

The Crucial Time For The Lordship-Committed Is Near!

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Attached is Spot On #20, *God's Commands Are Not A Burden For Lives Revolving Around Jesus's Lordship!* The commands in the Bible are given by our heavenly Father for His children to apply to their way of life and character. In that way they can shine with the love and spiritual power of Lord Jesus in the midst of the dark and needy world around them. To the **Lordship-committed** His good and righteous commands are not burdensome to learn and apply as their way of life. Rather, putting His commands into practice in your life, family and faith community is His essential means to your growing in spiritual maturity as you rely more and more on walking in His Spirit. (We share three examples of our own applications at the end of this Spot On).

Also, in this Spot On we encourage the Lordship-committed to avoid being ensnared by the **religiously-mired**. And, we present to those who are religiously mired the means of escape. It won't be long before the Lordship-committed will learn why the rulership of Jesus in their lives can often be a lonely path. Soon, during the Dark Days of Chastisement, many of the religiously-mired and unbelievers who need our Lord's blessing and provision during a time of great deprivation will find themselves turning to the Lordship-committed.

Prior To The Dark Days Of Chastisement The Dominance Of Nicolaitan Clergy Is Beginning To Fizzle

You won't hear from the pulpit the reality which so many Nicolaitan clergy have been experiencing. And most religious leaders who bring up the dire situation facing the religious establishment may bemoan the reality. Currently in the US, 1,700+ clergy are resigning each month. In a recent poll of US clergy, the faith-based research company Barna Group found that 38 percent of clergy had considered quitting full-time ministry in 2021. There are two diverse perspectives on this fact:

1. The clergy who are leading the religiously-mired regard these resignations or thoughts of resigning as a need for those in the pews to offer more support to their clergy.
2. By contrast, the Lordship-committed perceive what's happening to the Nicolaitan clergy system as the plan of our heavenly Father in beginning to restore what has been lost for centuries – the rightful scriptural role of older men of wisdom to shepherd and teach His children.

Followers of Jesus who have lived Lordship-committed realize the true nature of the shepherd/teacher in the earliest faith communities. Alongside authentic shepherd/teachers, our Lord Jesus is also restoring the rightful roles of the apostle, prophet, and evangelist among His Kingdom people (Ephesians 4:11-16). We'll have more on this important change in faith community leadership in our next Spot On.

Recent studies suggest that clergy stress is on the rise as the Dark Days of Chastisement draw nearer. For example, in 2017 Barna Research found that 30% of clergy were facing the risk of burnout — and by November 2021 that number had increased to 38% as noted earlier. Certain clergy categories were even more susceptible to burnout, including those under 45 years old and those in mainline denominations. From a biblical framework, the first group are too young to compassionately and maturely guide Father's children. And many of the mainline denomination clergy keep busy finding ways to cater to the desires of the religiously-mired – dry branches which are disconnected from the Vine and fruitless (see John 15:1-6).

The Facade Of The Religiously-Mired Is Being Exposed!

Below, as you read through statistics and findings from the Barna Group's research, you'll realize why the Holy Spirit gave us this Spot On to share. (We've used the phrase *religiously-mired* as a synonym for "Christian" or churchgoer.) A word of exhortation if you are religiously-mired or have become Lordship-committed and yet are still looking back over your shoulder to see what you left behind: May the reality of these abysmal statistics strengthen your own resolve to press on in the Lordship of the Jesus you yearn to love and serve (Luke 9:62).

Regarding Worship...

- The biweekly attendance at worship services [i.e., Sunday morning and Wednesday evening] is, by the religiously-mired's own admission, generally the only time they worship God.
- Only 1 out of every 4 of the religiously-mired state that when they worship God, they expect Him to be the primary beneficiary of their worship. (The majority admit that they expect to derive the most benefit for themselves from their worship experience.)

Regarding Faith-based Conversations...

- The typical religiously-mired individual will die without leading a single person to a life-saving knowledge of and relationship with Jesus Christ.
- At any given time a majority of the religiously-mired do not have a specific person in mind for whom they are praying in the hope that this individual will experience a new birth in Christ.

Regarding Intentional Spiritual Growth...

