

Prophetic Insights

Are You Pewsitting?

November 4, 2014

Over the years we've periodically used the term "**pewsitter**" to depict a particular type of person within contemporary Christendom. Recently the Holy Spirit inspired us to define what we mean by "pewsitter" because you may think we're only referring to those who occupy pews during services. Yet pewsitting is far more spiritually subversive than that! It portrays an intentional passivity in a person's spiritual walk — a heart unwillingness and resistant attitude to demonstrate the purposes and power of our Lord Jesus in their "Christian" life.

Four decades ago John Wimber, one of the founding leaders of the Vineyard Movement, asked a simple question after reading through the Newer Testament: "*Where's the stuff?*" In essence he wanted to know this: Why aren't the miraculous wonders and deeds of the Spirit Who was so at work in and through the first century followers of Jesus in the Gospels and in the Book of Acts present throughout Christianity today?

The two of us keep wondering the same thing! We recently returned from a refreshing four weeks away, renewed and revitalized for the work of ministry our Father has given us to do. Our trip ended with a flight to Colorado Springs from Atlanta. We were seated in aisle seats across from each other. I (Mike) had the privilege to share with the woman next to me, an unbelieving nurse, the miracles I've seen Jesus do in my almost-38 years of belonging to Him. During the last leg of the flight she asked question after question about our Lord!

I (Sue) was also blessed with in-depth discussion with my seatmate, a devoted follower of Jesus with whom I was able to both give and receive encouragement,

insight and witness of the "stuff" our Lord has done and is doing in our lives. (And I always appreciate that in such tight quarters conversations are "open" to listeners all around you!)

You might say that both women heard testimony of what some who've also trusted in the power of Jesus's Name call "*power encounters*" — the mighty work of the Spirit in and around and through those who are available and willing vessels for His use.

Once you hear about the "stuff" the Spirit does in and through those who wholeheartedly love and trust our Lord Jesus, you want the "stuff" which only He can do. And to have the "stuff", you must be fulfilling the purposes and relying on the power of the "Stuffer!"

However, there's also a heartbreaking side to our time away that we'd like to discuss with you in a bit. But before we do, it'd be helpful for you to ponder several excerpts from a story written by our friend Paul Knight in 1986. (The entire parable is found on page 6 of our book *God's Instruments For War*, a free download at our website.) As you read this, keep in mind what we've already touched upon about "pewsitters."

A Parable of War

"We were sitting outside the village frustrated. We had been enlisted to defend and win the allegiance of the members of the village for the Crown. But there seemed to be so little response to the consistent goodness of the throne. We, the soldiers of the King, were growing tired and apathy was around us like a dense fog.

It was then that we heard the blast of the horns warning us that they were advancing. The Enemy, whom we had grown to hate and despise, was advancing his troops close to the village.

We knew full well that the enemy and his workers were ruthless. They breathed the fire of hatred. As the others around us began to speak, we knew that the village we were caring for and seeking to win would be devastated... [and we], knowing that the King had prepared us with a power far beyond that of our enemy's, stood in resolve to fight. We shouted to our fellow soldiers to stand and bear arms for the King, to defend the village and to fight against the advance of the army...

When we returned to our camp outside the village, we again tried to rally our fellow soldiers to stand and to prepare for battle. The enemy had landed and was advancing with greater strength. We could hear the hellish cries of those who were being taken and those who so joyously performed the enemy's deeds of war. From the infants to the aged, we knew that they would be trampled and put in bondage. Untold horrors would be their fate. We again cried out to our fellow soldiers to stand and to fight.

A few of us ran to our fellow soldiers and with tear-filled eyes begged them to stand and to bear arms. But the fog had grown so thick, it seemed not only to block their vision but to silence our cries in their ears. They continued to rest and to talk...

With greater determination we began to fight, still urging our fellow soldiers to stand. All around us the devastation, even of the King's army, began to overwhelm us. Still we cried out to stand and to bear arms for the One Who cared for us. We shouted out the names of the villagers. With fading breath we called out, "Help us, please fight with us. *The enemy is here!*"

Because of the numerous contacts we had through our retreat ministry and Mike's counseling of religious leaders at that time, we were all too aware of how painfully accurate Paul Knight's warning was. And since our Father first assigned us to share the Hebraic foundations in 1994 we've come to recognize how difficult it is to awaken pew-sitters to fulfill their purpose in our Lord's Kingdom. But from the perspective of a pew-sitter, if you

don't embrace His purposes as your King, you have no need for His power!



