

## Followers Of Jesus Do Not Tolerate Vain Assertions

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Many years ago we took a personal step because of the overwhelming tolerance for unconfessed sin among the majority of self-identified Christians we encountered. We changed our own identification from “Christian” to **“followers of our Lord Jesus.”** Often we’ve stressed that the crucial point of maintaining loving and obedient fellowship with our heavenly Father and Lord Jesus as well as with each other is to be free from unconfessed sin. This relational requirement for fellowship is captured by the Apostle John in a series of succinct “if” clauses:

*“That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have **fellowship with us**; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. ...*

*If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.*

*If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us from all sin.*

*If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.*

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to purify us from all unrighteousness.*

*If we claim we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us” (1John 1:3,6-10).*

When our heavenly Father finished giving us the Hebraic foundations in 1994, we wondered why He would choose *us* to do this important work. We certainly recognized our own personal inadequacies and shortcomings! But one day the Holy Spirit spoke to us: *“Because you live repentantly I will use you. When you stop living repentantly I will find someone else to replace you.”* It was a huge comfort to us to realize two things about living repentantly: it was the requirement of the Holy Spirit for using us, and that to live repentantly is a core distinguishing factor of those who continue to follow Jesus as their Lord.

This is why we could no longer identify with “Christian” as our defining designator. What was once a respected identity of someone walking in the steps of Christ has become so compromised with worldly values and self-obsessed goals that Jesus has nothing to do with it. The word “Christian” in general has deteriorated into nothing more than a **vain assertion** made by people who stake a claim to being religious but hold onto unconfessed sin. They vainly assert their identity as being “Christian” but in reality they nullify the sacrifice of Christ by making themselves lord of their own lives and creating their own unrighteous standards of what a “Christian” is.

Mike: I’ve had the privilege over the years to serve as a Sunday guest speaker in many congregations. Before the service I’d generally ask the Holy Spirit to give me His view of the spiritual climate of the people I was going to address. In one congregation, for instance, He told me, **“The tolerated sin in this congregation is so overwhelming that the Father refuses**

***to hear their worship. It goes no higher than the ceiling.***” In another congregation that was beset by pride and strife, the Spirit told me to tell them, ***“I am the last jackass the Father is going to send to you.”***

On some occasions I’d ask those in the pews, “How many of you are free of all unconfessed sin? Please stand up.” In congregation after congregation almost no one stood up. And it was no coincidence that no one could respond when I asked them about prayers being answered in their midst—there was dead silence. Our Father upholds His own restriction on answering people’s prayers: *“If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear”* (Psalms 66:18). *“For the eyes of the LORD are on the righteous, And His ears are open to their prayers; But the face of the LORD is against those who do evil”* (1Peter 3:12). And, if He won’t hear the prayers of the unrighteous, will He hear what they regard as worship? Think about this: It doesn’t get past the ceiling.

In some congregations I gave the congregants time to repent of unconfessed sin before we went any further in the service. Sometimes there would be 20 to 45 minutes of waiting until everyone was cleansed of sin. Often you could hear people sobbing as they silently came before our Father and confessed their sins. (Actually, there was such a joyful sense of spiritual relief afterward as they worshipped with clean hands and pure hearts that I wondered why the leadership hadn’t given any consideration to the condition of their flock and done this before.)

Please go to page 7, “Why is the mourner’s bench gone?”, in *Turning The Hearts Of The Fathers To The Children* for further insight into why there has been so little call to repentance in contemporary Christianity <<https://restorationministries.org/download/03.fathers.pdf>>.

***“I purpose to be quick to repent and to confess my sins to my Lord. With the grace of God I will uphold righteousness in my life and my home. I will do nothing that would hinder your prayers from being answered by our Father.”***

When you and your family enter into biblical fellowship with other households, you’re making a value-based commitment to each other. In effect, you’re determining in your heart to pledge to others with whom you seek to fellowship that you will stay repentant before Him.

Sin *per se* becomes a problem when someone fails to repent and confess their sin to our Father and receive His forgiveness and cleansing. When the prayers in your fellowship family go unanswered for a period of time, be alert that unrepentance may be the hindrance. An absence of testimonies to our Father’s faithfulness may indicate that someone in your fellowship is hiding their sin. They are living a lie! This means their faith is no more than a vain assertion.

Please take this to heart: **Living repentantly isn’t optional.** Instead, repentant living that’s motivated by love-grounded obedient trust is foundational for authentic fellowship with our Father and Lord Jesus, and with each other. Living in and for Jesus

in the Spirit is a preeminent *value*, and only value-based relationships can support fellowship with the Father and Lord Jesus, and with each other.

(Please see, *Are Your Friendships Spiritually Authentic?* <[https://restorationministries.org/download/29.july19-07%20\(1\).pdf](https://restorationministries.org/download/29.july19-07%20(1).pdf)> for more on Value-based relationships).

### **Liar, Liar, Your Pants Are On Fire!**

*“He who speaks truth declares righteousness. But a false witness furthers deceit”* (Proverbs 12:17).

Not so long ago in this nation, when someone was being deceitful they'd be confronted for not telling the truth. From earliest childhood we were taught to tell the truth and to expect truth from each other. So what happened to truth as a cherished character quality?

**Since the relentless rise of TV advertising decades ago and the unrelenting propaganda of advertisements for children in particular, we've become a society that's indoctrinated into mindlessly accepting false statements, whether vain assertions or absolute lies.**

Deceptive ads harm adults as well as children by convincing them to accept falsehoods about the nature of the products being advertised. The intent of these fabrications is to induce people to make different purchasing decisions than they would if they knew the truth about the product. The manipulative lies of advertising have become the modus operandi of politics and society at large — and no one is alarmed or even mildly disturbed by vain assertions!

Some of you older people may remember Ralph Nader, a champion decades ago for consumer protection, environmentalism, and government reform causes. We've mentioned him before. Nader tried to get Congress to pass laws supporting ***“Truth in Advertisement.”*** That movement went so far as to propose having the product tested to determine if it really did what the seller asserted. Can you imagine what TV and media advertisement would be like if Nader had succeeded? And even more impacting, would government officials today be likelier to *speak the truth* rather than make vain self-aggrandizing, self-serving assertions?

Christianity as a whole as well as the populace of this nation at large have suffered because no major religious denominations or sects got behind the demand for truth. Today too many Christians accept the lies that “Truth is what you make it,” or, “There's an alternative truth.” Even Pilate asked, “What is truth?”, not expecting any decisive answer.

As people who represent the holy reputation of our Lord Jesus on earth, never let yourself become deluded into living a life of vain assertions. Please take this to heart:

Those in Christianity who *don't* daily seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit are as susceptible to embracing lies and vain assertions as the unbelieving population around them.

As fellow followers of our Lord Jesus, join us in living by our Lord's promise, "*The Spirit of truth will guide you into all truth...*" (John 16:13).

Mike & Sue