



## Messy Expectations: Community Under Pressure

Part 1 of Many     How May We Best Endure Until He Comes?

By Barbara L. Klika, MSW, Personal Life Coach

Undershepherd

[www.set-apart-ministries.org](http://www.set-apart-ministries.org)

[www.christian-transitions.com](http://www.christian-transitions.com)

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Our Father created us to be in relationship. That relationship is multi-faceted; with Him, within ourselves, with one another and with all creation. He is Himself, a relational Being. We couldn't understand Him even as much as we do unless we consider relationship.

*Jesus said unto him,  
Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul,  
and with all thy mind.  
This is the first and great commandment.  
And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.  
On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.*

Matthew 22: 37-40

So we see the comparison and complimentary aspects of being in relationship laid out as paramount to our faith walk. Yet the paradox is that relationships, especially the most intimate ones, are among the most challenging things we will ever face in this life. Even in the best of times, they can be very hard to maintain. It is also true that those we love the most we often find the most aggravating! If we didn't care, we wouldn't be bothered so much. It is indifference to one another that shows lack of care.

We see special blessing and joy in those relationships that grow together in Messiah and often see those blessings pour out on others. We understand that our Abba's intent was to grow us up in Him so that we can bless Him and bless others with the blessings we have received. Here at Set Apart Ministries, we have made it a major concern to encourage and exhort one another to grow up in every way into Him Who is our Head. We have seen that committed community is the best, and maybe only, context in which discipleship and the iron sharpening iron process can occur. Generally speaking, blessing will pour out into individual families first, but then later as the children grow up, their parents can become elders to pour out their love and concern on an entire community. Among each community there are always those who did not receive this nurturance in their own families so it is a kind of "second

chance.” It is a reason for celebration because all those in fellowship will benefit from this rich blessing in the lives of mature believers.

Yet, sin entered in and the intended model for all of life was distorted. Patiently, our YHWH has set the stage for our return to full relationship, with Him and with one another, through the finished word of our Messiah Yeshua. We experience this in part now as we yield to Him, but we look forward to the fullness of that joy in the future. Before we get there however, we have great struggles to face. A recent comment was made on this.

*But to tell you the truth I think the only unity that will happen is when Yahshua comes and gathers, then there will be a unified community until then it just isn't going to happen. Some I see just sway where the wind blows, show me the party and I am there to celebrate not caring if one believes sliver or conjunction, lunar or weekly, 14<sup>th</sup> 15<sup>th</sup> etc...*

Ah, the truth of these words stings! Yes, there are many that no longer anticipate being able to find genuine, deep companionship so they settle for an appearance of unity and look for the “good times.” Is this a good answer?

I have said myself that I do not believe our Messianic communities, or denominational churches for that matter, will find unity until Messiah sets His feet down on the Mount of Olives. Yet I have seen that this statement may be misunderstood! Because we find it difficult to agree on matters of doctrine and practice, does this mean that we cannot ever expect to be in YHWH honoring relationships with other Believers? Many have experienced inappropriate treatment in faith communities to say the least. Many have also brought their own woundedness and perspectives to faith communities that have tragically colored their experiences. As we draw near to the time of His return, the time of the Great Tribulation, does this mean that the increase of wickedness and lawlessness means that the hope of the blessing of community relationships in Him is no longer feasible?

*And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:  
see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass,  
but the end is not yet.*

Matthew 24:6

Messiah told us ahead of time what to expect so we are not to be troubled as we see these things coming to pass all around us. Still, though He said so often not to be afraid either, people *are* both afraid and troubled. We do not know if there are months or years of these troubles ahead of us. We do not know if we are facing an interim judgment by His Hand as so many dangers are rising at the same time here in America or if this is indeed the beginning of the global events that will culminate in His return. We do not know if we will be among those Believers who will be kept from physical death in glorious testimony or if our witness and testimony will come through not loving our lives unto the death.