Do You Readily Identify Yourself With Our Lord Jesus?

Our real sadness about pew-sitters is that not only do they lack the purpose and power of our Lord Jesus; they'll also do anything to avoid being publicly identified with Him. They're "**Christian**" chameleons, able and eager to blend in with the people in their surroundings no matter what they're doing, just so they won't be singled out as followers of Jesus.

You may remember that a while back we offered our readers bumper stickers and Ichthus window decals (pictured above). We were astonished at how little interest or response there was. Even the many pew-sitters here in our senior mobile home park gave us excuses, like not believing in bumper stickers or not wanting anything in their windows. Others said that faith is a "private matter"—which of course totally contradicts our Lord's commands in the Great Commission! But when we really encouraged them to be honest, most revealed that they were fearful of *anything* that would publicly identify them as being *connected to our Lord Jesus.*

Before we left on this trip, the Holy Spirit prompted us to create two iron-on messages to transfer onto T-shirts:

front

**Belonging
to Jesus is
a love-based
relationship**

back

**If you don't
believe Jesus is
the Son of God,
just ask Him!**

We wore the T-shirts at various times during our trip and were delighted that a good number of Christians approached us about them. Many said they were encouraged not only by the words but also that we'd have the courage to wear the T-shirts in public. On a few occasions we were able to pray with some as they shared difficult situations they were facing in their lives—things that only the power of the Spirit could remedy.

On the flipside, though, we were saddened in conversations by the absence of testimony to our Lord's purpose or power in people's lives. So often they gabbed about the pros and cons of their pastor or their congregation, but nothing was voiced about our Lord Jesus or any ways

He might be using them to bless others.

Sadly, we also realized that among the passive pew-sitters we met over the four weeks of our trip, they have one particular characteristic in common:

They enjoy speaking more about *the things of this world* than about anything that would bring glory and praise to our Father.

Confining the King of creation to a box they only occasionally open, they are content and self-gratified to attend services and participate in work projects that make them feel good about themselves. Yet they're too embarrassed to speak to others with loving joy and gratefulness about the precious Name of Jesus.

It's no small thing that we today are soberly warned to be diligent to walk as His disciples, since demonic workers of iniquity twist the Bible to suit the desires of rebellious, self-serving hearts: "*Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron*" (1Timothy 4:2). We truly believe that Satan has convinced pew-sitters to embrace a demonic doctrine of *powerless passivity* rather than live in the power and purpose of the Spirit and do their part in the Kingdom of our Lord.

- John Wimber once questioned, "Where's the stuff?"
- Paul Knight warned about the call to stand up and fight as soldiers of the Cross.
- Yet pew-sitters continue to live in *powerless passivity*, blindly serving Satan and his scheme of self-idolatry.

Use the attached sheets for an honest self-evaluation and to discuss how you and those close to you in the faith may be pew-sitting in deceived fruitlessness.

Are You Pewsitting? Or more to the point: *Are You Held Captive By Powerless Omission?*

Our Lord Jesus gave His own an irrevocable promise of *spiritual power* to do His Father's will, a promise supported by other parts of the Newer Testament:

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has trust in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

(John 14:12; see also Acts 1:8; 2:38,39; 1Corinthians 2:4,5; 4:20; 2Corinthians 4:7; Ephesians 3:20; 6:10; 2Timothy 1:7)

Whether you're seated on a pew alongside others or on a sofa in a house church every week, it's what you've chosen *not to do* on behalf of our Lord Jesus the rest of the week that qualifies you as a **"pewsitter."** Your silence in word and deed is actually a "loud witness" that your love for Him as your gracious Lord is overshadowed by other priorities: things of this world, personal preferences, fears or strongholds—you name it.

