

Prophetic Insights

Have You Been Marginalized For Following Jesus?

May 15, 2014

“And He did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.”

(Matthew 13:58)

“They got up, drove Him out of the town, and took Him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw Him down the cliff.”

(Luke 4:29)

Both of these accounts find our Lord Jesus in His hometown of Nazareth. In each encounter the people He'd grown up around **marginalized** the Son of God. And if you're serving our Lord Jesus in the life of love and obedient trust He commands His own, you'll find yourself in one way or another being marginalized by those who are offended by or don't understand your wholehearted devotion to Him as Lord of your life.

marginalize: *to treat a person, group, or conviction as insignificant or irrelevant.*

The question you must answer is this:

“Do you fear being marginalized more than you yearn to be true to our Lord?”

Throughout western Christendom so many fear being *marginalized* by those around them. They're glad to be “believers” welcomed in Christian crowds, but they don't want to be marginalized for unswervingly serving the will of our Father. Sadly, they don't take seriously our Lord's warning:

“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

This is a decisive point our Lord is making to each of us, with severe ramifications. Yet too many refuse to see that He's speaking to them *before it's too late*.

Recently I (Mike) had a vivid and disturbing dream. I was a co-pilot in a B-52 bomber



flying between buildings in a large city. The pilot was someone I'd been encouraging for many years to be true to our Lord Jesus, but the things of this world overrode his devotion to Him. In my dream this man held onto control of the aircraft and wouldn't trust me, an experienced pilot, to fly it. Only when he was finally overcome by exhaustion did he let me fly the plane. At that point we were fast approaching skyscrapers. I added power and began to ascend, but it was too late. We were going to hit the buildings. At that point I awoke, jolted by the inevitable consequences of this person's resistance.

I discussed the dream with Sue and prayed about its meaning for several days. It then came to me that the man I'd been coming alongside for so many years had *marginalized* me. Because of his own skepticism he refused to trust my input even though he knew it was true. I also realized that over the years a number of people received the counsel Sue and I had repeatedly given them *only* when their lives were desperate, waiting until it was too late to forestall tragedy.

That's why we can identify with our Lord's sorrow as He descended the Mount of Olives toward Jerusalem: *“If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes”* (Luke 19:42). Even after all that He'd done in that city, the people had hardened their hearts toward Him. He had been marginalized!

Do The Wholehearted Inspire You?

or

Do The Laggards Deter You?

We want to discuss two sources of whether Christians are *inspired* or are *deterred* in their walk of loving and obedient trust within their own faith community. First we'll show how some are inspired and spurred on to be wholehearted toward our Lord (box below). Then we'll explain how others are deterred in their faith journey (box at right).

As you'll see, the influence of the *Laggards* who hold key positions or influence in a faith community or religious system are a deterrent rather than an inspiration for others to live true to our Lord and His Word. Why? Because the inspired are guided and led by His Spirit, Who can't be controlled or deterred by the Laggard's *self*-importance.

How People Are Inspired To Be True To Jesus

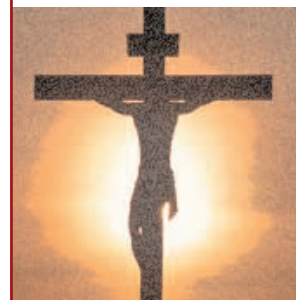
- **Innovators** (2% of people) — This minority hungers to become like their Lord and do His will. Out of love for Him they are willing to yield themselves and all they have. Their lives are transparent and they're humbly open about their flaws and weaknesses.
- **Early Adapters** (12%) — These people are inspired by Innovators. Their willingness to be inspired can influence others to press on in obedient trust too.
- **Early Majority** (33%) — This group doesn't want to be the first like Innovators are, nor do they want to be the last to make a change.
- **Late Majority** (33%) — These wait for institutional endorsement by the Laggards before letting themselves be inspired to press on.
- **Laggards** (20%) — These are most often religious leaders who won't allow themselves to be changed or inspired by others. They habitually deter others from living wholeheartedly and fruitfully in the lordship of Jesus.

Marginalization By Laggards

- **Laggards** — Thoroughly enjoying the prestige of position or influence in a religious system, these will do anything to maintain their dominance. They intentionally keep their personal lives private and hidden, and view Innovators and most Early Adapters as a threat to be marginalized.
- **Late Majority** — This group is easily controlled by Laggards since they rely so completely on institutional endorsement.
- **Early Majority** — These people can be a threat to the Laggards *if* they look to the example of Innovators and Early Adapters more than they do to the Laggards.
- **Early Adapters** — When these are inspired by Innovators *and* are also inspiring the lives of the Early Majority who look to their example positively, they become a threat to the Laggards and must be marginalized.
- **Innovators** — these are always seen as a threat by religious leaders and others who don't live in the lordship of Jesus. They become marginalized through disparaging remarks or insinuations: "He/she is a troublemaker;" "He/she doesn't fit in here." Once the community believes the Laggard's marginalization, the Innovators and anyone they've inspired are ostracized—EXCLUDED! And those who are deterred by the Laggards *don't want* to seek the truth about the ostracized.