*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb,  
and by the word of their testimony;  
and they loved not their lives unto the death.*

Revelation 12:11

Taking the messages to the seven assemblies as a pattern, we see that all but one of them are said to have people who hold on to what they have though many around them fall, yet only one is given a promise that they will be kept **from** the hour of temptation (Philadelphia Rev. 3:10) This will be because they have kept the word of His patience or endurance. Those in the Christian world continue to debate about the rapture-pre, post or mid tribulation - while amillennialists consider this a moot point. I think most in the Messianic world are thinking more along the lines of “as in the days of Noah” as for who is left behind. If it is possible to generalize any Messianic belief I think the consideration is more about enduring the initial plagues, as in the pattern established between Mitzraim and Goshen, and anticipation about when His people, Israel, viewed as the woman, might be taken away into the wilderness.

*And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up,  
and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.*

Luke 21:28

These stirring words ring in my thoughts. Lift up your heads, look past the trouble of this day to see our future in Messiah! Keeping our eyes fixed on Him provides the strength and hope in order to endure. In fact, this picture of the need for endurance is part of our mission statement for Set Apart Ministries.

*Cast not away therefore your confidence,  
which hath great recompence of reward.  
For ye have need of patience,  
that, after ye have done the will of God,  
ye might receive the promise.*

Hebrews 10:35-36

After we have done the will of God we will receive His promise. More stirring words to hold on to! Yet the questions about how we know what His will is and how we are to meet His expectations of us remain. We can see the picture in part, but not yet in full clarity.

I have written of Messiah’s direction to His followers, both then and now, to watch and pray with Him as we approach the final hour. In the “Watch and Pray” series, I examined several aspects of this instruction and how it looks for us today. Among the topics is the question of where we are as we watch and pray. Are we near to Him as Peter, James and John were or are we further away with the larger group of His followers? I would imagine there were many not even near the Garden who knew of this Man from Galilee who were also troubled and wondering how all the tension was going to play out.

Today, I begin writing about the question of “where” we are as we watch and pray now, wondering how all the tension will play out. We are in the season of His return. There seems no doubt about that! The swirling of tension and evil continues to magnify. Political tensions, threats of nuclear attack, religious fanaticism, anti-Semitism, extra-terrestrials and godhood, weather extremes and catastrophes. We see the Roman Catholic Church (and others) awash in sexual scandal yet being given a “place” in Jerusalem now in this time period. We see the worship of Mary bringing a resurgence of Goddess worship that also appeals to other religions and the push toward a “one world” united religion as well as the push toward “one world government.” Where are we to stand as we watch and pray with Him?

We see the forces for good and evil collide and compete worldwide. This is true in both the physical and spiritual realms. We are aware of the increasing lawlessness in general. The apostate nature of much of the traditional church bodies becomes more visible. The Messianic movement is not immune from difficulty here either. Already an eclectic mix, with various blendings of “church” and “synagogue” patterns of being, this body of believers appears to be anything BUT one body in Him. There is lack of clarity as to who has authority for leadership right at a time when in some areas there is a growing surge of people newly hearing the call to return to the ancient paths. Over the past 13 years I have continued to hear a sad pattern of people coming together in joy and excitement and blessing in fellowship only to fall apart not too long afterward, usually due to unresolved conflict. I have written elsewhere of the various aspects of fears for those in leadership as well as those seeking out leaders. I have written of the different types of difficult people one encounters as well as the existence of those who come with the intent to sabotage fellowships, known or unknown even to themselves.

Right now the burden I feel is to address the manner in which we as followers of Messiah Yeshua can best endure the increasing chaos and danger around us while remaining faithful to Him. It has been difficult enough for people to come together as we all prayerfully seek return to our heritage during more ordinary times. The additional stressors common today have led many to question ***whether it is even wise to try to come together.*** I am certainly well acquainted with the dangers that are present and increasing as I have encountered people who were just difficult all the way to those with murderous intent toward me. For SAM, our position has been to be cautious, not advertise our meeting places, and meet with and screen people prior to including them in community worship/study time so we are doing our best to guard what He has established for the well-being of the community yet remain open to encourage others.