Even a casual perusal and understanding of our Father's Word reveals that He has purposes for you to fulfill in Christ. If you belong to Him, He has given you His Spirit's power to accomplish them. Regrettably, pewsitters want neither His purpose nor power. Perhaps James is pointing directly to pewsitters in his admonition: *"Anyone who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins"* (James 4:17). And that's the testimony of so many in Christendom: ***they sin by their omission.***

Still wondering if you're pewsitting? Please ask yourself these questions:

- Have you ever shared the Gospel with someone and seen them respond by the Spirit's grace and put their trust in our Lord Jesus (see Philemon 1:6)? *(Yes or No)*
- Do you readily pray for unbelievers when they

tell you a need that only the powerful authority of the Name of Jesus can meet? *(Yes or No)*

- Would our Lord and the people who know you well describe you as always ready to reveal Jesus to the lost (2Timothy 4:2)? *(Yes or No)*
- Would these Scriptures accurately describe you? *"Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil"* (Ephesians 5:15). *"Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity"* (Colossians 4:5). *(Yes or No)*
- *"For we are to God the aroma of Christ among those who are being saved and those who are perishing"* (2Corinthians 2:15)? Do you exude His aroma? *(Yes or No)*
- Do you regularly intercede in faith for the salvation of particular people? *(Yes or No)*
- Do you find yourself easily speaking with unbelievers, joyfully testifying to what our Lord has done for you (see 1Peter 3:15)? *(Yes or No)*
- Is there anything on your person, around your home, or on your vehicle that publicly identifies you as a follower of our Lord Jesus? *(Yes or No)*
- Is your "fellowship time" a pre-programmed service with most of it spent with you speculating? *(Yes or No)*
Or, is your gathering with other Jesus followers in the pattern of what the Bible describes: *"When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Let all of these be done for the strengthening of the called-out-ones"* (1Corinthians 14:26)? *(Yes or No)*
- If you're a leader in your faith community, do you allow for each person to use their Spirit-given gifts when you're together? *(Yes or No)*

- Our Lord Jesus trained His disciples by *role modeling* what He taught, and then *sent them out* to do likewise. In your faith community are you being discipled as Jesus would disciple you? (*Yes or No*)
Is receiving Bible teaching your primary method of spiritual instruction? (*Yes or No*)
Does anyone confirm as your discipler that you're *putting into action* what you've been taught (see James 1:22)? (*Yes or No*)
- Do you regularly invite others from your faith family to your home to express your regard for them and to strengthen your relationship with them (see 1Peter 4:9)? (*Yes or No*)
- Would our Lord describe you as “hospitable” and one who “*does what is good to everyone, and especially to the family of those who are trustingly faithful*” (Galatians 6:10,CJB)? (*Yes or No*)
- When you and those close to you in the faith are together, what do you most often talk about? Do you ever discuss “God-sightings” and “power encounters” or other topics which testify of His working in and through and around you (see 2Corinthians 3:17,18)? (*Yes or No*)
- We who follow Jesus as our Lord and Savior are commanded to “***encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin’s deceitfulness***” (Hebrews 3:13). Do you contact at least one other person in your faith community each day, encouraging them to lovingly serve our Lord and do His Father’s will? (*Yes or No*)
- Do you more frequently spot *what's wrong* with other people or even in things going on in the world rather than prayerfully seek what our Lord would have you do as His representative to help (see Eph. 2:12)? (*Yes or No*)
- Do you have close friends in the faith who are outside your economic/social class? (*Yes or No*)

Would they say you lift them up and uphold their dignity, or look down on them in any way (see Romans 12:13)? (*Yes or No*)

- Do you reach out to those less fortunate than you with the intent to uphold their dignity (see 1John 3:17)? (*Yes or No*)
Do you do for them what you would want someone to do for you in the same situation (see Matthew 7:12)? (*Yes or No*)
- Do you believe that our Father is using you to fulfill His purposes (see Hebrews 13:21)? (*Yes or No*)
Is your life a testimony to His Spirit’s power working through you (see Ephesians 3:20)? (*Yes or No*)

If you’ve circled many “No’s,” then you’re pewsitting! Please, repent, agreeing with our Lord that you’ve sinned against Him, and by His grace purpose to turn from that passive path. Then by that same grace and love for your Lord earnestly walk in His plans and purposes for you in His Spirit’s power.

*“You **cannot** drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you **cannot** have a part in both the Lord’s table and the table of demons” (1Corinthians 10:21).*

Repentance is the choice you need to make to sever your self-serving straddling of the kingdom of this world that’s ruled by Satan (see Ephesians 2:1-3). Then, in grateful loving trust in Lord Jesus, live powerfully through the Spirit, bringing glory to your Father.

Have no doubt about this:

• Powerless, passive pewsitters embrace deceiving doctrines of demons. If they don’t repent, they’ll face eternal consequences.

• Those who belong to our Lord Jesus serve Him powerfully through His Spirit at work within them. They’ll be graciously welcomed into heaven as His own.