- Only 9% of the religiously-mired who consider themselves born-again have a biblical worldview. This worldview includes a certainty that: •the Bible is accurate in its teachings; •Jesus lived a sinless life on earth and rose victorious from the dead; •Satan is real, not symbolic; •all Christians are responsible for sharing their faith in Christ with others; •the only means to salvation is through God's grace; •God is the all-knowing and all-powerful Creator of the universe Who still rules it today. The other 91% of born-again adults possess a patchwork of theological views and rarely rely upon those perspectives to guide their daily decisions.
- When asked what constitutes success in life, few of the religiously-mired defined success in spiritual terms. Most describe outcomes that are related to professional achievement, family solidarity, physical accomplishments, or acquisition of resources.
- When given the opportunity to state how they want to be known by others, fewer than 1 out of 10 of the religiously-mired mentioned descriptions that reflect their relationship with God.

Regarding servanthood...

- In a typical week, only 1 out of every 4 religiously-mired will allocate some time to serving other people. Most of that time is dedicated to volunteering in religious programs that benefit fellow congregants; little effort is invested in serving needy people outside the congregation.

Regarding Spiritual Friendships...

- Fewer than 1 out of every 6 of the religiously-mired have a relationship with another believer through which spiritual accountability is provided.
- The most significant influence on the choices of the religiously-mired is neither the teachings from the pulpit nor advice gleaned from fellow congregants. It is messages absorbed from the media, the law, and family members.

Regarding Family Faith...

- A large majority of the religiously-mired rely upon their faith community rather than their family to train their children to become spiritually mature.
- In an average month, fewer than 1 out of every 10 religiously-mired families worships together

outside of a religious service. Just a few pray together other than at meal times; and the same minimal numbers study the Bible together at home.

- The likelihood of divorce of a married couple who consider themselves born again and are religiously-mired is the same as couples who were not disciples of Jesus.
- Apart from religious-based programs, the typical religiously-mired family spends less than 3 hours per month in endeavors designed to jointly develop or apply their faith.

Are you asking yourself how this unbiblical way of life continues to perpetuate itself? Religious leaders most commonly evaluate the success of their faith community using spiritually meaningless criteria: attendance, membership, revenue, ratio of pastoral staff to congregants, and square footage of their meeting place. Barna's research indicated that those measures may be informative but they are ultimately insignificant since they do not relate to a Christian's primary reason for existence — life transformation.

Many Are Becoming Lordship-Committed Before the Dark Days Of Chastisement Come!
Quietly and without fanfare many are turning to the Kingdom
in which the Lordship of Jesus reigns through His indwelling Spirit.

As Barna Research has noted, millions upon millions are leaving the institutionalized “church”. Their spirit is hungering and thirsting for intimacy with their God and with an extended spiritual family which are mirrored so clearly in Scripture. Yet both of these biblical realities have been so poorly imitated by schedule-dominated, man-centered religion. Many of the followers of Jesus who have exited organized religion are learning to appreciate an essential issue of the Kingdom: to walk daily in repentance — turning away from that which is in error according to God’s way — and turning to God to walk in union with the Spirit of Jesus in every aspect of their life. In loving gratitude for the immeasurable gift of life in Jesus they are applying God's commands to their way of life and finding a depth of peace and joy they'd never known possible! To experience that intensity of spiritual intimacy calls you to leave behind pagan-influenced religious systems and the clergy who appease people's sinful lifestyle and self-gratification but never confront their sin.

In light of what we've just written, we are deeply concerned about those who remain religiously-mired. Can it be that Nicolaitan clergy have convinced their congregants that they belong to Jesus when in fact He doesn't see them as His at all? Consider our Lord's own words when it comes to those who are complacently and comfortably mired without the rule of Jesus directing their lives: “Whoever belongs to God hears what God says. The reason you do not hear is that you do not belong to God” (John 8:47; see also 1Corinthians 2:12-14). Too many of the religiously-mired have been deceived by their religious leaders and the crowd around them in pews each week that they're in good standing with Jesus no matter how they live. The simplest way to find out for yourself if you belong to our Lord Jesus is to ask His Spirit. If He's within you, He will certainly respond and confirm your status for you. But if you don't hear His reassuring presence, then cry out to Him in loving trust to make Himself known to you as Lord of your life. He died in order for you to have that abiding relationship, so make sure you are fully yielded to Him. Our Lord would not leave you in doubt over such an eternally crucial issue!

If you're among the millions who've gotten free of the systems that have hindered your spiritual growth and are now fully available for how the Spirit of Christ would use you, please pray with compassion for those who are still caught in the mire. There's a good chance that someone was praying for you before you were freed.

Mike & Sue