Spot On #20

👉**Restoring the Hebraic understanding of God's Word.**
👉**Reemphasizing obedience-based loving trust in our Lord Jesus.**
👉**Reaffirming the way of our Lord that glorifies our heavenly Father.**

Figuratively, the center of the bullseye is the point around which everything else revolves.

God's Commands Are Not A Burden For Lives Revolving Around Jesus' Lordship!

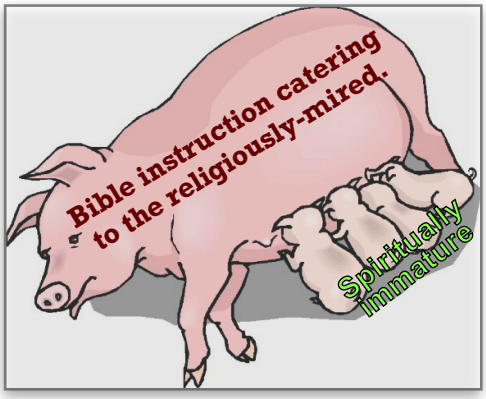
In this Spot On we want to help the **Lordship-committed** stay far away from being compromised and spiritually corrupted by the **religiously-mired** — people we hope will free themselves from the mire they've grown used to. The way of life of the Lordship-committed, their love-impelled motives and actions, revolves around obedient trust in the rule of Jesus in their lives. Being Lordship-committed is a distinctly discernible way of life to which others can attest. By contrast, the lives of the religiously-mired show no indicators of Jesus' rule, and minimal if any Christ-like transformation. Absent are the four attributes that befit belonging to Jesus as Lord!

1. **Your life revolves personally around the Headship of Lord Jesus in bringing glory to your heavenly Father through doing His will.** (John 15:5-8; Ephesians 1:15-23)
2. **You live repentantly by grace, and help others live likewise in love-produced communal righteousness within the relational connectedness of a home fellowship, ensuring that your Father hears and answers your prayers.** (Psalms 34:14,15; Ephesians 4:15,16)
3. **You diligently seek the Holy Spirit's *rhema* so that by the Spirit you are able to specifically carry out your Father's will and glorify Jesus.** (John 16:13; Romans 8:14)
4. **The aroma of Jesus is manifested in and through you, beginning with His love, forgiveness and compassion even for those who persecute you.** (Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 5:44)

Continuous suckling on the milk of God's Word isn't for the Lordship-committed!

"Milk" instruction of Bible truths may be inspirational and needful to those who are new believers being suckled on God's Word. But remaining "babies" is not what our Lord intends for His own. The writer to the Hebrews clarifies the fruitless way of life of the religiously-mired:

"In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" (Hebrews 5:12-14).



By failing to distinguish good from evil, the lives of the religiously-mired are what Christian pollster, George Barna, has reported: **There is no moral difference between Christians and unbelievers in this nation**. Barna's statistics also reveal that there's no difference in the rate of abortion among the religiously-mired and unbelievers. Just as telling, the rate of divorce among the religiously-mired is higher than the divorce rate among those who make no claim to being "Christian". Something is very wrong here!

Why do Christians remain religiously-mired?

Authentic biblical discipleship entails reproducing your loving and obedient way of life in the life of another person. But Hellenized religious leaders limit discipleship to just teaching the Bible as factual information. Few of these teachers role model God's righteous commands as their own way of life *and* firmly entreat the disciple to apply God's commands as their way of life. Barna's research discovered that most contemporary discipleship fails to instill passion for the Person and Lordship of Christ in their lives. Thus the "disciples" stay religiously-mired. **Think about this. Biblical instruction that ignores or even excludes the Holy Spirit in transforming your way of life is just plain anti-Scriptural!** Ask our Lord if belief without the inner presence and work of the Holy Spirit is acceptable to Him...

(In 1998 we wrote a newsletter, ***The Almost Christian***, shedding light on the religiously-mired who believe they can live as a "Christian" while still embracing the world's values and goals.)

