



Are You “upside down” or “right side up?”

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Various things have occurred lately that set me thinking about the Hand Teaching and how it applies to our fellowship relationships. If you haven't yet seen it, it is found here.

Generally speaking, it outlines the situation that being regenerated in faith by the presence of the Ruach does not automatically mean that we are immediately brought into full alignment with His wisdom and understanding. I see this as a process of being turned “right side up” once again...more details are in the PowerPoint to make this more clear.

So there are believers who truly do have the Ruach and are reborn, but they are working out their salvation...with fear and trembling! What happens when people who are not yet right side up “hear” or perceive actions and words from those who are more closely aligned with being “right side up” with the Spirit of Yah as their priority? Though I'd hope that people would be able to recognize the person whose priorities are more Yah centered and honor that in them, what seems to happen is that they often will interpret what may have been said or done through their lens of not yet being “right side up.”

An example might be found in several of our Community Teaching Moments topics. Briefly, I might say here the situation could be one in which discussion of regular attendance for Shabbat worship is under consideration. “Right side up” priority would be closely connected with spiritual, relational and emotional maturity and would hopefully be associated with those in elder positions in a fellowship. I would expect this person's priority to be recognition of the need for themselves to participate fully and regularly in their community gatherings because it is what our Abba has designed and commanded us to do. They will also perhaps have the understanding that it is not a burden but instead a way that He strengthens us to bear the burdens of the week while we are yet in this world system.

Now, consider a situation in which an elder expresses concern for one newer in the walk and their tendency to miss Shabbat gatherings on a frequent basis. Though they could be talking of their understanding of the importance for the strength and joy of the individual to be present, one whose ears are not yet turned all the way “right side up” could very easily hear them as being demanding and

critical, perhaps accusing them of being controlling in trying to force them to attend. (Yes, this example is real from more than one occasion!)

This seems to be a salient point because people find commitment rather frightening, even when it is for their own good. This commitment would be the strength of longer term relationships in which people at earlier stages of maturity are willing to allow those of later stages of maturity to speak into their lives. The tendency to hear and interpret motivations through their own level of motivation or understanding I believe has led to many misunderstandings and “falling out” of fellowship situations. These people tend to be much more reactive than they are responsive. (Reactivity is a response more based in emotion while responsiveness is more closely related to weighing alternatives or logically considering a situation.)

How to rectify this? Prayer is always the number one resource, but perhaps more specifically prayer for the personal and spiritual growth of everyone in a fellowship; that each one will grow in the sense of being able to offer “good will” toward others. I understand this to be the ability to consider anything that might seem upsetting in the light of the real nature of the heart and character of the person before reacting negatively with emotional assumptions and accusations. Known as being among those who were “turning the world upside down” Paul was really in the process of helping people be turned back to “right side up.” He spoke of an entire list of behaviors that are problematic in his letters to the Romans, our chapter one. Among them is “malignity” which is defined as assuming the worst of someone else.

Following prayer, it seems to me that a good option is to practice preventive maintenance! When people in a community become aware of things such as their own process of being brought “right side up” and the definition of things such as malignity, a path may open to deal with any difficult situations more effectively. In the heat of the moment, when someone is in a reactive state, coming from their

“not yet reoriented right side up” faith, it will not be easy to point out these matters. However, given some time, hopefully within a day or so, a situation may be revisited and these things may be referred to as part of the process of maturing in our Messiah through relationships with others.

Greater understanding of this process may go a long way toward strengthening the boundaries and stability of our fellowship groups. Though some are quick to say that people “falling out” from a group result in blessings when they form a new group elsewhere, I stand by my conviction that a “falling out” is not at all the same as a “sending out.” Beginning a new group by those with unresolved issues from a previous falling out I believe undermines and endangers the foundation of any resulting new group, perpetuating the instability we see too often in the American Messianic/Hebrew Roots community.

Where are you and yours in the process of being turned right side up? Have your leaders and members ever talked about how they are doing in the process of restoration? It might be a great time to open the subject now, before troubles arise!

Want help? Call Barb at SAM office: (920) 634-2760