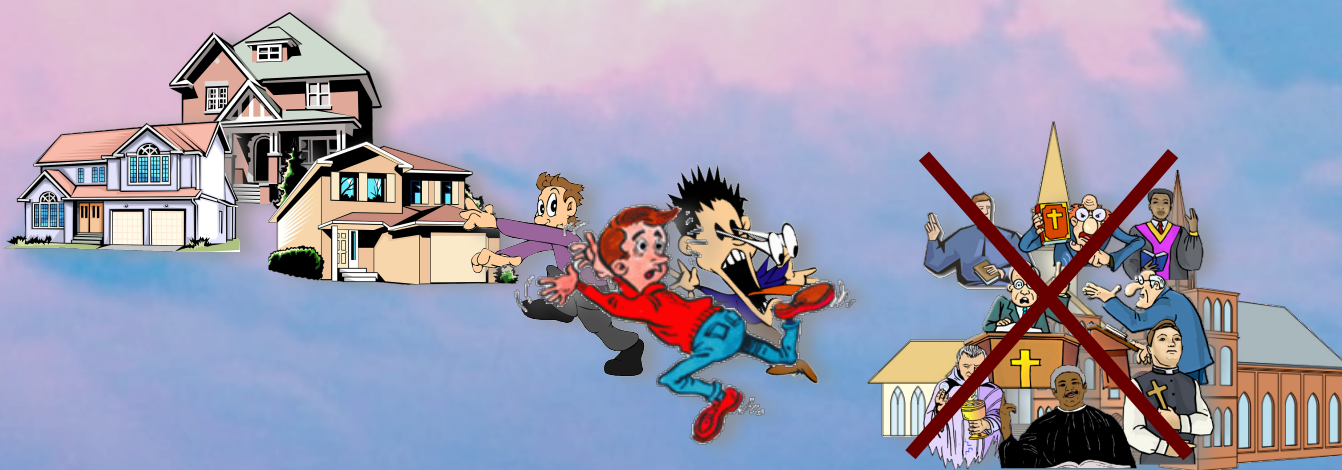


God's Clergy-less Kingdom

***"All of you come out and
serve Me in My Kingdom.
My Kingdom is established
in homes of righteousness."***



by Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz
Restoration Ministries International

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About Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz



Mike and Sue Dowgiewicz became followers of our Lord Jesus in 1977 while Mike was a career officer in the navy, having served three deployments during the Vietnam Conflict as a helicopter pilot.

After being born again he realized that following Jesus was a response of overwhelming love toward his Lord, and he wanted to learn how he could more adequately present the life-changing work of His Savior to others.

Resigning from the navy in 1978, he attended Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary to study the roots of the many various denominations and sects throughout Christendom. There he was made painfully aware of both the division and the competition among the segmented religious establishment.

Through his own ministry track, however, he learned how important interpersonal connection with one another is in discipling others to walk in Jesus' steps through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Sue attended seminary as well, focusing on studies in Newer Testament Greek and on effective ways to reach others from different cultures. In a way that only our Father could work out, both of these pursuits would feature heavily in their various ministries over the course of their lives together.

After seminary Mike and Sue administrated and taught at a Christian retreat center where they interacted with over 5,000 people. They were able to come alongside those who were hurting relationally within their families and experiencing frustration in their own faith walk.

While at the center, Mike was a counselor to religious leaders throughout southern New England. He was able to use the skills he'd acquired from his graduate studies in interpersonal relationships to encourage these leaders to develop a unified concern among their congregations for the lost in their communities to encounter Jesus.

Sue found her heart's desire to work among people of other cultures by teaching conversational English to international students at a nearby university for six years. Through their time together these students became dear friends, and a number of them heard about Jesus for the first time.

Mike and Sue's combined ministry was recognized by the Associated Press in an article that was published nationally. Mike also was featured in an article in New England Church Life, "Who Pastors the Pastor?"

Following their retreat ministry they lived in Israel, where our Father revealed the Hebraic foundations to them.

Restoration Ministries International has its basis in research and revelation they did while living in Israel, and Mike and Sue are sharing our Father's re-establishment of the Hebraic foundations that both communally strengthened the early followers of our Lord Jesus and spiritually empowered them.

Their present ministry through the internet is reaching people from 105 countries with a call to a life of loving and obedient trust in Jesus as their Lord.

Mike holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of Connecticut, an MBA from California Lutheran College, and a Master of Religious Education from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.

Sue holds a B.S. in Education from the University of Connecticut as well as having taken several graduate courses at GCTS.

Father's Purpose For Restoration Ministries International

Restoration Ministries has its basis in revelation and research they did while living in Israel.

For the past 24 years through Restoration Ministries International Mike and Sue have been sharing our Father's re-establishment of the relational priorities that strengthened the early followers of Christ to boldly reach and disciple others.

The core of the Hebraic Foundations is based upon prioritizing relationships, beginning from the center of the diagram below outward. Our Heavenly Father has given Restoration Ministries International the responsibility to focus on the center three priorities.



- [For further information on our Father and Jesus.](#)
- [For further information on Your Home.](#)
- [For further information on Fellowship In Homes.](#)

Each of the materials produced by Restoration Ministries International is interconnected with a family of information related to what our Father told us to call "The Hebraic Restoration".

Each item is designed to stand alone to equip you to apply these foundational truths and principles to your life. Yet the real strength of each is found in its interrelationship to the other facets of the Hebraic Restoration.

Through these truths our Father is revealing the trust-based, obedient lifestyle of our father Abraham:

*“The promise comes by trust, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to **all Abraham’s offspring**—not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the **faith of Abraham**. He is the **father of us all**. “If you belong to Christ, then you are **Abraham’s seed**, and heirs according to the promise” (Romans 4:16,17; [see also Galatians 3:29](#)).*

Followers of our Lord Jesus are children of Abraham, the first Hebrew (Romans 4:16; Galatians 3:7). Abraham trusted God in love-grounded obedience, willing even to sacrifice his son at God’s command.

Therefore, God called him into covenant union with Himself, and caused Abraham to be the father/role model for all followers of Jesus our Lord.

THAT MEANS YOU!

Chapter 1

Introduction

God's Clergy-less Kingdom is written for followers of Jesus who have left the Christian religious establishment and are seeking to lovingly serve Him in His Kingdom. As you prayerfully read this article, keep this in the forefront:

The Spirit of Christ is within you! You MUST fully trust Him to guide and empower you (see Matthew 18: 18-20).

Those who have followed Jesus as their Lord and King from the earliest centuries of His first coming until now share a glorious legacy: His authority and His power to fulfill His glorious plan.

And what is this plan? To make known His redeeming Gospel and to harvest for His Kingdom all who will come!

If you are still engaged in a religious system and dependent on clergy as intermediaries on your behalf, we suggest you read our book, ***Pastoring By Elders*** (1998), and our Hebraic Article, "***I Hate Nicolaitanism***" (2005).

However, you may be reading this article but aren't familiar with either of these two resources. Please, pause here and peruse these! Otherwise, continuing with this article will be like reading the Newer Testament without any knowledge of God's foundations in the Older Testament.

As we'll discuss, the Kingdom which our Lord is establishing has absolutely *nothing to do* with religion.

This article explores facets of *relational intimacy* and *spiritual power* which the earliest followers of Jesus embraced.

Section 1 discusses the ways in which these Spirit-filled believers *used the Bible* to guide their daily lives.

Section 2 examines the *gifts of the Spirit* our Lord uses for three specific purposes:

- to equip Jesus' followers for service
- to help them maintain unity in Spirit

- to mature them into the full measure of the character of Jesus.

In **Section 3** we'll probe the three primary *relational priorities* upon which the Kingdom of God is built:

1. Our Father and His Son, Jesus
2. Your home
3. Your home fellowship family.

(Throughout this article we'll cite materials available on our website for further study. All are a free download.)

For Want of a Nail

***For want of a nail the shoe was lost.
For want of a shoe the horse was lost.
For want of a horse the rider was lost.
For want of a rider the battle was lost.
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.***

For Want of a Nail is a well-known poem of connecting links. You can clearly see that it reveals *why something has gone wrong or has not turned out as you expected*.