Freeing yourself from the quicksand of the religiously-mired

We know from testimonies over the years that many of the religiously-mired have been convicted by what the Holy Spirit gives us to share. ***But*** they stay mired because they fear losing relationships. As we wrote in our workbook, ***Demolishing Strongholds***, most relationships within family and faith community pivot around the same prevailing demonic strongholds. But if you're free of strongholds and no one in your relational sphere wants to join you in living Lordship-committed, you need to go on without them. As our Lord Jesus directed, we who follow Him must be willing to do the same: "Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:60).

If you're seeking to flee being religiously-mired, you'll most likely have to leave behind the **"academic model"** of Bible instruction that seminary-trained teachers generally offer. An especially disastrous outcome awaits many who rely on seminary trained clergy who teach the Bible in an academic manner: they are deceived into believing they can't serve our Lord or His Kingdom until they get more Bible knowledge. And since there's no moral difference between the religiously-mired who are instructed under the **"academic model"** and unbelievers who are biblically illiterate, our Lord and His Word are blatantly defamed! This is the tragic hidden pitfall of the **"academic model"** of Bible instruction that is perpetuated by seminaries.

Adopted from pagan Hellenism, the academic model eradicates the obedience element of the biblical Hebraic model: any instruction of God's Word leads to the learner being held accountable to put it into practice. To hear is to obey because God is the ultimate Author.

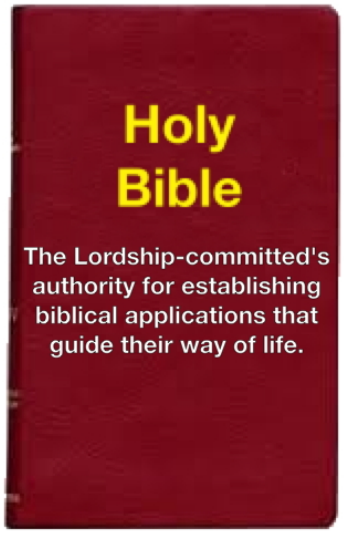
Males in particular need the Hebraic model of discipleship. Males mature in their faith journey primarily through having access to **role models** and **being confronted** when necessary. These two biblical elements help a male make God's commands a way of life — the method our Lord Jesus used with His disciples, as did Paul in discipling Timothy, Silas, and Titus. The discipling relationship that's threaded throughout the Bible is one in which the disciple becomes like his or her teacher through adopting that person's godly way of life (Luke 6:40; Philippians 3:17; 1Timothy 4:12; Titus 2:7). The academic model can never accomplish this. Instead, it keeps men as well as women religiously-mired!

How to get out of the mire without role models or confrontation.

We are very much aware that fewer and fewer mature Christians are willing to invest themselves in discipling the less mature. There are a number of reasons for the paucity of mature

role models, a topic we may address in the future. But if you want to get out of the mire but don't have access to role models *and* someone who will confront you when you're straying from our Lord's path, then you must resolutely rely on trusting the Spirit of Jesus within you. It's certainly better to have alongside you at least one follower of Jesus who seeks to be Lordship-committed. But whether alone or journeying with another, do explore God's commands with the intent of making each one that applies to you a way of life through binding (refraining from) or loosing (doing it) (Matthew 18:18-20). As you do this, over time your way of life will testify to the wisdom of the Holy Spirit and the righteousness of God's commands (2Corinthians 3:3). This is the way of life of the Lordship-committed – resolutely distinguishing good from evil!

For the Lordship-committed, God's commands are not a burden!



👍"Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:29,30).
👍"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome" (1John 5:2,3).

If "My burden is light" and "His commandments are not burdensome" strikes a positive note in your heart, you are pleasing our Lord Jesus as you show your love for God in your obedient trust. The presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit makes all the difference in the life of the Lordship-committed. They aren't fearful or ashamed to discover that an attitude or action is sinful in our Lord's sight. Rather, they deeply appreciate that they can repent and choose a way of life that reflects our Lord Jesus. They're also deeply aware that distinguishing good from evil means far more than just recognizing sin in themselves.

