

RESTORATION MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

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Prophetic Insight

Escape Spiritual Darkness And Complacent Mediocrity

Deny yourself, pick up your cross, and experience life with Jesus as your Lord.

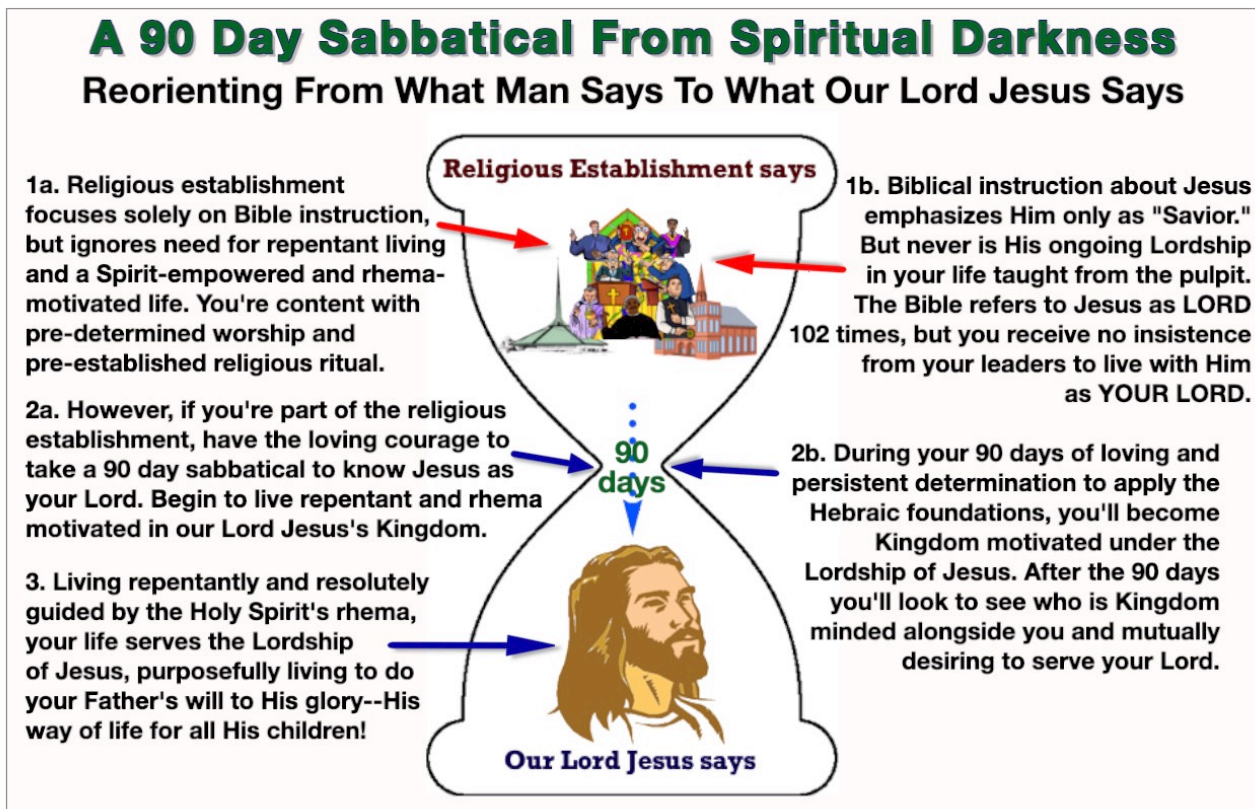
Dear Friends in Christ Jesus our Lord,

Over the course of several days the Holy Spirit imparted to us this Insight to share with you who deeply desire the intimate personal relationship with Jesus Christ as your beloved Lord. This Insight is especially for people who are within the organized religious establishment and in whom the Holy Spirit is nudging their spirits to be unflinching in serving Jesus as Lord of their lives. We'll be discussing factors that for centuries have hindered many within religious systems from experiencing the **Lordship of Jesus and the Kingdom** He has inaugurated. Rather than doing Father's will under the Lordship of Jesus, these impediments produced widespread **complacent mediocrity** (halfhearted indifference).

90 Days Of Transformation Illustrated With An Hour Glass

(See the illustration below to better understand the required transformation process)

When people in the religious establishment asked us to help them really experience the Lordship of Jesus and put into practice the Hebraic foundations, we'd encourage them to take a **90-day sabbatical** from religion. Yes, it took courage to leave the rela-



tional comfort of the religious system. And we warned them that those who remain in spiritual darkness wouldn't understand why they were leaving. Most likely they would be falsely accused of rejecting people who enjoyed the **complacent mediocrity of the spiritual darkness**.

