's Word is intensified; it is intended that he learn to apply its truth to his life.

In other cultures and in tribal societies, public acknowledgement of a boy transi-

tioning into manhood demands a period of preparation that he might meet the requirements of responsible manhood.

My Nigerian friend James Oderinde told me that in his tribe a boy calls all his uncles "father." Each male relative has the same responsibility and interest as the father does in preparing a boy to become a respected and responsible man. Then he'll never bring shame on the name of his family or his tribe.

As the restoration continues, this sense of a "family" of men in faith communities will cooperate together to prepare their boys for responsible manhood. But for this to happen, Christian men need to reacquaint themselves with the biblical facets of maturity. At the same time, they need guidance to develop these aspects in the young men they come alongside.

May I be prophetic and share with you what the restored intergenerational preparation for a Christian rite of passage will look like?

Our boys will no longer be separated from their fathers in church services to be herded into Sunday school and youth groups. The mature men themselves will recognize their *combined responsibility* as spiritual "fathers" to all the young men in their faith community, including those who have no dads at home.

Men who need help in acting responsibly will be disciplined by the older *zakens*, learning how to fulfill their role as father. The organized systems of Sunday school and youth groups (which are often the means of supporting paternal irresponsibility) will be discarded because of their true fruit: activity-oriented, self-centered, stunted adolescents who have little moti-

vation to become responsible men.

It takes *men* to raise a man. At our retreat center, we rejoiced in the results when men came together multi-generationally! The wisdom and experience shared by those who have tasted the tender mercy of our God stirred younger males to press on to maturity.

Biblical male development calls for a man to *learn responsibility* so that when he marries, he'll be responsible not only to God for himself, but also for the wife and family God gives him.

Remember, God *doesn't accept excuses*. He didn't accept Adam's, nor will He hear those that husbands may give Him today.

Does your father treat you as a man? Yes or no? If yes, how did this occur? If no, why do think this is so?

If you're married, do your wife and others regard you as a responsible man, both toward God and your family? Ask them for feedback.

Are there younger men or boys in your life with whom you could share these "preparation" insights and help them along the path of maturity?

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth — A Closer Look At Males: *Stages of Male Development*

In Lesson 10 we discussed the six stages of male development. Now that we are focusing on the relational priority of the home, it would be helpful for you to have an accurate understanding of which stage you are in, and what help you may need to press on. (These insights come from Robert Hicks' excellent book, *The Masculine Journey*.¹

The first stage, the **Creational Male** (Hebrew *adam* "ah-DAHM"), connotes **mankind in general**, both male and female. Having been made in the image of God, humanity is distinct from the rest of creation.

The next stage of male development is the **Phallic Male** (Hebrew *zakar* "zuh-KAR"). In this stage a man responds to **the innate sexual drive** that impels and motivates him toward an intimate relationship. Biblical admonitions constrain him, however, to confine his expression of that sexuality to his wife.

In fact, a man's true worship of God begins by *fleeing* lust (1 Corinthians 6:18) and saving himself for the woman he will take in the covenant of marriage. It's through *not giving in to lust* that a man begins to learn true responsibility to God by denying himself for the sake of obedience to His Lord.

When the term *gibbor* (ghi-BOR) is used in the Hebrew Scriptures, it refers to the third stage of a man's life development, the **Warrior Male**. A man in this stage seeks to excel and to conquer. He's **known by what he does**. In our culture

this would generally represent a man in his twenties and thirties, and even into his forties. He's heading for the top in his occupation, scurrying to acquire the trappings of material success and recognition.

During this stage a man is often so consumed with desire for success and recognition that he spends little time interacting with and enjoying his family.

He may be deriving "attaboys" from work or congregational leadership for his effort, but his own wife and children are yearning for intimacy and connection that he has no time for. He may even grow angry toward them, thinking they're ungrateful. He's bringing home the bacon from his job and filling in activity slots in his congregation. Isn't that enough?

Eventually a man becomes a **Wounded Male** (*enosh* "en-OSH") during which season **God completes the wounding** that wasn't accomplished in earlier stages. Only through wounding can a man be humbled enough to learn to trust God in ways he couldn't have imagined in prior stages. Through the trials and disappointments he faces in wounding, he truly begins to understand the needs of those around him.

[This is the painful stage I was in for the three years that led up to our going to Israel. But God knew that my friend Bert could get me, at age 47, through the Wounded Stage.]

Often a man goes through the *enosh* stage in his forties or early fifties, but we've encountered those even in their sixties *still fighting to be warriors*. Sadly, they're bludgeoning those around them like old bull elk, trying to shore up their diminishing physical capabilities.

To renew his flagging self-image, the wounded man may take up with a younger woman. He ignores the instruc-

tional wounds our Father is inflicting to build his character. Instead, he compensates for the pain by giving way to his sin nature.

The wounding he's undergoing creates deep-seated confusion and frustration. He loses the purpose, meaning and ego satisfaction he had in the Warrior Stage. In this culture, this misunderstood stage is called a "mid-life crisis", as though it's some affliction he has to get through so he can return to the guy he was. Yet God doesn't plan for him to *go back*; he's to *press on ahead* to maturity!

