

7
Great Lies of American Christianity

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CURT JOHNSON

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Introduction:

Who is this communication for?

As of this writing, I am 67 years old. I don't think it would be an exaggeration to say I've listened to thousands of sermons and read hundreds of books over the decades.

Many of those communications were not as productive or effective as they could have been simply because it wasn't clear at all WHO the communication was directed towards!

So, I wanted to be clear who this book is written for...

This book is primarily for the thousands of young men and women impacted by the life and ministry of Charlie Kirk.

When Charlie was assassinated and became a martyr, I know I wasn't the only one who thought of the verse . . . Matthew 12:24

"Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds."

So, this is for the young men and women with a desire to build the Kingdom of God in America and impact our society and culture as Charlie so successfully did.

My hope is that exposing these 7 lies woven into the fabric of the American Church experience will save many of you from following methods and personalities that will NOT lead you to where you want to go: Authentic Christianity that Impacts a Culture.

And worse, if you succumb to these lies, the current Churchianity establishment will intentionally or unintentionally use your youth, energy, zeal, and passion to build Man's Kingdom instead of God's.

My desire is to see you create and thrive far beyond what the last 2 or 3 generations of Church leaders in America were able to.

My prayer for young men and women called to radically serve the Lord in the days ahead is this: You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free from much of the ineffective and impotent structure of American Churchianity.

Curt Johnson

PS: We desperately need a fresh, purer, more powerful expression of Christianity in America right now. (If you don't see that or agree, this book is NOT for you.) It is up to this new young generation of men and women impacted by Charlie Kirk and others like him, to

let the Good Shepherd lead them into the formation of the powerful Bride of Christ He intends in these last days.

To our older generations. This book is not intended for you, nor intended to be a rebuke or correction. We mostly failed and came up short in America in our attempts to create the Kingdom of God that would impact our nation.

If you can't see or admit that I don't know what to tell you.

It is obvious.

I'm not condemning anyone on what was or wasn't accomplished but giving a straightforward analysis on why overall and collectively we failed our society.

There are reasons we failed. This book reveals 7 of them. I am sure there are more.

Let's give this new generation a "clean slate" start in hopes they can do far better than we did in these final days of human history!

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Dear Friend,

If you feel like you're struggling too hard to grow in your impact of the world with the Gospel, and not much is happening, I wrote this book specifically for you.

Have you ever thought to yourself: There's gotta be a better way to do Church, faith, ministry. Something's missing?

If you are just starting out on your journey and the struggle has not begun yet, then this is even better timing for you to consider, recognize, and avoid these 7 Great Lies of American Christianity (7Gs) and build the Lord's Kingdom closer to what He desires for you and our nation.

After almost 30 years of learning from the current American Church system and seeking out mentors to discover more biblical approaches to "Church" . . . I came to a point in my pursuits where I knew that purer expressions of Christianity in America were rare.

Let's be grateful for the few exceptions that have discovered some of the ingredients and Biblical blueprints Jesus intended for His people.

Overall, the American Church has failed to impact our society and culture – we've been losing that battle for decades. Many good men and women across all denominations and streams in the body of Christ were/are trapped in a flawed and often corrupt system that is mostly the invention of men, not the design the Bible put forth to His Bride to advance His Kingdom.

The worst part about it was, I could not – for the life of me – figure out why this wasn't working! I was doing everything I had been told to do. Pray More. Fast More. Study More. In fact, I did way more than that. I travelled the country and sought out mentors in hopes of discovering the keys to a better way.

Along the way I met and was influenced by many awesome men and women of God like John Wimber*, but still the expression of American Christianity never felt "right" or "complete" to me.

So even though I was looking for real answers without a lot of success, I did figure out some of what was wrong or missing.

This book is not claiming to have the answers. To use an analogy, this is a diagnosis without a clear remedy or solution.

The implementation of true Christian living in America will come from the next generation. I hope this diagnosis will assist in the noble effort.

The American Church can be compared to an airplane that just putts around the tarmac. It looks like an airplane and has some of the components of an airplane but never takes off. Airplanes should be designed and built to fly, not strut around the runways.

I DO NOT CLAIM to have the answers, but what I do confidently submit to you is that the 7G's are discoveries as to why, in part, the Body of Christ HAS NOT, and DOES NOT impact of our society in the way the Lord intended.

Almost Everything You've Ever Been Taught About Building A Church or Ministry Is Wrong!

In American Christianity we have a genuine case of the blind leading the blind when it comes to the implementation of Biblical Church life.

As a result, the vast majority of well-intentioned people who want to start a Church, fellowship or ministry follow traditional ways and/or the inventions of men instead of a true Biblical revelation.

This has severe side effects. There's a horrible mess of pride, division, hype, hot air, misconceptions, falsehoods, delusions, distortions, myths and downright lies that get passed along from one generation to the next. This has created an American Church influenced by a secular society, instead of the other way around.

You see, the common methods taught in ministry may lead to individuals getting saved, and believers having some community, but rarely do they have any impact on the society in which we live.