FYI: The most common objection we've received about followers of Jesus leaving the organized religious establishment is this: *"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, **not giving up meeting together**, as some are in the habit of doing, but exhorting one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching"* (Hebrews 10:24,25). Being called to account because you aren't gathering with a congregation is flawed in its application to your sabbatical from a religious system. First, in Matthew 18:15-17 our Lord Jesus discusses the importance of His followers and the gatherings of the called-out ones confronting sin, a command which certainly isn't happening in most religious establishments today. He then gives all His followers the authority to personally and mutually apply God's commands to their lives (Matthew 18:18,19). Jesus then assures His presence within even the smallest gathering, *"For where two or three gather in My Name, there am I with them"* (Matthew 18:20). Your spurring on toward love and good deeds and meeting together can happen within the smallest get-together of Jesus followers.

When it comes to remaining in spiritual darkness with those who call themselves Christian but are mired in hidden sin and are entertaining strongholds, Paul in 2Corinthians 6:14-18 warns us that there can be no fellowship with light and darkness. Our God is holy, and we need to flee the incursion of tolerated sin and demonic incursion that's within a congregation whose sin isn't being confronted by the leadership. God gets no glory by answering the prayers of people who refuse to repent of their sin and prefer instead to live by their own standards. So He doesn't hear them (Proverbs 15:29). By contrast, we know from our own experience either as just a married couple before Him or when we fellowship with the repentant, a number of our prayers are being answered. And His wonderful answers prompt us to give testimony and praise to His glory for hearing our prayers (1Peter 3:12). How often do you find testimonies of answered prayers among your religious establishment? And if there is a time for public testimony, it's often someone coming forward to declare they've given up a besetting sin which they then fall back into again. There's nothing about the miraculous hand of our Lord Jesus nor about the divine encounters and interventions He has orchestrated.

We wrote in our series, ***Going To The High Places***, that for you to experience all that our Lord Jesus promises each of His own, you must leave the "valley of spiritual darkness." Your internal transformation often means a journey alone and/or with your family for a season or with a few others on a similar course. If you've read Hannah Hurnard's classic, *Hinds' Feet On High Places*, then you'll recognize a similarity in the journey of the main character, Much-Afraid. She needed to leave behind the valley of the Fearings and the captivity of her relatives in order to press on more intimately with the Shepherd.

Our *Going To The High Places* series follows the transformation process of Much-Afraid after she leaves the valley and starts heading for the High Places. Like Much-Afraid, both before you leave the valley and afterwards demonic spirits will do every-

thing they can to hinder your journey. But keep in mind that it's **only after** you leave the familiar comfort of spiritual darkness that transformation by the Spirit takes place within you. After many trials and testing in which the Shepherd always came to her aid when she cried out, Much-Afraid was changed into Grace and Glory. Your persistent and loving courage to keep being changed as the Holy Spirit works in and through you brings this transformation about.

After we received the Hebraic foundations in 1994, we tried to stay within local religious establishments and share some of what we'd learned. But we met with stiff resistance and even a certain blindness. For example, after a particular pastor read our *Restoring the Early Church* and the importance of **communal righteousness** and mutual load-bearing within faith communities, he said, "We're doing that already. We have monthly potlucks in people's homes and they can talk together and play games!" Aware of much tolerated sin within the congregation, we also recognized that since repentance wasn't important to the pastor, we needed to leave in order for Father to hear and answer our prayers.

The UnChristlike Utilitarian Religious Establishment

Utilitarian: Utilizing the most *efficient* and *effective* means to achieve a desired outcome, especially in pursuing happiness. Noted in the Declaration of Independence is the *pursuit of happiness*, a supposedly fundamental right to freely go after what you want in life in any way that makes you happy. "Happiness" is humanity enjoying life to the fullest in this world. But God never guaranteed this!

Utilitarianism in the religious establishment is extensive, seducing people to remain in the complacent mediocrity of spiritual darkness. And utilitarian domination within Christianity influences religious leaders to pursue ***any efficient and effective way to attract and retain happy congregants***, regardless if their methods defy God's Word. Utilitarianism in Christianity is similar to Humanism's objective, which is the pursuit of happiness without any moral boundaries. You'd be correct in saying that utilitarianism is completely anti-Christ and against His commands for His own to abide by (see Luke 9:23-26). We repeat this truth,

- **Christ is not synonymous with the Christian religious establishment.**
- **Christianity has rapidly become far less representative of our Lord Jesus as He is presented in the Bible.**
- **Spiritual darkness and complacent mediocrity more accurately identify contemporary Christianity than do the righteousness of Christ's own and their loving and obedient service in doing our Father's will.**

(a). Utilitarian "Smarty pants" theology in '*making disciples of all nations*'.