The writer of Ecclesiastes exhorts us to think carefully about *why* things aren't going well. Father God always has lessons for us to learn: "*When times are good, be happy; but **when times are bad, consider**: God has made the one as well as the other*" (7:14).

Do you earnestly love our Lord? Are you prepared in body, mind and spirit to do whatever He asks of you in order to extend His Kingdom?

Then it's important that you learn *why* the spiritual power that was so realized among the first followers of Jesus is so rarely seen today in westernized Christendom.

His people can no longer live fruitlessly, bringing Him down by weak, compromised lives. He does not lie; therefore, when His promises seem unfulfilled, **WE are at fault in our sin or unbelief.**

The King of the universe assures us of His desire to bring glory to His Father through His people:

*“Most assuredly, I say to you, **whoever trusts in Me**, the works that I do **he will do also**; and **greater works than these he will do**, because I go to My Father”* (John 14:12).

Be assured through God’s Word that nothing goes on in this world without our Sovereign Father’s permission. Our loving Father wants us to ascertain *why* the “nail” is missing so that we may gain wisdom to fulfill His will.

He so often reveals the *connecting links* so that we may discern the underlying cause for why the power and spiritual unity our Lord promises *isn’t* being experienced today particularly in this nation.

Let’s be clear on terms. *Wisdom* is seeing events and the world around us from *God’s vantage point* — and learning from it!

We aren’t always wise, but we’re given sure direction in what to do when we’re at a loss: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should **ask God**, Who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him”* (James 1:5).

When you seek His wisdom with a *heart that’s determined to follow through* in what He reveals, you’ll probably discover that His view on the matter is entirely different than anything you could have come up with (see Isaiah 55:9).

An old New England proverb applies to the person who neither pauses long enough to gain wisdom nor applies what he’s been shown: **“A fool is the lumberjack who doesn’t stop to sharpen his ax.”**

As you’ll recognize when we discuss apperception and revisionism, failure to stop and reexamine folly has characterized multiple theologians for centuries.

Think about this for a moment:

Why would a Jesus follower want to go through life without the *spiritual power* and *relational unity* so prevalent in the Bible?

If we resolutely sought wisdom from our Lord, we’d discover the “missing nail” to remedy the situation and experience His Kingdom in our lives. *To not* do so is as foolish as trying to fell a tree with a dull ax.

The “missing nail” comprises three foundational practices which the early followers of Jesus embraced.

1. They ***apperceived*** the Scriptures, establishing ALL of their faith practices on God’s Word.
2. Mindful of the power of the Holy Spirit throughout the Older Testament, they ***relied on His power*** all the more.
3. Well aware of the relational priorities laid out in the Bible, they were enabled to ***cooperatively fulfill*** God’s part for them in the Kingdom.

Chapter 2

Foundational Practices of Biblical Kingdom Living



How desperately we need to return to a key practice of our Hebraic forefathers who first put their trust in Jesus: *applying God's Word* to their daily lives. This is called "apperception."

To ***apperceive*** is to return to the original framework of understanding that God gave each Scripture author as he wrote. We today can *draw out* of passages what would have been clearly understood then as *biblical truth*.

In contrast, ***revisionism*** alters historical truth and facts to fit current social or cultural standards and agendas. This practice *reads into* passages whatever conforms to what someone *wants it to say*.

For example, if you apperceive Scripture, you take into consideration the ***revealed pattern*** of both Testaments. Newer Testament teaching draws directly from Older Testament truth.

A revisionist, however, isolates certain verses to "prove" a point which, in fact, is ***contrary to biblical truth*** as a whole.

This would be the strategy for those who use John's statement that "God is love" to deny the reality of hell, or to condone homosexuality or divorce. Verses are

plucked *out of context* to frame a god of a person's own desire and design—who they *want* their god to be.

Discerning biblical truth and establishing for yourself and your home how to *put it into practice* are underpinnings of a Kingdom lifestyle. And, **apperception** is the methodology that Jesus and the Newer Testament writers used to apply God's Word, the Hebrew Bible.



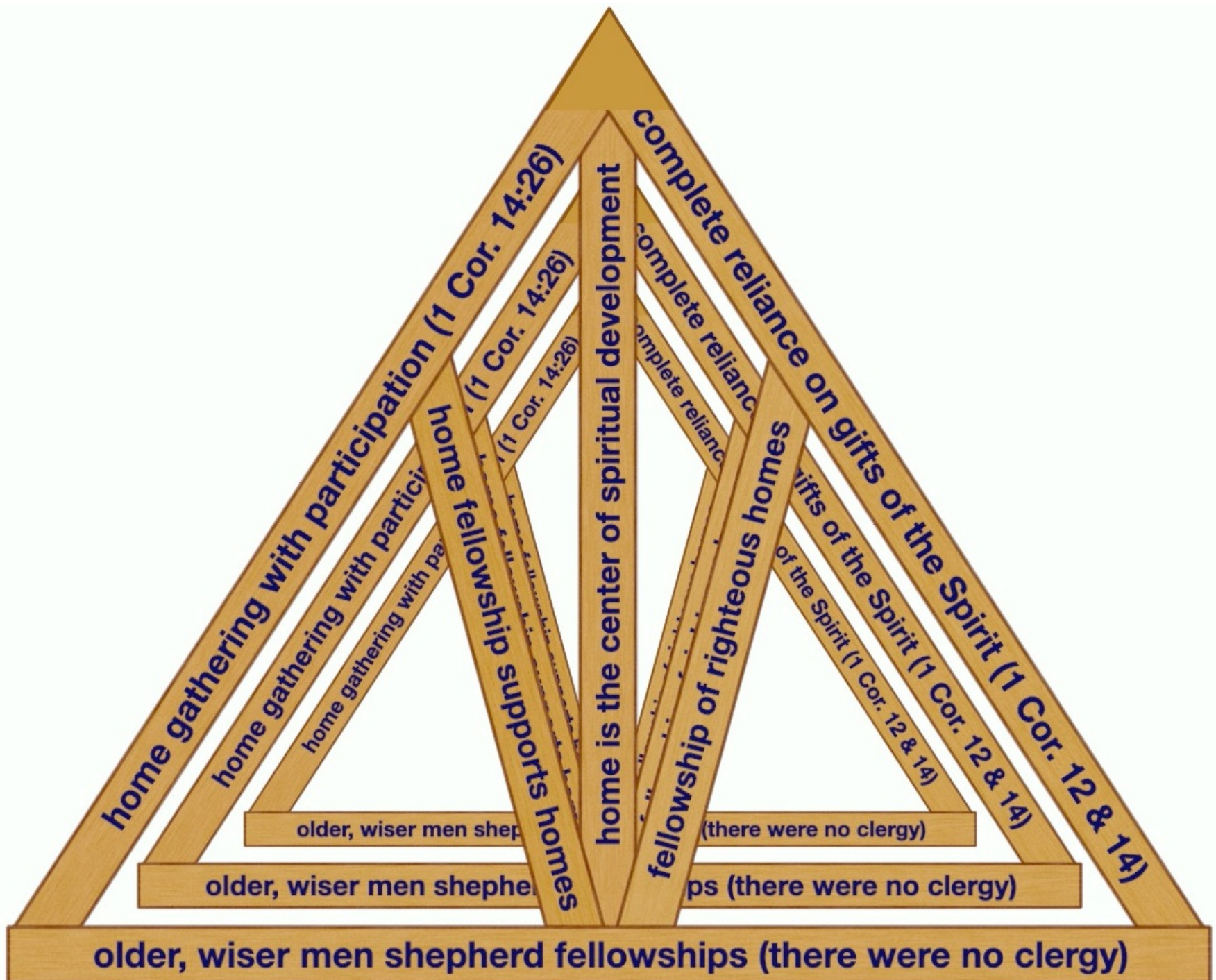
Throughout the Newer Testament, the Older Testament serves as the foundation for the teachings of our Lord and the epistles. For instance, Matthew cites the Older Testament *55 times* in his Gospel account.