The Lordship-committed understand that "good" from a biblical perspective is evidenced in their suffering and love-driven sacrificial service to their Lord Jesus in doing His Father's will (see 2Timothy 2:3; Philippians 1:29; 1Peter 3:17). This "good" calls for avoiding the "evil" of becoming friends with the world's goals and values (see James 4:4; 1John 2:15-17). We noted earlier George Barna's discovery that the religiously-mired and unbelievers are morally the same. It's this worldly compromise of the religiously-mired that we who live Lordship-committed must diligently avoid, even separating from them if need be (see 2Corinthians 6:14-18). The transformational goal of God's commands is clear to any of us who live Lordship-committed and purpose to grow in our spiritual maturity:

"His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the full knowledge of Him who called us to His own glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, in order that through these you might become partakers of the divine nature, escaping the corruption that is in the world by lust.

But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly friendship, and to brotherly friendship love. For if these things are yours and abounding, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the full knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he in whom these things are not present [the religiously-mired] is being shortsighted, even to blindness, being forgetful of the cleansing from his past sins" (2Peter 1:3-9, literal).

Giving "all diligence" to spiritual development is not only an individual matter for the Lordship-committed. Diligence is also a key component in our fellowship with each other. Mutually applying His Word to your way of life is indispensable for spiritual maturity and for spiritual unity!

Three personal testimonies from our 45 years of biblical applications

💚 1978. After we left navy life we planned to buy a house while Mike would be attending seminary. (He was especially interested in learning about the divisive denominations in Christianity.) We found a home with the exact three criteria the Holy Spirit had revealed to Sue, which she wrote in her prayer journal. His brother had offered to co-sign a mortgage with us. That night we stayed at a campground near the seminary. As Mike looked into God's Word for further guidance about purchasing the house, he read, "Do not go to your relative's house when disaster strikes you—better a neighbor nearby than a relative far away" (Proverbs 27:10). We both had confirmation in our spirit that we weren't to accept his brother's offer to co-sign. The next day the Assistant Dean of Students directed us to a small local bank where we met with the president. For three hours he questioned us about our faith journey. And then without even seeing the home, he told us, "You can have the mortgage." That *rhema* from the Spirit served us well!

💚 1983. When the Board of Directors asked us to take over as administrators of a retreat center, they told us we would have to raise 40% of the income through donations. Since Mike had worked at both a Christian college and a seminary, he was familiar with how "Christian" organizations often kowtowed to the rich. We were concerned that we might violate James 2:1, "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism" (see vv. 2:1-4). Fearing we might cross this line and sin if we benefitted from the donations, we asked the Board to pay us nothing. Now, nearly 40 years later, we've never taken a salary and have never lacked anything. We are so blessed by our heavenly Provider!

💚 1986. While we were serving at the retreat center, the Holy Spirit revealed that we were to home school our son. The climate against homeschoolers back then was extremely antagonistic. (One father from another state had been jailed for home schooling his children.) We told the Board of Directors that we'd leave the retreat center if home schooling our son created negative press for the center. Most of the homeschoolers in our area hid out from school boards, but we searched God's Word for spiritual guidance in educating our son. We found that being personally responsible for training our son was well-supported in God's Word. Mike was also encouraged by our Lord's words, "For whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40). So we met with the Superintendent of our local school system, armed with our biblical basis and our Constitutional rights to teach our child. Not only did he back us with the school board for the next five years. When our son completed our state's high school requirements, our school board defied the State School Board's order against cooperating with homeschoolers and gave our son a high school diploma from a high school he never attended.

(For help in biblical applications, read ***Christian Halakhahs – Loving Jesus Through The Way You Apply His Word***).

Over the years we've established numerous biblical applications that have guided our way of life and character. If you're Lordship-committed, seek the Holy Spirit yourself for guidance and confirmation in applying God's Word to your own life. With obedience to His Word comes His blessing, just as it was for Israel (see Deuteronomy 28). And each application is another step to spiritual maturity. Hold tightly to being Lordship-committed by His Spirit, and never let the religiously-mired entice you into their muck. Keep pressing on in the grace which our Lord Jesus gives to those who are fully committed to Him in loving and obedient trust. It may not be a life of worldly pleasure, but in the end you'll find that it's worth everything!

Mike & Sue