"Smarty pants" theologians is a phrase which describes intellectual, analytical males who concocted a utilitarian Christianity that is devoid of the Lordship of Jesus and an individual's love-grounded life of obedient service in His Kingdom.

Utilitarian management has been part of Christianity for hundreds of years. That's

because efficiency under the rule of one or a few is a key aspect of **Nicolaitan domination**. Let's review Christian utilitarianism over the centuries because it really is related to imprisonment in the valley of the organized religious establishment.

◉ Centuries ago utilitarian theology made inroads into Christianity in the area of Christ's words to "*go and disciple all nations.*" This very direct command was made by Jesus first to His faithful eleven disciples. And since this "going and discipling and baptizing" was to continue to the end of the age, each of us who love and serve Jesus as Lord are also included in this command. But an extra-biblical, utilitarian understanding which was introduced centuries ago has become widely used in Christianity. For example, while Roman Catholicism entertained complacent mediocrity in its pews, the Jesuits became the official "going out" arm of the denomination. Bearing Christ's burden for the lost became a **utilitarian professional matter**. Today's concept of missions professionals has misconstrued our Lord's words, literally "*Going therefore,*" into something for which you have to depart home and family to do. As a result, throughout Christianity those within the organized religious establishment don't experience the heart burden of our Lord Jesus for the lost who are in their relational sphere.

◉ Tragically, a number of those who did go forth with the Gospel became intricately connected with the utilitarian motives of **European military and colonial expansion**. The sacred and secular were often intertwined, with the utilitarian secular overshadowing the sacred through greed and control – powerful evil forces which too often deny the human rights of indigenous people. Around the world and especially among Native Americans in this land, "Christianity" has left in its wake the shattered lives of those for whom the compassion and forgiveness of Jesus were only words on paper. Unconscionable slaughter and unscrupulous theft of land and unrelenting eradication of indigenous customs and ways became identified with government-approved Christian missions. Even now the evils of "Christian" missions are being exposed in the media for the unspeakable horror they inflicted on indigenous peoples with full support of government policy.

(See *Reality 2. Jesus Wasn't A European White Man.*)

◉ Yet another utilitarian theology emerged in the 18th through the 20th centuries: Missions existed for the improvement of society. This was called the "**Social Gospel**." Missionary activities began focusing primarily on a people group's quality of life at the expense of sharing the Gospel. Galvanized by this misguided goal, many missions became obsessed with **utilitarian quick results** – doing only those actions that brought about immediate and quantifiable accomplishments. Success was evaluated through numbers of converts, even if these were "rice Christians" — people who converted for only as long as the food and benefits came their way. In other words, these "converts" wanted a Christianity that kept them happy. And utilitarian quick results strongly appeal to logic-driven, analytical males – theologians and religious leaders alike.

◉ Picture another utilitarian efficiency of focusing on measurable tangible results. A church building could be painted and repaired or a well put in faster than authentic conversions and discipleship could be achieved and a reproducing faith community planted. Medicines could be distributed much more easily than the Gospel could be translated into the various languages which would speak to the heart of each people group. Seek-

ing donations for missionary work was far less difficult when funds could be given to achieve tangible results like a structure rather than to support those who would labor a lifetime to add souls to the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus. Aligned with measurable results that could be reported back to the home missionary society, utilitarianism in missions also required domination by the mission agency organization. That's because all too often the indigenous were considered untrustworthy or inefficient. They were perpetually supervised and never allowed to mature as a faith community on their own.

◦ One related factor of utilitarian influence in missions in the 20th century is the emphasis on the psychological/social approach regarding human suffering. Relieving suffering as "good Christians" became the centerpiece of outreach both at home and abroad. This approach works because humans are far more aware of their physical needs in the here and now than of anything eternal. **"Humanitarian Christianity"** far outpaces the spread of the authentic Gospel of humanity's desperate need to be reconciled with Father through His Son Jesus. In many circumstances workers who focus only on providing for material needs ***falsely believe that this paves the way for the Gospel even if they don't specifically speak of Jesus***. But a number of those who go abroad to relieve human suffering have within themselves a deep need of personal healing. As of several years ago 85% of single missionaries were sent home during their first term of service. It's hard for people to share living testimonies about their own trust in the Lord Jesus when they are the "walking wounded" themselves. So they're far more willing to relieve human suffering however they can for however long they do. But remember this: Our Lord commanded His own to disciple all nations and teach them to obey His commands. How many mission agencies instead believe that their good deeds alone will inspire unbelievers to join them. But join them in what?