And keep in mind that in true Hebraic style, when a verse or even part of a verse was cited to listeners, they immediately recognized the *entire context of verses* surrounding that passage. Given the biblical illiteracy of so many today, that's no longer the case.

In order to undo the erosive influence of all the pagan practices that have been adapted by **revisionist** Church Councils over the centuries, we must apperceive the Bible as our Hebraic forefathers did.

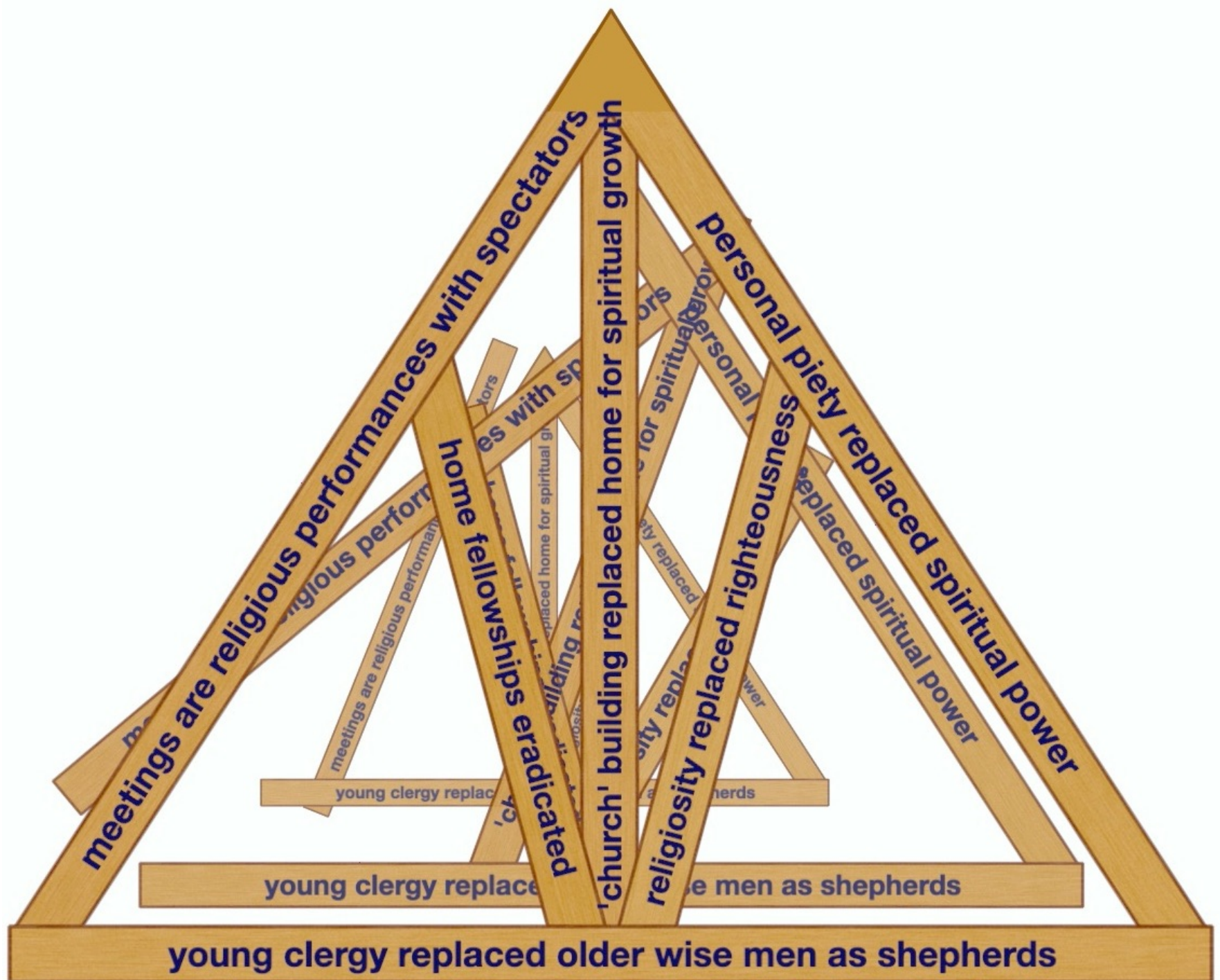
The following metaphor of roof joists describes the **diagrams next page**, illustrating the difference between apperception and revisionism.

Apperception A man sets about to build a house. He carefully measures out a pattern for a roof joist and cuts it, then **uses that joist as the pattern** for the second one and **for each and every joist** he makes.



Apperception relies on the entire Bible. The text speaks for itself. Don't read your meaning into it. This describes apperception—going back to the **pattern of God's Word** for every application and religious practice.

By the time he finishes cutting his last joist and lays it against the original one, he discovers that the measurements are **way off**. What started as minor deviations add up to major differences.



Revisionism manipulates or eliminates Bible truth to adapt it to predetermined agendas and pagan practices. As God's Word was altered by successive Church Councils to accommodate ever-changing cultural standards and religious system agendas, the original pattern of ***God's intent for His Kingdom*** was lost along with its power.

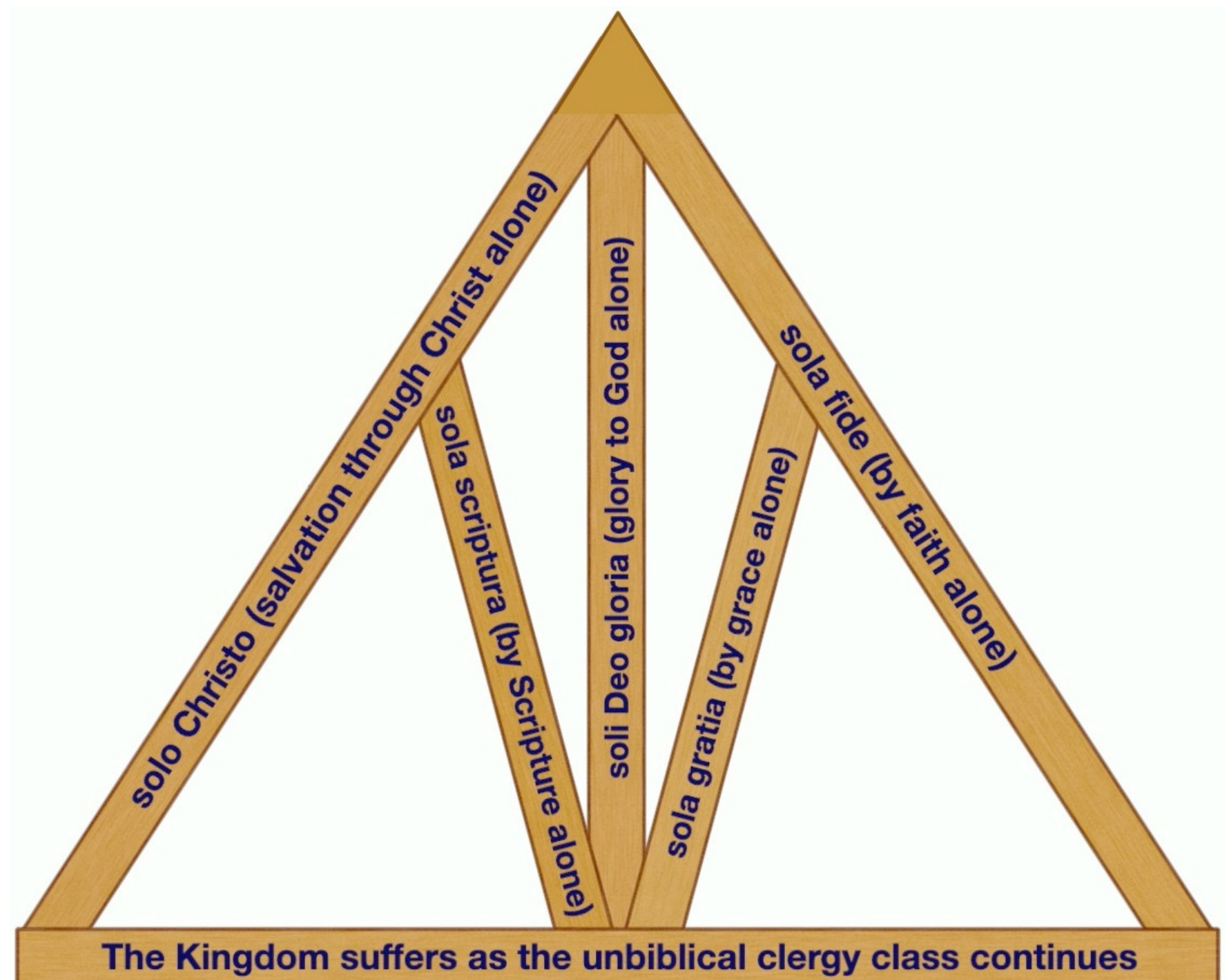
Historical Attempts at Apperception The diagram below shows that over the past several hundred years some did apperceive the Bible. The period which

Church history calls “The Reformation” restored some of the foundational Hebraic tenets.