In fact, the current models can lead to destructiveness as well – as we have seen in recent years many leaders and ministries bring shame to the Gospel.

A caution . . . as your eyes are opened and you consider the 7G's, don't "throw the baby out with the bath water." Continue to enjoy your community. Love your Pastor and the elders among you. Respect them and their work.

But . . . don't assume they have all, or the right answers, or that their work is being built on pure or solid Biblical revelation. I hope their motives are pure, but I also hope you can discover a more scripturally enlightened way.

Remain humble and teachable and glean what you can . . . but passionately pursue the Spirit of Wisdom & Revelation on your journey.

Enjoy,

Lie #1: The Church is a building and a Pastor.

When talking with people about Church, the main 2 topics that come up in casual conversations in American culture are almost always the building (or location of the Church) and the Pastor (or Senior Pastor in larger congregations.)

Have you ever considered that neither of these are mentioned much or emphasized in the New Testament (NT) . . . at all?

It is not wrong to go to a building, and/or for a Pastor to do most of his shepherding there, but just notice that you won't find that formula as crucial or significant in New Testament (NT) writings.

Yes, the NT believers met often publicly and from house to house (Acts 20:20.)

Specifically though, weekly Church attendance is not Biblically emphasized as a key to Kingdom of God building – yet our culture has made it THE MAIN EVENT.

Let's take a fresh look at these 2 priorities of the American expression of "Church."

A. The Pastor.

"Pastor" is mentioned a few times in the NT. Including in the Book of Ephesians' description of the 5 offices of the New Covenant Faith. Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor, Teacher.

Ephesians 4:11-13 "So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the Pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."

Many assume the much more common term in the NT of "elder" is the same as Pastor, which is simply not the case. An elder could have the office gift of "Pastor" – but that is not to be assumed.

Elders were those seasoned believers in a city that were appointed to watch over the Church and build the Kingdom of God in their geographic area. They could have held any of the office gifts . . . or not.

Elders were also overseers in a geographical area, not separated by denominations.

In each city Galatia, Thessalonica, Rome, Philippi, etc. a group of elders oversaw the Church. Our independent denominational congregational meetings in separate buildings is not the Biblical model. So, the difficulty for even sincere Church leaders, is to attempt to apply Biblical revelation to the current American Church structures.

I was privileged to have been taught by Francis Frangipane* in this revelation of the “City Wide Church.” In the 1990’s we brought Francis over from Cedar Rapids, IA to my hometown of Rockford, IL with the help of the association of Pastors I was a part of, and he spoke at the facility that Don Lyon founded, Faith Center of Rockford, IL.

This resulted in real death threats against Francis’ life if he spoke that evening. We met with the police detectives in Don’s office to determine if we should hold our service that night.

We did.

True Biblical expression of the Bride of Christ, such as believers uniting in a city, threatens the kingdom of darkness. Like Charlie Kirk, true expressions of NT Christianity threatens the kingdom of darkness. Our current denominational Pastor/building man-invented system does not.

Unfortunately, the Church structure today with the “Pastor,” looks and models the corporate organization chart, or the military chain-of-command structure.

We’ve taken our cultural values and practices and brought them into the Church, instead of the Church impacting our culture!

As we study the NT, we find that the Body of Christ was led and cared for by a group of elders in plurality, and that the preaching and teaching was done primarily by the Apostles, Prophets, and Teachers.

Each of the office gifts were given to bring the saints to maturity, which explains why most American Christians are so immature! Most believers only get equipped by one office gift. (These office gifts are often termed “5 Fold Ministry.” See Appendix B on page 40 for more information.)

Since our American culture primarily only pays Pastors, many “Pastors” that have adopted our American model may be Pastors, or may have one of the other office gifts.

I was one of them for a number of years. Having felt “called” into full time ministry, I quit my job and went into Bible College. After that I became a Pastor on a large staff was ordained a couple of years later. I was just following the traditional path of ministry.

Looking back, it is clear to me now that my journey was a mix of the Holy Spirit trying to lead me and the traditions of men all mixed together.

As the years and decades went by, it was clear the office I was called into was that of the Prophet. So, for years, I attempted to “Pastor.” Truth told, I wasn’t a very good Pastor. My care and concern for the sheep was not my priority. Revealing truth and fighting evil were.

Paying a man or woman* to perform Church leadership or Pastoral duties isn’t wrong, it is just not following the Biblical revelation of Church leadership. (*Women in ministry is not a topic for this book. Suffice it for now that I endorse Women in ministry.)

Together, in a geographical area, the elders and those with an “office” gift, in mutual accountability and function, shepherded and equipped the saints. This is far different than how most Churches operate now in the corporate organization chart or military chain-of-command design.

Perhaps the more damaging dynamic to the erosion of understanding how the Bride of Christ should look and operate regarding the “Pastor” is the use of that title as a name, calling someone “Pastor.”

Consider this scripture:

Matthew 23: 5-12

“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called ‘Rabbi’ by others.

“But you are not to be called ‘Rabbi,’ for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth ‘father,’ for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one Instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

It is easy to judge the Catholic denomination for using the term “Father” in their culture as that title is directly mentioned in these verses, but that misses the broader spirit of intent of this scripture.