FYI: Today's Humanitarian Christianity has influenced society at large to show charity without accountability regarding the recipient. The lazy or rebellious receive the same assistance as people whose legitimate needs came about through no fault of their own. Thus the lazy and rebellious see no need to change their ways.

◦ We've observed especially in the 20th century two **utilitarian efficiencies** which have been added by a number of mission agencies and similar ministries. First, far fewer followers of Jesus are willing to spend their lives abroad to live among a people group and evangelize and disciple them. So instead, certain ministries advertise to their supporters that they are sending out Bibles — yet all too often they send out solely the Newer Testament. Many even put on the cover, "The Holy Bible" as though that's all there is of sacred text. But it's incomplete. Without the very necessary backdrop of Older Testament truths especially regarding the utter sinfulness of humanity and the conditions for entering our heavenly Father's Covenant, the readers or audio listeners are left with a "short-changed" version of why Jesus had to become our Perfect Substitute Sacrifice — a foundational truth that's definitively explained in the Older Testament.

The Newer Testament reveals the outcome of entering our Father's Covenant through trust in the blood of Christ. But the parameters of why people need to repent as they come to God are fleshed out in the Hebrew Scriptures, as are all the prophecies and history of Israel and God's loving interaction with them. The warnings and admoni-

tion about Israel's disobedience are meant for us today so that we don't repeat their sins. In sending out only the Newer Testament, the utilitarian missions export a westernized Christianity which keeps too many recipients from rooting their trust firmly in fruit-bearing soil. We wrote to one of these mission groups who send out only the Newer Testament, and they responded by telling us how efficient and less expensive it is for them to not include the Older Testament.

- ◉ The second efficiency that was adopted by utilitarian missions is the rise of **short term missions**. Generally, a team of mostly younger people go overseas to do a physical task on behalf of a people group while also bringing forth some entertaining presentations of the Gospel. From the sending agency's viewpoint, the exposure of younger people to other cultures expands their horizon. But too often little or no consideration is given for the cultural norms of the people who received the short term missionaries. Nor were a number of the full-time missionaries completely honest with the agencies in their having to take time away from their own labors to come up with meaningful activities for the young visitors.

We've spent time with a number of short-term missionaries in their 20s and 30s whose 3 or 4 week endeavors abroad basically revealed their own shallow relationship with our Lord. Wanting to be part of an adventure with other "good Christians" seemed a far more driving motive than coming alongside the lost in the darkness of their sins to bring them into relationship with the authentic Lord Jesus. It saddened us when many of these short-term missionaries returned home feeling good about their "service" to the needy. They had pictures and something to talk about for many years afterwards – **"Been there and done that!"** But in too many we found no noticeable change in their own life goals or values or character. Statistics show that while short-term missions have grown substantially among the church in this country, the number of full-time missionaries has remained about the same or even decreased. (Perhaps an example of a "short term missionary" in the Bible is John Mark, for whom Paul initially had no respect until the younger man later matured and became a full-time worker.)

- ◉ Utilitarianism also ushered in the efficiency of the **Evangelistic Crusade**. In the Bible the evangelist was a faith community planter and repairer. He spent considerable time sharing the gospel, and as people responded he stayed on discipling them until an elder shepherd(s) could be anointed. He was later available to intervene if problems arose within a faith community, as we see with Paul in 1Corinthians 1:10,11. The utilitarian evangelistic crusade of today is more like a "spiritual drive-by," often heralding the immediate success of the number of people who "go forward" because the appeal sounds so good and doesn't require any change to their current lifestyle.

But this approach **has proved to be a gross failure in authentically bringing hearers to repentance and being born again from above**. Multiple studies have revealed that at best 10% of those who go forward remain true to Jesus. Even the most noted evangelistic crusade discovered only 4% remained Christian. How defaming this methodology is to our Lord Jesus as 90%-96% ultimately drift away from any interest in following Him and are actually inoculated against Him. When someone else talks to them about Jesus, the thought runs through their mind, **"Been there and done that."**

(b). Complacent mediocrity within the utilitarian religious establishment.