Many spiritual truths that had been lost for centuries were reemphasized, especially a focus on the ***relationship between God and man*** and how that relationship defines ***how a person lives***.

Some of the revived precepts which were grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures and claimed as essential to life in Jesus are dear to His followers today:

- sola scriptura***—Scripture as the sole and final authority for Christians
- sola fides***—acceptance by and reconciliation with God through faith alone
- sola gratia***—deliverance from sin only by God’s grace
- sola Christos***—salvation through Christ, in Christ alone
- solī deo gloria***—glory to God alone



Attempts at apperception restored some key precepts that are found in the Older and Newer Testaments. Each of these biblical principles is Hebraic to the core, permeating the Newer Testament as well as the Hebrew Scriptures from which they were drawn.

The Reformation would have been a fitting point in history to restore ALL the Hebraic foundations—**including:**

- reinstating the equipping gifts cited in Ephesians 4:11.
- restoring the **home** as the basic building block for spiritual growth.
- returning to **home fellowships** as extended spiritual family to uphold communal righteousness, and to evangelize neighborhoods, workplaces and schools.

However, the tenacious roots of **revisionism** upheld and maintained the priestly class of professional clergy that had long been copied from pagan temple practice.

Using “holy buildings” adapted from Greek and Roman heathenism and falsely proclaiming these edifices to be “churches,” the clerical system indoctrinated crowds with a weekly dose of religion.

Tragically, the authority Jesus gave ALL His followers to apply the Bible through the power of His Spirit was usurped by the ecclesiastical hierarchy.

(Find more insight into the authentic Kingdom in Lifebytes 51 thru 57: <https://restorationministries.org/lifebytes.html>)

We’ve noted often the need to *walk your spiritual talk* for very good reason. Jesus referred to Himself as “the Way” (John 14:6). In the Book of Acts the early Christians were known as “the Way” (Acts 24: 14).

This use of the term “the way” has a very distinct Hebraic importance in regard to *halakhah* [HAH-luh-kah]. The root word, *halak* [ha-LAHK], means “to walk.” Thus, *halakhah* refers to *walking out your life* in a way that’s based on God’s Word.

Even before the incarnation of Jesus, a number of rabbis taught that whenever the Older Testament was studied by two or three, the Holy Spirit was there with them.

The principle of the witness of “two or three” is used throughout both testaments in numerous contexts (Isaiah 8:1,2; 2 Corinthians 13:1; Matthew 18:16, apperceived from Deuteronomy 19:15): “*Every matter must be established by the testimony of **two or three witnesses.***”

Therefore it was no surprise that Jesus would give authority to ALL His followers to study and apply His Word. *His Spirit* would be working in and through them even in a very small gathering:

*“I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, 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: 18-20; also 16:19).

Because of the power, the authority, and the command of our Lord to apply the Bible to our daily lives, He’s calling us to trust in His Spirit at work within us and to seek the confirmation of two or three as witnesses to and participants in our faith practices.

Not that He isn’t calling us to spend precious solitary time with Him as well! Jesus helps us overcome the *deceit of our sin nature* as two or three in Him confirm how we are applying His commands in our lives.

(For more on applying the Bible to your daily life, see our book [**Christian Halakhahs—Loving Jesus Through the Way You Apply His Word.**](#))

Chapter 3

Bedrock Gifts of the Spirit To Extend the Kingdom

We've paraphrased Ephesians 4:11-16 to personalize the heart of our Lord in His purpose for spiritual gifts: a mature body that is *prepared to serve* and *built up in love* as each one does his or her part.

*Jesus: "It was I Who gave some to be **apostles**, some to be **prophets**, some to be **evangelists**, and some to be **shepherds** and **teachers**, to prepare My people for **works of service** so that **My body may be built up** until you all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of Me and My ways and **become mature**, attaining to the whole measure of My fullness.*

*Then you will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, you will in all things **grow up into Me** Who is the Head, the Anointed One.*

*From Me, and Me alone, is the whole body joined and held together by every supporting ligament, **growing and building itself up in love, as each part does its work.**"*

The giftings listed were not new innovations. Apostles, prophets, evangelists and shepherd/teachers were already functioning among the Jewish people when Jesus walked the earth.

We today who follow our Master and yearn to grow in service and maturity in Him need to thoroughly discern *His motive* for these anointings, the basis to restoring spiritual power in our fellowship families.

Notice that our Lord Jesus is the ONLY Head of His called-out ones, those He has *set apart* from the world's goals and values in order to be His bride. Every part of His collective body is under His control, fitted and held together by every joint and ligament that are attached to Him.

Nowhere does He call for or need any kind of ecclesiastical hierarchy, for according to His promise, wherever two or three seek to apply His Word, He is in their midst.

Jesus alone is the King of His Kingdom.

He knows what is required to extend His Kingdom on earth.

He realizes that His called-out ones must have Spirit-empowered *specialization of labor* in order to extend His Kingdom on earth.

This is why He has called for the combined cooperation of the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist and the shepherd/ teacher to:

- **equip His followers for service**
- **build them up into unity**
- **mature them into the full measure of the character of Jesus.**

This *collective, cooperative body-life* operation through the Spirit in each Jesus follower is readily apparent in Ephesians 4:11-16.

The service, unity and maturity to which Paul refers would be evident today if not for centuries of opposition and interference by the vested interests of clergy.

Can you hear our Lord's clarion call? It's time to experience a Clergy-less Kingdom—a Kingdom of Christ's servants that is built upon the foundation of apostles, prophets, evangelists, and shepherd/teachers.

(For more on vested interests of the clergy system impeding the Church, see our book [Restoring the Early Church, Volume 3: How Christianity Lost It's Hebraic Roots](#)".)

Not only do the Spirit's anointings differ in their outworking. The "body" analogy reveals another distinctive.

The gifts of **apostle**, **prophet**, and **evangelist** often function like the external parts of the human anatomy, such as hands or feet. They operate in a way that's different from the internal organs.

For example, these three giftings often are *sent forth* from a local fellowship to bring messages of spiritual truth to other regions.

At the same time, however, through prayer and provision these "external parts" are nourished and supported by the internal body organs of the sending fellowship family.

Both within the Kingdom and the human body there must be harmony between the internal and external parts for each to function as intended.

How stunted has been the expression of these giftings, especially in lethargic western Christendom, because so many have looked to a professional intermediary clergy person to do it all for them.

If your heart yearns to see Christ lifted up as His people work together for His glory, then you and those going on with you in seeking first His Kingdom and His righteousness need to rely on the Spirit of Jesus within you.

Remember, our Lord chose fisherman and tax collectors, those not highly esteemed by the world, to be the first to serve in His Kingdom. Don't be surprised that the King wants to use you!

Each of the “external” gifts of apostle, prophet and evangelist is used by our Lord Jesus to tackle unique circumstances. Let's *apperceive* how these Spirit-empowered roles would have been understood by His earliest followers.

An *apostle* is someone sent on a particular assignment. Just how he fulfills that mission may vary, but the common thread is a specific mission to complete beyond the confines of the local faith community.

