

Do you really want to be conformed into His image?

Are you interested in watching someone grow in their walk with Yeshua or are you more interested in bad-mouthing them? If your goal is to see them be conformed into the image of Messiah, you have to let go of all your “Yes but...” excuses concerning them. To add to this, that person isn’t in your life by accident. Haven’t you prayed, “LORD help me to be just like you”? Well, what about the verse that says, “Before they ask, I will answer them”? God is the one who put that person in your life, and He chose to do so before the foundation of the world.

I used to keep a handful of sheep in my back yard. In the winter time I would load a bale of hay on a plastic sled and drag it across the snow until I got to an old pine tree that I could see out my kitchen window. There I would place the bale in the shelter of the tree and then the sheep would gather around it and munch peacefully. This arrangement worked well for a long time. Then one day as I looked out my kitchen window I saw one ewe ram herself into the head of a weaker ewe. She also rammed herself into the side of the weaker sheep, and drove her away from the food. Then the weaker sheep stood with her back to the bale of hay and her face away from it so that she couldn’t see it. A couple days later I found her dead. Our bad-mouthing others can have the same effect on Yeshua’s sheep.

When I was 18 I left my parent’s home to go to Bible School. My parents lived in the middle of Australia in a place called ‘Alice Springs’. The Bible School I was heading for was near Perth which is near the lower part of the western coast of Australia. I started the journey by hitching a ride with a friend who was heading for a different Bible College in South Australia. The plan was to fly from there to Perth. The road from Alice Springs to South Australia is travelled by very few people. Once in a while we would see somebody going the other direction, but probably no more than a handful of vehicles the whole 22 hours we were on the road. Eventually we started driving through sheep country. At that time I knew very little about sheep and was fascinated by all that I saw. That night when I opened up my Bible the LORD led me to read Ezekiel 34. I sobbed as I read the passage. It talks about shepherds who mistreat God’s sheep. It also talks about sheep that mistreat other sheep. Verse 21 even describes the very thing that happened under my pine tree. [I’m not going to write the whole chapter out here, but you should read it.] It also talks about God’s judgment on evil shepherds and ornery sheep.

Later after I had been in Perth for a while, I began to condemn in my heart the people in the congregation I was attending because they weren’t like the young radical Believers that I had known back up in Alice Springs. (These people were married and had families to attend to and that sort of thing, which I had no clue about at that stage of my life!) One day during a worship service we were singing one of those ‘I love you’ to the LORD

songs, when the LORD said to me, “You don’t love Me because you don’t love them!” (John 13:34 & 14:15, 21 & 15:12) I never forgot that. It has stuck with me ever since! What’s more is that when Yeshua first gave this new commandment it was during the Passover Seder just before He was sacrificed as God’s Lamb for our sins.

To add to that, one time I remember a pastor telling the story of how a woman in his church had practiced ‘lashon hara’ which is negative gossip that seeks to hurt. Afterwards she came to the pastor in repentance. Then the pastor took a pillow full of down feathers with her watching and shook all the feathers out into the wind. Then he told her to go pick all the feathers up. She exclaimed that she couldn’t. Then he told her that that’s what had happened with her ‘lashon hara’.

So do you practice such things? What about the sister-in-law or the step-mother or the person in your congregation or some other member of God’s Kingdom that you are speaking lashon hara over? If you want to be conformed into the image of Yeshua, you have to forsake all your “yes but...” excuses.