Over the past year I have spoken with people who will not even give their name or telephone number to meet newly interested people after dealing with too many dangerous situations. I have heard the sadness of one who finds it difficult to share the Good News when it involves all the contentiousness and lack of harmony present in this Messianic movement...hard to invite anyone into a house that is divided! I have learned just this past week of a fellowship that considers itself “closed” out of concern to keep danger at bay. Families are divided as one spouse sees the benefit of coming together with like-minded people while the other fears the danger of trusting others when too many people have proven untrustworthy in the past. I am reminded of the sage words of the King of Siam in the musical, “The King and I,” A Puzzlement.

*Shall I join with other nations in alliance? If allies are weak, am I not best alone?  
If allies are strong with power to protect me Might they not protect me out of all I own?*

*Is a danger to be trusting one another  
One will seldom want to do what other wishes But unless someday somebody trust somebody  
There'll be nothing left on earth excepting fishes!*

Here then, is the proverbial hard nut to crack. Our YHWH designed us to be in relationship, but in the increasing chaos and danger such relationship involves more vulnerability and risk than many are willing to allow. The forces of wickedness are growing in intensity and cannot be expected to subside. His Word says this is so. We are to work while it is yet day because once the darkness comes, no one will be able to do so. We have seemingly conflictual callings: to be a light to others and to preserve that which is good.

*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*

Revelation 22:11

May we conclude that in these last days, all hope of having a faith community that is a blessing and a source of guidance and strength is now lost? If that is so, is He a cruel god, leading us to **believe we can attain** what we actually **cannot** do? In these words of Revelation, it appears that there will be an increasing separation...not only the sheep from the goats but also the sheep from the sheep according to Ezekiel 34. How does this separation work out? Does it mean that eventually every Believer will be standing alone as we move through the increasing forces of wickedness?

**They are like centrifugal forces.**

Will the forces spin us *together* with like-minded people and away from others?

Will the forces spin us *apart* from one another/like-minded people?

**Is there a Scriptural directive for belonging or not belonging in community during these days that, if possible, will deceive even the elect?**

**Do we seek or fear strong allies?**

**Is the view that discipleship and the “iron sharpening iron” process can only happen in committed relationships correct?**

**How important is discipleship and the “iron sharpening iron” process to our walk as forces for good and evil swirl and magnify?**

It is these and other questions that will be considered as I move through this series. Conversations about these topics will be held in our teleconference groups as well as by personal telephone or email interaction. Please let me know your perspectives! Together, in Messiah, may we come to a workable conclusion as to how to reconcile these challenges.

*And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season  
we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

Galations 6:9

## ACTION STEPS

### 1. Take in additional observations.

*If you haven't already read the material that pertains to these questions on our site,  
please do so now. Here is a partial list of relevant topics.*

Consider the [4 levels of community interaction](#) as we have outlined them.

Consider the differences between [fellowship and what we call "social-ship."](#)

Consider the current struggles over [what constitutes authority](#) in Messianic groups.

Consider the different aspects of [what it means to lead/shepherd](#) in groups of different levels as presented in the introductory comments.

Consider the [aspect of shepherd/leaders provision or lack of provision of covering.](#)

Consider the [teachableness and humility that goes with maturity and accountability.](#)

Consider our presentation of what we believe constitutes a community called to be set apart to YHWH in the **[Be Ye Set Apart](#)** video on [our home page](#), top left.

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IF you still have time:

Consider checking out [the article addressing Love vs. Fear Based Faith.](#)

Consider the series on [Messy Expectations.](#)

### 2. Reflect On Your Personal Experiences

Consider what type of community interactions you have experienced.

Think about what has caused you to desire to run toward faith based community.

Think about what has caused you to run away from or avoid faith based community.

Prayerfully seek our Messiah for His leading on what He wants for us.

Consider how this leading may match or conflict with our personal experiences.

Contact Barb at [info@set-apart-ministries.org](mailto:info@set-apart-ministries.org) or (920) 634-2760 or P. O. Box 5584, De Pere, WI 54115