During his wounding, he feels lonely and detached, as though no one understands his misery. All he knows is that his marriage seems unfulfilling, his children don't seem to need him, his job isn't satisfying, and his body is starting to fall apart.

Warning: Many men lose their marriage at this time. Mired in a pit of self-pity and isolation, he's unable or even unwilling to reach out to the older men who have already gone through this stage. His seclusion is all the more defeating because they could help him see God's purpose for the wounding.

The *enosh* stage is like going through the "**valley of the shadow of death.**" And it is a death experience! During this time a man must learn to die to his old inclinations, goals and ways. That's the only way he'll garb himself with humility. And, it's an essential part of our Father's design to raise up *humble* older men of wisdom who will shepherd His children.

God has designed that the wounded stage develop a man who is **totally dependent on Him**, as was Abraham. It's only when total dependence on his Lord is complete that a man emerges from the Wounded Stage.

The severity of the wounding depends on two factors:

1. How much sin the man tolerated in his past, *and*
2. His personal access, or lack thereof, to older role models in the faith in earlier stages.

The Hebrew term *ish* defines the **Mature Male**. This reflects a man who has passed through his wounded period to become a person of **dignity and integrity**. At this stage of his life, a man is known by his character, by **who he is**. No longer is he known by *what he does*. The competitive spirit and desire to achieve that once drove him has been exchanged for **love, mercy, compassion**. He's now a reflection of our Father's heart.

The Mature Male senses a renewal of life purpose. No longer a warrior, he's able to cooperate with other men with a servant's heart. His humility enables him to coordinate with others in service to Jesus.

Paul's admonition carries special meaning for him: ***“Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves”*** (Philippians 2:3). This is the true understanding of humility.

At the same time, the Mature male's dependence on his Lord empowers him to confront foolishness and practices that aren't of God. A courage to represent the interests of our Father grows inside him, culminating in the next stage, Sage/Elder.

If his marriage has endured through the wounding process, he finds his love for his wife growing in new dimensions. His appreciation for her deepens, and they can at this stage be a highly effective team to help younger couples.

In particular, the Mature male recognizes how our Father has always wanted

to use his wife to teach him meekness. For a man to love his wife as Jesus would love her requires **absolute humility**. She is called to give deference to him as to the Lord (Ephesians 5:22,23), *but he is never to lord it over her*. This calls for mutual loving respect and cooperation between the two of them!

The final stage, which not all men achieve because they've acted foolishly in prior stages, is a man addressed as a *zaken* (zah-KEN) or **Sage/Elder**. *Zaken* means “gray-bearded wise man”. He is a willing and available mentor, **revered for the wisdom he's gained through life experience**. Even his past mistakes and sins, and subsequent repentance, have been used to teach him wisdom.

An Elder is a man who has truly tasted our Father's mercy through forgiveness. And this understanding is what enables him to represent our Father in caring for His children with compassion. The apostle Peter is a striking example of a man who was fully aware of his past shortcomings, yet learned the wisdom of humility through them (see 1 Peter 5:1-5).

A *zaken's* guidance and understanding allow him to bring practical application to God's Word when others ask. As noted in Lesson 9, in biblical times the Hebraic elders who shepherded God's people passed along wisdom in the *practical* realm, not the theoretical. They provided skillful advice for solving problems facing the community.

We asked this in Lesson 10, but let's go over it again: If you're a man, in what stage do those who know you well think you are?

If you're a younger man, what relationships do you have in place that are sources of mentoring for your life?

If you're in the Mature or Elder Stage, what are you doing to make yourself available to help younger men?

THE HOME

The Basic Building Block For Spiritual Growth — A Closer Look At Males: *Growing Wise and Remaining Teachable*

“A fool finds pleasure in evil conduct, but a man of understanding delights in wisdom” (Proverbs 10:23).

In Lesson 10 we discussed four of the different types of fool found in the Bible. We want to review these so that you can identify where you are and what help you may need.

Remember, from the Hebraic perspective the goal for every follower of Jesus is to grow in wisdom and understanding to walk in His ways. The Bible describes different kinds of fools, both young and old. The type of fool a man is reveals the type of spiritual soil with which the elders (*zakens*) have to work.

Perhaps as much as anything else, the term *fool* describes an attitude, bent of mind or life direction *which needs correcting*. This is the key feature which distinguishes a teachable man from truly foolish one: his willingness to accept correction.

Paul understood clearly the role of elders in developing younger men to succeed them. He stated unmistakably *how* a man is changed: “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you **teach and admonish one another with all wisdom...***” (Colossians 3:16).

In Lesson 20 we discussed the ways in which men are changed. Current studies have affirmed the Hebraic view of the various approaches that prompt males to alter their behavior and lifestyle:

- **Role modeling** — A man is **changed** through role modeling as he emulates that which he esteems in others. “*For you yourselves know how you ought to **follow our example...***” (2 Thessalonians 3:7); “*...set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity*” (1 Timothy 4:12).
- **Confrontation** — A man is **changed** through confrontation and admonition by those who come alongside in relational brotherhood. “*We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are working hard among you, those who are guiding you in the Lord and **confronting you in order to help you change***” (1 Thessalonians 5:12, CJB).
- **Education changes no man.** Fact acquisition only adds to his knowledge, but **does not change** his life. “*Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up*” (1 Corinthians 8:1); “*But everyone who **hears these words of Mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash***” (Matthew 7:26,27).