We can clearly detect a specific mission nature in the instructions Jesus gave the Twelve (Matthew 10:5-14) and later the seventy-two (Luke 10:1-12) as people *sent forth*.

From a Hebraic understanding of apostle, the emphasis is on the *function* the person provides, that is, his mission.

An apostle was never Scripturally considered a position of ecclesiastical dominance inferred by either Roman Catholicism or more recently by Protestantism. Nor is it a rank of standing to which successful clergy are promoted.

A *prophet* is used by our Lord Jesus among faith communities to mercifully alert them when they are violating His Word. The purpose is to point them toward their *need for repentance* so that fellowship may be restored between our Father and His children. (See 1 John 1:6-10.)

In a way, a person who is prophetically gifted is our Father's agent to connect the “missing links” so that His children may have wisdom to discern why things aren't going well. He also uses prophets to warn of impending disasters (Acts 11: 28).

God works through prophets to make known *particular messages* regarding larger issues. Calling upon prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, He spoke through these men to *reveal His wisdom* to Israel for a very specific purpose.

Out of a heart of holiness as well as love, He wanted the Israelites to know *why* He had sent the famine, drought, or war they were experiencing. These were *severe mercies* to restore fellowship with Him!

He intended that they would *humble themselves* and *turn away from* their rebellious sin, and *return to* Him and be reconciled through their repentance.

Whether the messages would be received or not didn't influence the prophet's assignment. He was compelled by God to deliver them, even if it meant removing leaders whose sins had become grievous to Him (see 1 Samuel 15:26; 1 Kings 21:21).

God's arm is not short today. He still speaks through those He has gifted prophetically.

The prophet who operates beyond the confines of a local faith community functions differently than those who use prophetic gifting within their faith family. The gift of prophecy within a community operates "*for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort*" (1 Corinthians 14:3).

The **evangelist** is burdened to see the lost embrace the Covenant our Father offers mankind through Jesus. Used by God to share the truth that will keep people from ending up in a Christ-less eternity, the evangelist operates in a specific area for a period of time.

As with Paul and Timothy, he remains alongside the responsive ones to establish and disciple a faith community. He then turns this over to the shepherd/teachers who have proven themselves capable (see Titus 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:2).

One who is gifted as an evangelist maintains an *ongoing relationship* with the faith communities he establishes. They are often sources of support as he operates outside of the local body.

In the pattern of Paul, through this relational connectedness he is available to address and repair issues that may go wrong in the faith communities he established (see 1 Corinthians 1:11, for example).

The vital characteristic of a biblical evangelist is that he doesn't assume permanent leadership of a local faith community. Again, that ongoing care is entrusted to those who have been gifted by the Spirit as reliable and mature elder/shepherd(s).

Compelled by the Spirit through his gifting, the evangelist is always alert for new souls who will embrace the Father's Covenant.

The **shepherd/teacher** functions within the pattern of the biblical elders of the Hebrew Bible, available day by day to bring guidance and insight into life situations through Spirit-empowered application of the Word.

As with a heart, this “body part” works to keep every other part nourished. As implied by the descriptions of an elder in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, the Spirit gifts an older man who is prepared to represent our Father's compassion and interest in the care of His children.

*All these [gifts] are the work of one and the same Spirit, and **He gives them to each one, just as He determines.** The **body is a unit**, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, **they form one body**. So it is with Christ (1 Corinthians 12:11,12)*

For all others within the body

As you focus on the Spirit of Christ within you for guidance and power to fulfill our Father's particular work for you, He'll make known to you as He does each of His followers their Spirit-empowered “specialization.”

Let's take a closer look at Spirit-imparted gifts in light of Paul's body analogy.

Harmony comes to the body as each one does their part *according to His grace working through them*—a key factor cited in the apostle's letter to the local body in Ephesus (see Ephesians 2:8-10).

Do recognize that gifts of the Spirit have a *supernatural source!* They are *not* natural talents or abilities, though certainly these come from the Creator's design.

Rather, giftings emanate as power given by the Holy Spirit as He sees fit for the *advance of the Kingdom* and for the *mutual building up* of those who serve their King (see Ephesians 4:12).

Neither gifts nor body parts exist to serve themselves.

As with body organs that willingly serve the whole for its good, gifts are *empowerments of the Holy Spirit* so that each person does their part in extending the Kingdom of God through serving others—all to be motivated by *sacrificial love* (the essence of 1 Corinthians 13).

All of the spiritual gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12 exist as our Lord's blessing of one to another, whether they function within the local body or beyond.

It's obvious but bears repeating: Whether in leading others as an elder or in administering mercy or any of the giftings in between, *no system of organized religion* is ever implied. The body is a *living organism*, never an organization!

(For more on the role of shepherd/teacher in particular, see our books [**Pastoring by Elders**](#) and [**God's Instruments for War—Discovering and Coordinating Spiritual Gifts as Weapons of Warfare.**](#)).

Chapter 4

Your Relational Priorities: Our Father & Lord Jesus



Perhaps by this point you and those within your family and fellowship family are hungry to fulfill your purpose in the Kingdom of God! It's essential that each of you lives according to the relational priorities of the first followers of Jesus.

As you'll see in the **Restoration Diagram**, not all levels of your relationships can be the same in intensity or availability. (Perhaps you've been part of religious systems that have kept you scrambling to the extent that even your spouse or children suffered from your absence and busyness!)

Three key relationships help you to fully function as our King's beloved servant. The most essential of these is your relationship with the **Father and His Son, Jesus** through His Spirit in you.

Next in priority are the people within **your home**—your marriage and family, if these apply to you.

And, supporting the first two relationships is ***fellowship in homes as extended spiritual family***. Mentoring and role modeling by older men and women take place in this relational level, equipping you to grow in the character of Jesus.

The relational priorities illustrated in the diagram are means through which you're able to serve your King and be found faithful in His Kingdom on a daily basis. Note that our Father and His Son Jesus are not looking for you to "just be busy" on their behalf!

While religious organizations need "warm bodies" to keep the system running, our God wants *your heart*, your loving obedient trust that relies on His Spirit to direct and empower you to serve Him.

Behind all that you do, He wants to know how much you want *Him as your heart's desire!*

Everything about your life in the Kingdom flows from the *center outward* and permeates each subsequent relational priority. The center, the **Father and Jesus**, is the cornerstone of your life.

He bestows grace and empowerment on His authentic followers, those who are determined to press into Him and live righteously as His ambassadors. That kind of love-grounded, obedient trust enables all the other relationships to flourish for His glory.

As you learn to live a Kingdom life-style in His Spirit, you will face:

- a season of ***separation*** from your past religious practices that were fruitless.
- a time of ***initiation*** into living by the truths of the Kingdom through the Spirit.
- a period of ***transition*** for you and your household and home fellowship family as you grow in your conviction to live to extend His Kingdom and please your Lord.
- the possibility for ***confusion*** as the adjustments are taking place, since others probably won't understand.

Keep in mind that the *Spirit of Christ within you* and the *confirmation of two or three* are His means to guide you on your continuing journey in Him.