You can recognize complacent mediocrity within an organized religious establishment when the only difference in their lives compared to that of unbelievers is where they spend Sunday morning. Any other difference isn't apparent.

◉ By the late 20th century, immediate gratification – happiness — became a far more prevalent value among many Evangelicals than was Jesus as Lord and Savior. In the US the rise of the people-pleasing **Church Growth Movement** owes its origin to Peter Drucker rather than to the Lordship of Jesus or the Bible. The influence of Drucker, a well-known secular management consultant, contributed greatly to the success of business corporations as well as mega-churches. An extreme utilitarian approach by religious leaders was adopted – **treat your congregation like a business**. The clergy became CEOs. Their goal was to efficiently and effectively attract and retain "happy clientele" in the pews to pay the bills. To accomplish this goal, they succumbed to violating Scripture in order to keep the clientele coming back:

- **Preach the Bible, but don't preach Jesus as Lord.**
- **Preach the Bible, but never insist on repentance or even mention it.**
- **Provide whatever activities and programs keep them happy.**

◉ The utilitarian religious establishment stealthily entered homes by encouraging husbands and fathers to **outsource** their biblical responsibilities for their wives and children to the better trained people who were working on behalf of the establishment. But there were consequences. The husbands and fathers were happy in their role of complacent mediocrity. But the wives in particular became increasingly more independent and more open to divorce so they could pursue personal happiness without the inconvenience of a husband. And the younger people were kept happy as the religious establishment offered them a variety of secular activities. When these young people became adults, less than 23% considered themselves "Christian." (For more on outsourcing, see page 5 of *Reality 9. Don't Mistake Our Lord's Kingdom For Christianity*).

◉ Closely related to the drive for worldly success within much of the organized religious establishment is the utilitarian domination of Christianity through "Christian" TV/ media programming. Aimed at keeping a paying clientele, marketing schemes of **"blessings for donations"** became the best opiate for the complacently mediocre to date – sit at home, watch entertaining "Christian" programming, and give a donation now and then.

◉ In one way or another the utilitarian management philosophy of Peter Drucker is found in almost all organized religious establishments today. If you do attend a religious service each week, pay careful attention to Who isn't emphasized as the Lord Who rules the hearts and lives of His own. And if your leadership doesn't insist that you maintain fellowship with our Lord Jesus through repentance and ongoing love-grounded obedient trust, it's time for you to get out! No matter how much you enjoy your religious system, remaining a part of it makes you just as guilty of the sin of spiritual darkness as the utilitarian religious establishment. We encourage you to walk in the REAL LIFE THAT COUNTS FOR ETERNITY!

Life In The Bottom Of The Hour Glass

In the bottom of the hour glass you're dead to yourself, and far from any complacent mediocrity in your life. You're alive under the Lordship of Jesus as His beloved, blood-purchased brother or sister, His trusting slave/servant (*doulos*) doing your part in extending the Kingdom to your heavenly Father's glory. What's a "slave/servant"? Here's an example. When Mike worked as a Controller of a Christian college, a well-respected student took a summer job as a servant in one of the large mansions that dot the North Shore of Boston. One afternoon on his day off he stopped by Mike's office and plopped down dejectedly in a chair. When asked what was wrong, the young man said, "Did you know I took a job for the summer as a servant?" Mike nodded and asked, "So what's the problem?" "The problem," he stated glumly, "is that they treat me like a servant. **I have no will of my own!**" This must be true of you *if* you love and serve our Lord Jesus and are purposing by grace to do our Father's will.

Finally, consider these passages that describe the nature of a person our Lord Jesus would call one of His own:

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34).

"For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother" (Matthew 12:50).

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave-servant, and becoming in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

"And they overcame [Satan] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Revelation 12:11).

We've written this lengthy Prophetic Insight to share with you what the Holy Spirit has shown us concerning the imprisonment that keeps so many in efficiently managed religious bondage and hinders them from the Lordship of Jesus in their lives and the purposes of His Kingdom. It takes an emotional toll on us as we cite the demonic and sinister influences which are so prevalent within much of the organized religious establishment. But we'd much rather obey the Holy Spirit than disobey! It seems that in every generation our Father raises up "Issachars" who understand the times and what His children must do (1Chronicles 12:32). All we ask of you is to ask the Holy Spirit if what we share is from Him, and if it is meant for you.

Mike & Sue

Philippians 1:9-11; 3:10-14