Hebraic thought revolved around discerning that which was pleasing to God (wisdom) and that which was abhorrent (foolishness). Let's review the five Hebrew words for fool according to their distinct characteristics. (With thanks to Marvin Wilson for his groundbreaking book, *Our Father Abraham*.)²

The **Simple Fool** (*peti* "PEH-tee") found in Proverbs 1:4 denotes an ignorant or immature person who is vulnerable to error but *still teachable*. The *peti* who is willing to seek help should be welcomed when he sees his own need for correction and is willing to learn and apply wisdom to a certain area of his life.

A *kesil* (KESS-ill), or **Hardened Fool**, is stubbornly set in his ways: "*As a dog returns to its vomit, so a kesil repeats his folly*" (Proverbs 26:11). This type of fool so enjoys his evil ways that intervention by a wiser person would probably prove futile. He may come to you time and again for advice but he won't put it into practice.

The *ewil* (EH-will), similar to the *kesil*, adds insolence and anger to his unwillingness to change (see Proverbs 29:9) and will probably respond with quarreling and wrath if you try to correct him.

The **Mocking Fool**, or *letz*, is described in Proverbs 21:24: "*The proud and arrogant man—'Mocker' is his name; he behaves with overweening pride.*" This type of fool disrupts the discussions of righteous men and women and heckles people of wisdom. His arrogant pride keeps him from admitting his need for correction. You'd be wasting your time and effort trying to help such a person as he has to prove his point and has no "ears to hear".

The *nabal* (nah-bahl) is the **God-denying Fool**. "*The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God'*" (Psalms 14:1). His disdain for holiness closes off any opportunity for you to admonish or correct him. (Incidentally, this type of fool is no atheist. Rather, he has *created his own concept* of what he wants God to be—perhaps a god who holds no one accountable for sin, or who is so "loving" that he's nothing like the Hebrew Scriptures portray him.)

It's evident that as an elder or mentor you must exercise discernment with those whom you guide toward holiness. How easy it is to be distracted and worn down by those who keep voicing their problems over and over and yet have no real desire or intent to change! It's as though they want only to "empty their garbage pail" another time but have no real desire to keep their "pail" from refilling with sinful attitudes and actions.

Too often in this Atomistic culture, elders find themselves encountering Hardened, Mocking and even God-denying fools whom Satan will send to wear them down. Many fools have hidden, deep-seated idols in their heart (see Ezekiel 14). Only God can deal with them in ways that will bring them to repentance.

If you're a true elder, your fatherly heart yearns to impart wisdom to try to help the hurting and/or change the disobedient. But if a younger man is determined to remain in his folly, your words will fall on deaf ears:

Though you grind a fool in a mortar, grinding him like grain with a pestle, you will not remove his folly from him (Proverbs 27:22).

Jesus certainly understood the fruitlessness of dealing with the Hardened, Mocking or God-denying fool. He warned His disciples, *“Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces”* (Matthew 7:6).

When you come alongside to minister to people, remember the practical Hebraic focus of imparting wisdom:

- “Simple” fools can be taught and are worthy of your time and wisdom.
- The “hardened”, “mocking”, “angry”, and “God-denying” fools must be cut off until they repent of their depraved ways of thinking and desire wisdom in order to change. In essence, their desire to hold onto their sin keeps them from hearing and obeying wise counsel. The principle found in Matthew chapter 18 applies here:

*But if he **will not listen**, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If he **refuses to listen to them**, tell it to the church; and if he **refuses to listen even to the church**, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector (vv. 16,17).*

It’s the responsibility of the person being mentored, the one seeking wisdom, to make it pleasant for a wiser person to invest time in him:

*Obey your leaders, and **submit to them**; for they **keep watch** over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them **do this with joy and not with grief**, for this would be **unprofitable for you** (Hebrews 13:17).*

If this isn’t taking place, both men should reevaluate the nature of their relationship. Heed this important comparison: *“He who **walks with the wise** will become **wise**, but the **companion of fools** will **suffer**”* (Proverbs 13:20).

If you have yet to be considered wise, what type of fool do those who know you assess you to be? What type have you been most often during your life?

Describe the older people of wisdom who have had an impact on your life. What character qualities drew you to them? How were you changed by your relationship with them?

If you’re an older man with younger men around you in your faith community, how do you interact with them? Is the Hebraic material we’ve been sharing here helpful in guiding you to discern who to help and who to cut off until they repent?

Bibliography

1. Robert Hicks, *The Masculine Journey* © 1993. Used by permission of NavPress. For copies call 1-800-366-7788; pp. 23-27.
2. Marvin R. Wilson, *Our Father Abraham* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), pp. 283-287.