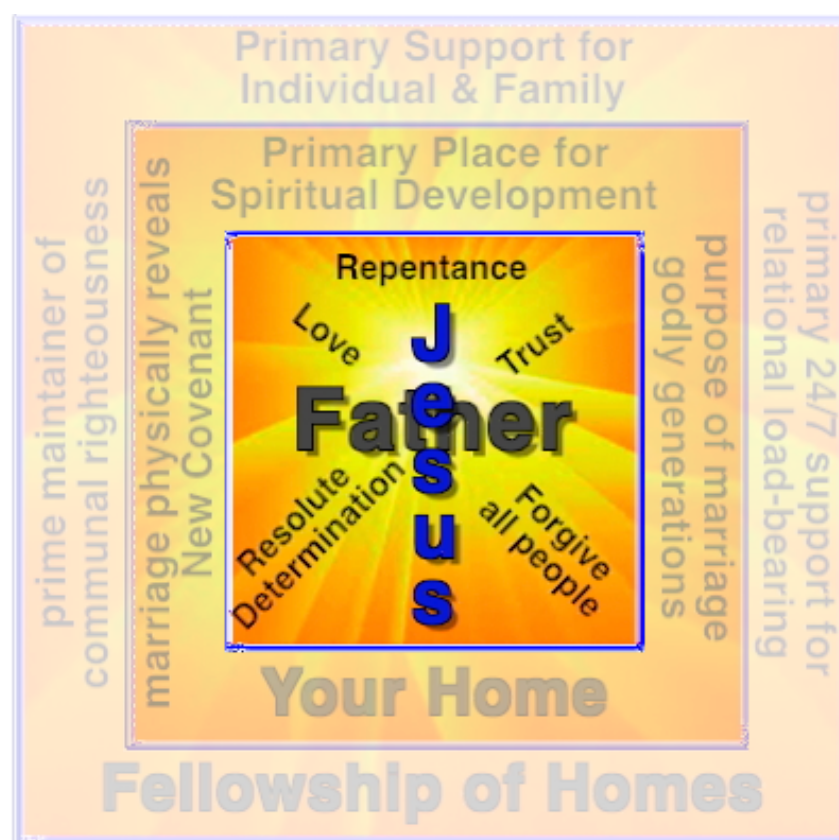
Jesus commends the weaving together of *mutual discussion* and *agreement*, whether in a marriage, a family, or a home fellowship family (see Matthew 18:18-20).

The presence of Lord Jesus in your midst as you fulfill His Kingdom purposes makes all the difference. Jesus Himself stirs you to put His Word into practice in ways that befit service to the King.

You can't just read about the Hebraic foundations; you need to discuss with others that which our Father is restoring, with intent to make them your *way of life* for His glory.

“For this reason Christ is the Mediator of a New Covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance” (Hebrews 9:15).

Our Father and Jesus



Our relationship with the Father and His Son Jesus is far deeper than an awareness that “God exists”! Even the demons are aware of that reality and it brings terror to them (James 2:19).

Our Father established a “New Covenant” with us through the shed blood of Jesus so that we might enjoy the intimate union of authentic fellowship with Him through the Holy Spirit.

That covenant union entails a meaningful and grateful purpose: to *fulfill our Father's will* (Matthew 12: 50). The depth of love fanned by His grace produces an

obedient trust that evidences we are His children, the family of Jesus (see 1 John 3:10).

Our Hebraic Article, [The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation](#), keynotes the five Biblical stipulations required by our Father to both enter His Covenant and remain in it.

These five provisions made clear by God permeate the Hebrew Scriptures, the Bible used by Jesus and the Apostles to make the Gospel known (see John 6:45).

Our Father's Stipulations for Ratifying and Consummating the Covenant in Christ Which Leads to Salvation:

1. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins and continues with your ***repentance***.
2. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins and continues with your agape ***love***.
3. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins and continues with your ***obedient trust***.
4. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins and continues with your ***forceful conviction and determination***.
5. Your Salvation Pilgrimage both begins and continues with your ***forgiving others***.

Each of these stipulations calls for your *intentional and ongoing response* to Father's call of grace to you in Jesus (John 6:44; Ephesians 2:8,9).

Repentance grieves you that you have grieved God through sin. That grief is the "*godly sorrow [that] brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret*" (2 Corinthians 7:10).

You thirst for the forgiveness, cleansing and restoration that only Father can give through your glorious Substitute, Jesus.

The Greek word for repentance, *metanoia*, means not only a change of mind but sorrow that's accompanied by a *change of heart toward God*. Not just how you think, but your *entire heart and life* are altered as the Spirit of God works in you.

Repentance is a process which begins with your confession. The Greek word for confess, *homologeo*, means that you agree with God that you have sinned against Him. You have violated His holy righteousness and deserve only punishment, just as every other person on earth has done (Romans 3:23).

But agreeing with God through your confession to Him is just the beginning of repentance. When you repent, your heart *turns away from* your sins—you don't want to live under that despicable bondage any longer.

You cry out for forgiveness in your spirit based on Jesus having taken away God's wrath from you (see Romans 5:8-11). This is your *justification* by the blood of the Lamb, Jesus.

Your sin is forgiven when you respond to the Holy Spirit's conviction and confess it. You turn your heart away from your sin and turn toward God for forgiveness and reconciliation and fellowship through Jesus.

His Spirit takes up residence as you are "born from above" in *regeneration* (see Titus 3: 5).

Sanctification is the lifelong process which follows repentance.

By God's undeserved favor, His grace, you're being transformed as your values, goals and actions become aligned with God's Word through His indwelling Spirit (see 2 Corinthians 3:17,18).

You are being made holy before God as you surrender to His Spirit in you by replacing your sinful attitude or response with God's way.

In effect, *you begin to live and respond as Jesus would*. You deliberately choose to make God's commands your way of life, yielding to the Holy Spirit.

Only in this way can you implement the command which gives ample proof of His Spirit at work in and through you: "*Produce fruit in keeping with repentance*" (Matthew 3:8).

Even in fruitbearing you are dependent on His Spirit in you to will and to act in ways that please Father God (Philippians 2:13).

You need to cry out to Jesus for His help, so that through His Spirit you can be more like Him. This is where you "*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Choosing either to submit to God or give way to Satan's schemes begins with your *thoughts*. Only you can decide which "voice" you'll listen to!

The second stipulation of the Gospel of the Covenant in Jesus is **love**.

This concept soaks the pages of the Older Testament as you take in the magnificent love between God and His chosen people Israel. You can't miss His terms of endearment, or His broken heart in Israel's spiritual adultery with pagan gods.

This primary command of God for His children underlays every other command He intended for their well-being: to *love Him* (see Deuteronomy 6:5,6,24).

To love God was an *action*, a responsiveness that was reflected as His people *loved one another*—another foundational command to Israel through Moses (see Leviticus 19:18).

Because *love* is at the root of identifying oneself as a child of God, Jesus could reiterate to His Jewish hearers the two most important commandments:

“‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind’; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27).

Our Lord wasn't just reciting well-known words. He was affirming that love is the glue that binds His people together in Covenant union with His Father and Himself.

Unconditional love that responds to its Source is how we as His own are enabled to understand our Father's heart for the salvation of all mankind.

Here is where *humble gratefulness* diffuses your very being. As a lifeline is to a drowning man, so is the deliverance from sin that's *initiated toward you* by our Father through Jesus' sacrifice on your behalf.

The only genuine response you can have to such grace is love.

The next stipulation of the Covenant Gospel is **obedient trust**, a prerequisite that would have been well-recognized by Jesus' followers.

The Hebrew word for “faith” means more than just belief through mental assent; it is a profound confidence in God. Trust is a *deep responsiveness from your heart*, far more than mere belief that God is real.

Reliance on your Lord penetrates the very core of your being, propelling you to an obedience that starts in your heart and manifests itself in Spirit-empowered action (see James 2: 14-26).

Your obedient trust demonstrates that you apprehend deep within you our Almighty Father's love for you. Your willing dependency on Him ultimately puts to death your own ambitions and plans as you yield to His for your life.

Even as your ongoing trust matures and you recognize His unfailing faithfulness, an element of childlikeness that refuses to take hold of doubt takes root in you (see Matthew 18: 3).

You begin your pilgrimage by trusting in the shed blood of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. You continue on in your faith journey by trusting in the loving care of our Father no matter what circumstances befall you.

Where trust exists, peace does also. Any worry, anxiety, or concern are warning signals to you that you're taking your eyes off the Sovereign One who has numbered both your hairs and your days.

That's why we are exhorted to confidently cast all our cares on our Lord—because *He* cares for us! (1 Peter 5:7)

The unwavering trust to which God calls His children is the fabric woven throughout both Testaments because HE is the Source of all trust! (Review the Hebrew Scriptures and you'll find *distrust of God* a recurring temptation that led Israel astray.)

As you choose to yield to the indwelling Holy Spirit, He empowers you to rely on our Father, not fearing any troubling circumstances or trials.

An authentic Covenant relationship earnestly seeks the Pearl of great price, a focus on our Lord for *Who He is* rather than for what He can do for your life on earth.