There's no middle ground between the *inspired* and the *deterred*. From our Lord's perspective you can't be *half*-inspired; that means He's NOT your LORD! Remember your call as His own: "...we do not love our lives so much as to shrink from death [or marginalization]" (Revelation 12:11).

The Ultimate Marginalization By Religious Laggards



Other Forms Of Marginalization

It's amazing how many ways people marginalize others, often hurting one or both parties.

Waiting Too Long

Many years ago we shared a duplex next to a blended family. For over a year we reached out to this couple to help them overcome their ongoing tension, but the husband repeatedly resisted any wisdom Mike offered. The day we were leaving to move across the country he came to Mike in tears admitting, "I outlasted you, didn't I?" Later we heard they had divorced.

Finding A Flaw

We moved to a large city where a nationally known pastor presided over the largest congregation in town. Mike was helping a young pastor, and described to him the serious struggles we'd experienced in our own marriage before we went to Israel. The younger man reported Mike's testimony to the prominent clergyman, who began to publicly disparage us, even intimidating other clergy in the city to not attend our seminars.

Mike contacted this influential man to find out what was behind his actions since he'd never met us. During the conversation the man revealed his own deep-seated bitterness against his dad, and refused any help Mike could give. It wasn't long afterward that he was removed for sexual misconduct.

Despising In-Laws

We've encountered many parents of married children who despise their daughter-in-law or son-in-law. No matter how much we tried to help the parents assist the younger couple, they refused to relinquish their entrenched resentment. Sadly over time many of the younger couples ended up in adultery and/or divorce.

Imprisoning The Wholehearted

Are you a "social psychotic"? Social psychotics are fearful of close relationships who might hold them accountable. Those they claim to be "friends" live some distance away, or have no real influence in their lives. And they make sure each "friend" doesn't personally know or interact with the others.

We've experienced the results of social psychosis through people who want a relationship with us but are reluctant that we meet or become friends with those they consider close to them. Social psychotics are generally Laggards, Late Majority, or Early Majority who don't want to be the first to be inspired. We feel walled out by social psychotics, and wonder why they even want any relationship with us at all.

Come To My "Church," Not My Home

On numerous occasions we've met Christians who've invited us to the services at their faith community but NEVER to their home. That saddens us, as we feel like our dignity as human beings has just been robbed.

Prejudiced By Past Baggage

People who know Sue consider her to be meek, a joyful woman with a quiet, gentle, and submissive spirit. They also recognize her strong biblical conviction as she seeks to represent the loving heart of Jesus to others. However, she's found that many divorced women, or women whose attitude is manipulative or controlling because of past hurts by their father or husband, immediately erect a relational wall against her. Their past baggage somehow creates an aversion to Sue even though she'd love to help them find emotional peace and freedom in Jesus.

Similarly, men who are beset by unresolved issues with their fathers or other men in authority have an immediate aversion to Mike. Many of these bitter and resentful men

have exclaimed to him with anger, “You’re just like my Dad!” This sad situation was really brought to light when Mike counseled clergy many years ago. A pastor who was a close friend told Mike, “I limit my friendships with other clergy based on how they respond to you. You had a great relationship with your father, and I’ve found that men who were close to their Dads also enjoy being around you. But those who are bitter or hostile toward their fathers don’t like being with you. That’s how I know who to make friends with and who not to.”

Conclusion: We know we haven’t included all the forms of marginalization in this Insight. Prejudice, racism, sexism, creedalism, and many other excluding motivations could have been cited. But it’s important that we who follow Jesus, who love Him above all else, *embrace the marginalization* that will come because of our trust in Him. At the same time we must NEVER allow ourselves to marginalize others for whom our Lord shed His blood.

- Have you ever been marginalized, or even persecuted, because of your faith in Jesus? How did you respond? Did you keep in mind His promises to you? *“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you”* (Matthew 5:10-12).
- Have you ever been marginalized by people in ways that have nothing to do with your faith? What did they do to you, and how did you respond to that marginalization? Would Jesus have responded the same way?
- Have you ever marginalized others with your actions or your words or your attitudes? Have you ever marginalized anyone because of your own unresolved past baggage? In either of these cases of marginalization, how did you enact it? Did you ask their forgiveness afterward?

Some Marginalized People In The Bible

David (1Samuel 23:8-26); **Elijah** (1Kings 19:1-3a); **Jeremiah** (Jeremiah 38:6); **Daniel** (Daniel 6:3-11); **Jesus** (John 11:46-51); **Lazarus** (John 12:9-11); **Stephen** (Acts 6:8-14).