That's why He calls for our ***forceful conviction and steadfast determination*** to trust wholeheartedly in Jesus—a vigorous response from which no earthly power can hold you back!

Tragically, what passes for “salvation” today is a self-benefitting acquiescence to a shallow gospel message that dissolves when the going gets tough (see Matthew 13:19-22).

As Jesus proclaimed, following Him is a *heart* issue, a compelling determination to follow Him. This was the standard for His earliest followers, those who embraced our Father's covenant. It's captured in Matthew 13:44-46:

*The **kingdom of heaven** is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and **sold all he had** and bought that field. Again, the **kingdom of heaven** is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and **sold everything he had** and bought it.*

Think of the *certainty* you need to give up everything you've got in order to lay hold of that which our Father is offering you.

Genuine repentance, *agape* love, and lasting trust produce the type of conviction and determination that endures in Jesus as your Lord through His Spirit at work in you.

The final stipulation for entering and continuing in our Father's Covenant is that we ***forgive others***.

The first followers of Jesus understood that our Father will not enter Covenant with an unforgiving person. Refusing to forgive reflects arrogant pride, failing to recognize how much *you yourself* need to be forgiven by God!

That pride puts you in the position of being *resisted by God*—a dangerous place to be (see James 4:6, apperceiving Proverbs 3:34).

You're elevating yourself above the Cross when you withhold forgiveness. You're saying in your heart that someone has violated you more than you've violated our holy and righteous Father.

That is why Jesus left no room for doubt when He warned, "*If you do not forgive men their sins, your Father **will not forgive your sins***" (Matthew 6:15).

Forgiveness authenticates love for God; unforgiveness denies it:

*We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' yet **hates his brother**, he is a liar. For anyone who **does not love** his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And He has given us **this command**: Whoever loves God **must** also love his brother (1 John 4:19-21).*

Hatred or lack of love is evidence of unforgiveness, and parallels bitterness. Our Father doesn't need bitter envoys to represent Him in this world.

Again, if you cling to unforgiveness, you've failed to appreciate how much *you* need to be forgiven by the shed blood of Jesus. You can't carry that millstone with you and hope to enter Covenant with our Father.

Your decision to forgive opens the way for the Holy Spirit to take up His residence in you. It is He Who heals your heart and emotions, since you can never heal yourself.

(If you find that *after* you are in Covenant union you're assailed by unforgiveness, cry out for the Spirit's power to forgive and to pray blessing on the offender—a sure way to cause Satan to back off in tempting you in that area!)

Our Father knows that we are the “weak link” in His Covenant with us, and how greatly we need to *rely on the Holy Spirit* to help us consistently put into practice the stipulations of that Covenant.

Jesus has baptized you with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11), and our Father seals you with the same Spirit *guaranteeing His part* of the Covenant (2 Corinthians 1:22).

If you find that your love, trust and determination to bring Him praise are faltering, cry out to His Spirit within to restore and strengthen you.

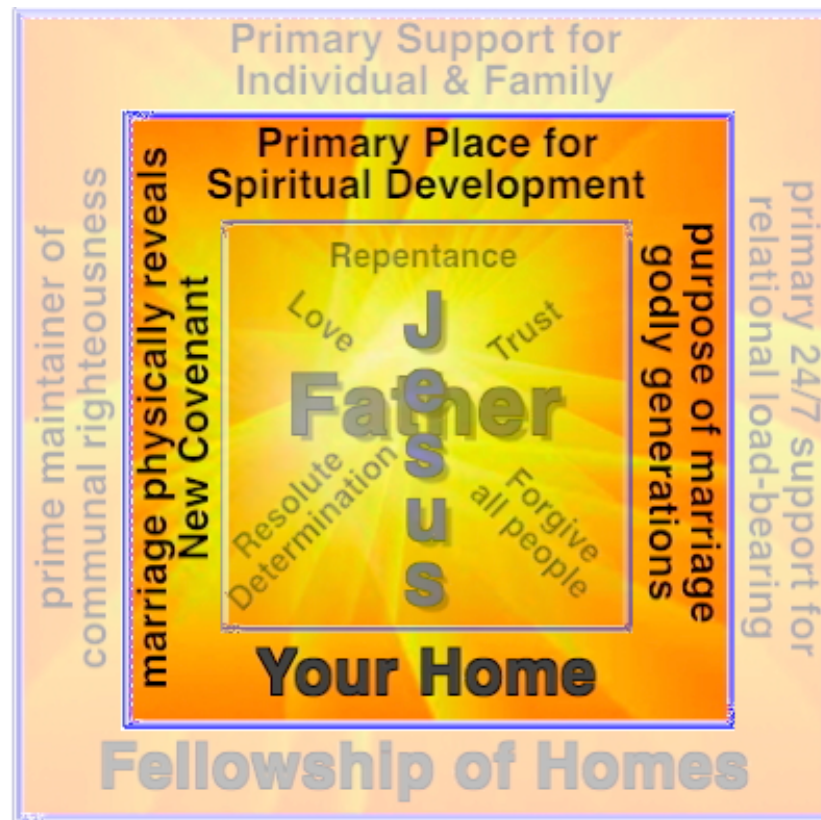
And ask those in your fellowship family to pray with you to press on with eyes fixed on the prize of your high calling in Jesus (see Philippians 3:12-14).

(We encourage you to delve into the Covenant our Father offers in Jesus, see Lessons 24 thru 29 of [Discussing How to Restore the Early Church](#).)

Chapter 5

Your Relational Priorities: Your Home & Fellowship of Homes

Your Home



Our forefathers who first trusted Jesus knew that the *home* is the basic building block for developing a Kingdom lifestyle, whether you're married or not.

While not everyone is blessed with a marriage partner, our Father designed marriage from the beginning to be the physical representation of the Covenant we have in union with Him.

In other words, if you want to know the depth of a husband's relationship with our Father, then watch how he loves his wife. The *agape* love a man has for God is reflected in the *agape* love he is called to have toward his wife (Ephesians 5:25-31).

Just as your heart devotion to want to live in Covenant union with our Father brings about His grace to make that happen, so does self-sacrificing love bring about a God-honoring covenant union within your marriage.

As you weigh the stipulations for embracing the Covenant our Father is offering you, can you see how these apply to your own marriage covenant?

1. Can it exist without **repentance**?
2. Can it bloom without your **love**?
3. Can there be peace without your **trust**?
4. Can it flourish without **forceful conviction and steadfast determination** to make it succeed?
5. Can love grow without **forgiveness**?

Again, the quality of your marriage covenant must represent the fervency of your Covenant with your Father. This is why your *mutual cooperation* in sanctification as life partners is essential for growth in Christ's likeness.

Both of you still have a sin nature that resists the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:17). Don't get upset over the darkness you see in each other; rather, cooperate with the Spirit and help each other change until your marriage shines!

Work together to ensure that your home is one of righteousness. Establish biblical applications, *halakhahs*, that will be the principles guiding your Kingdom lifestyle.

Biblical applications act like a *perimeter of protection* around your home. Make these an ongoing family endeavor.

- Perimeters secure a sanctuary of spiritual refuge and nurture in your home.
- Those within the perimeters experience unity as they pay the price of forfeiting their own sinful desires in order to please their Lord.
- By upholding righteousness within those perimeters, your prayers will be answered, bringing testimonies to our Father's faithfulness.

*"Behold, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the coming of that great and dreadful day of the LORD. And **He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers**; lest I come and strike the earth with a curse"* (Malachi 4:5,6).

Before the Dark Days of Chastisement come from our heavenly Father, it's imperative that earthly fathers who walk in His Spirit fulfill their responsibilities from God to their children. Our Lord has ordained specific purposes for marriage and the family:

*Has not [the LORD] made them one? In **flesh and spirit they are His**. And why one? Because He was **seeking godly offspring**. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth. 'I hate divorce,' says the LORD (Malachi 2:15,16a).*

Our Lord always has a *multigenerational perspective*. The devil knows this, and schemes continually to subvert a key purpose for marriage—to produce godly generations.

If you were Satan, how would YOU undermine our Lord's goal? Perhaps with these tactics:

- You'd certainly have to be *devious*.
- The husband and wife would have to be *blind to your real intent*.
- You'd have to *camouflage your strategy* so it would appear helpful to the couple and be widely accepted by other Christians. This would keep them from questioning or being suspicious.

Satan's secret weapon is not secret to corporate America: **outsourcing**. This translates in the home into sending out wives and children for others to spiritually train.

A husband and/or father in the Kingdom cannot “outsource” his wife and children for religious indoctrination. You need to *use your home* to nurture your family into spiritual maturity.

A home that's determined to live righteously in Christ is a fortress of spiritual light in the midst of homes of darkness—people who are destined for hell unless someone becomes burdened for their souls.

Jesus is counting on you to extend earnest prayer and warm hospitality to extend His Kingdom through your home, even if you live alone!

Why pray? Prayer is *spiritual warfare*. The prayers of a person or family who upholds righteousness is like an artillery barrage opening the way for the assault.

Satan is aware of the power of *righteousness* combined with *prayer that perseveres* until the answer is received (James 5:16-18; 1 Peter 3:12).

So it's vital that you train your family to remain righteous through repentance, and that they join you in continuing to intercede for the people our Lord has placed

you among. This includes your neighborhood, workplace, school and people you see regularly in public settings.

Don't forget how much the Bible calls for *hospitality* to others. Our Lord is honored when we invite people into our lives and homes because of their intrinsic value of being *made in His image*.

There's a wonderful vulnerability when you invite people into your home. Guests get to see how you really interact with each other! After all, it's the unexpected occurrences, like the spilled casserole or burned pie, that reveal what's behind the smile.

(For more on home and family, see Lessons 30 thru 44 of [Discussing How to Restore the Early Church](#).)

Fellowship of Homes



No sooner had Peter preached his message at Pentecost than we see followers of Jesus meeting in homes, learning and having communion together.

God added to their numbers daily, and they knew that they could grow spiritually in the intimate setting of one another's homes (see Acts 2:46,47).

Meeting in homes wasn't new. Before the coming of Jesus people regularly gathered in each other's homes to uphold communal righteousness and to establish supportive, load-bearing relationships.

Authentic fellowship finds *load-bearing believers* throughout the week encouraging each other as you wholeheartedly trust God together, following our Lord Jesus and carrying each other's burdens.

You're being built up to testify of the powerful love of Jesus through word and deed so that others might come to know the Jesus in you.

Our Father wants sons and daughters who have tasted His power as they've walked in loving, obedient trust and are being equipped to extend His Kingdom.

From their history the early followers of Jesus who were Jewish recognized from the Hebrew Bible that God holds people *communally* responsible for sin. So they met in homes to help each other remain repentant and to have their prayers answered.

People who claimed to be Christ followers but whose lives proved otherwise weren't considered in fellowship with those for whom Jesus was *Lord* of their lives (see 1 John 1:6).

The Psalmist certainly made clear how important it was to not fellowship with the *unrighteous*, with people whose hearts as well as deeds violated God's ways.

Spiritual compromise becomes all too easy if you excuse or tolerate sin in those who call themselves "Christian" but are bringing down His name:

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the **counsel of the ungodly**, nor stands in the **path of sinners**, nor sits in the **seat of the scornful** (Psalms 1:1)*

A home fellowship is an *extended spiritual family* working together through the power of the Holy Spirit.

This is where the gifts of the Spirit can cooperate together as body organs. Every activity and purpose of a home fellowship is evaluated by whether it is pleasing to God, aligns with His Word, and fulfills His Kingdom purposes.

Developing and nurturing relationships who are willing and able to bear the load for each other is intimately connected to upholding communal righteousness within your fellowship family. Communal righteousness makes load-bearing all the easier!

There are four primary purposes for fellowshiping in homes:

- 1. Uphold communal righteousness.**
- 2. Develop load-bearing relationships.**
- 3. Multiply through actively sharing the Gospel of the Covenant.**
- 4. Prepare succeeding generations to follow Jesus and extend His Kingdom.**

Other Qualities of Home Fellowships

1. Prayers are being answered. John sums it up best: *“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and **bear fruit**—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in My name”* (John 15:16).

Your fellowship with our Father and with His Son Jesus spurs you on in your hunger for righteousness. Answered prayer is our Father’s gracious response.

2. Your home fellowship family uses their discretionary time to *bless others* and to reach those *who have yet to follow Jesus*.

“Discretionary” is that part of a day in which you can choose what you want to do and with whom you want to spend that time. Significant contact throughout the week within your fellowship family as they use their discretionary time on behalf of each other is a healthy sign.

Your choice to share fellowship with one another strengthens the connectedness of the relationships and removes pressure from the shepherd(s) to be sole ministers of God’s grace.

3. Another wholesome indicator is when the children are comfortable with the adults, especially with the men. If a stranger visited your gathering and couldn’t figure out whose children were whose, that kind of care and acceptance being given to the children by the entire faith community would get his attention!

4. Judge every man by his wife’s eyes. If he’s fulfilling his call to be considerate of her, her face will reveal it. The Bible commands a man to sacrificially love both His Lord and his wife. The love he claims to have for God should be readily apparent in his actions toward her.

If an elder/shepherd fails to see appreciation and love in a woman’s eyes when she speaks with or about her husband, he should step in and ask questions. This

wife might need to talk with another woman, and her husband might benefit from the wise counsel of an older man.

5. People who love God thirst to know His Word. They consistently study and discuss the Bible in their own homes. Teaching in a faith community should center around *application* or *clarification* rather than just presenting content.

Each extended family member will then have some spiritual nugget or question to contribute so that no individual will dominate the gathering with a lengthy monologue. Mutual discussion helps everyone grow!

Concluding Comments

As you consider in your spirit these troubled days worldwide, you can't doubt our Father's involvement. He has made sure that things aren't going well as struggle and challenge pierce lives on an individual as well as national level.

He is looking for His own to seek Him for wisdom, to discover the "missing nail" to correct the problem. Now is the time for our trust in God to be enacted through the Spirit's power as spiritual darkness becomes more intense around us.

*If My people who are called by My name will **humble themselves**, and **pray** and seek My face, and **turn from their wicked ways**, then I will hear from heaven, and will **forgive their sin** and **heal their land** (2 Chronicles 7:14).*

God yearns to show mercy to those who love Him and confirm their love in their *obedience to His Word* (John 14:21). Earnest repentance can *stir Him to relent* as people respond to prophetic warning.

Be prepared to do whatever our Lord requires in order to see the Spirit's power restored in our faith communities. Seek wholeheartedly for Him to be lifted up by His love and power at work through you!

Entry into His Kingdom demands birth from above into His Spirit, the Power at work in His people:

*I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is **born of water and the Spirit**. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the **Spirit gives birth to spirit**.... The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot*

*tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone **born of the Spirit** (John 3:5-8).*

If you are born of the Spirit, Jesus is your Head. You are burdened by Him to see His Kingdom expanded. The Kingdom of God is one of spiritual power, not human effort and striving.

Paul, who spent three years in the desert learning from Jesus (Galatians 1:16-18), clearly leaned on trusting the Spirit within him:

*My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the **Spirit's power**, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on **God's power** (1 Corinthians 2:4,5).*

In our own strength we can do nothing that will bless our Lord and bear lasting fruit. Man's ways are meaningless when it comes to Kingdom living!

Paul goes on to explain the difference between those who are imbued with Spirit understanding and those who can perceive only from their flesh:

*"We have not received the spirit of the world but the **Spirit who is from God**, that we may **understand what God has freely given us**. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words **taught by the Spirit**, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.*

*The man without the Spirit **does not accept** the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he **cannot understand** them, because they are spiritually discerned"* (1 Corinthians 2:12-14).

If you're not experiencing the life we've been discussing here, then call out to our Lord with a heart eager to please Him. The Spirit of Jesus will guide you as our Lord promised, if you'll trust Him to do that.

"The Kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:21).

(For further insight into your relationship with our Father and Jesus, your home, and home fellowship family, click on the Restoration Diagram at our home page at Restorationministries.org)