We in Protestant circles call our spiritual leaders “Pastor” – which violates the broader application of this scripture. Was Jesus supposed to name every title that could be used here in laying out this directive?

Why did Jesus instruct us not call our brother or sister with these spiritual titles?

The Holy Spirit knew that calling any person by a spiritual title would undermine the saints fully grasping the perspective that we ARE ALL MINISTERS of the Gospel. “. . . *you are all brothers.*”

I think it was in 1990 when we as Vineyard Pastors were in Denver, Colorado in a large seminar with John Wimber. I remember he addressed this to the hundreds of “Pastors” there. Some were asking how they should address him. What should they call him? He simply and humbly said: “My name is John.”

I liked that.

A lot.

Calling someone “Pastor,” or any title, within the Body of Christ, intentionally or not, creates a perception in the flock that there is a 2-Tier system in Christianity. This practice insinuates that there are some people at a more ordained or higher level to do God’s work.

Footnote: (And of course there are some leaders that actually believe and propagate this misperception of a 2-Tier system – which is tragic and sad, but I am not trying to bring correction to anyone, just laying out a logical appeal from scripture in hopes the new generation will avoid this practice as they form what I

believe will be the most glorious expression of Christianity in history When Jesus returns.)

When you call your “Pastor” by that title, ask yourself if you are violating the intent and spirit of that scriptural exhortation?

If so, and that title use is strong in your fellowship culture, I would suggest you simply go to your Pastor and ask if you can call him by his just his name, and drop the title usage.

If the cultural practice is so strong that it would create conflict or confusion in the fellowship of believers or be perceived as disrespect, it may not mean you need to leave your fellowship, but simply humbly honor their request if the Holy Spirit allows you to.

But please remember who I am writing this book. The more important application of this truth would be If YOU start a ministry, Church, or fellowship – you would do well to not call your brothers or sisters by their titles in your culture and community . . . and be closer to the scriptural revelation of the design of the Body of Christ.

B. The Building.

We call our building the “Church.” Seems innocent enough when we know that we as the believers make up the true “Church.”

The concern is misuses of Biblical terms, little by little, create the mentality and paradigms of American Church life that contributes to such lack of power to impact the American culture.

Consider this silly metaphor . . . Say I had a friend that wanted to get physically fit and healthy. He decides to start going to the “gym.” Of course I am happy for him, and that is a good choice. He is going where there is the equipment, knowledge, others on the same quest to be healthier and stronger.

My friend goes for a few weeks, but there is little change in his health.

I ask him about this “gym.” He tells me there is a nice sign on the door “First Central Gym.” Inside there are rows of tables and seats where they get to pick from a

selection of donuts and muffins, drink coffee or soda, while listening to the head trainer talk about exercise and watch videos of people working out and athletes performing.

He has been attending for an hour every other day but not seeing any results.

Of course, the “gym” he is going to is not a gym at all – regardless of the sign on the door.

It is not wrong to eat a donut or watch a video, but that is not what a true gym is.

Regardless of most signs on buildings, they are not the Church.

So, when the discussion of Church is brought up in our culture, the two main topics of the Pastor and the building have little to do with the Biblical revelation and expression of Christianity.

When the Lie #1 is propagated, mostly innocently, this detracts from the truth of who the Bride of Christ actually is, and how powerful She should be.

We don't go to Church.

We are the Church.

I hope your Church has a wonderful shepherd there that doesn't care to be called Pastor. More importantly though, like when David threw off Saul's armor to take on Goliath in a very unconventional way, I hope you approach the pioneering you do in the Kingdom with David's spirit.

Lie #2: Weekly Church attendance is crucial for a Christian.

It is a major deception when American Christians think attending a Church service once a week is what makes them a good and faithful believer and follower of Jesus Christ.

Yet, many Christians have that false sense of assurance and confidence.

Can a weekly Church service be of value to a believer and community?

Of Course.

But when a message is communicated that weekly attendance to a Church service alone will be the main event and factor for a believer to become part of the powerhouse Bride of Christ needed in the final days, then this LIE becomes potent to neuter and thwart impactful ministry and discipleship.

This Lie is so powerful and contributes significantly to the weakness the American Church has struggled with to impact our nation.

The true “Church” is a living organism.

Weekly Church attendance can be very healthy, like eating your vegetables is healthy for your body.

But with this analogy, it can also be a destructive influence if one believes eating a few vegetables once a week is all the food you need in your diet each week.

In referring back to the “gym” example . . . even if someone is sitting in a pew every Sunday, doesn’t mean they are actually or meaningfully engaged in the life flow of the Body of Christ. Worse yet, they may even be eating the donuts of cheap grace, not even vegetables.

Thankfully there are directives and clues in the NT to Church life.

Here is a glimpse into participation of what NT life was like for the believers in the first generation of Church life:

Acts 2:42-47 “They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

Many years ago, one of the most impactful seasons we implemented as a small group of about a dozen men is that we committed to connect and pray with at least one brother every day for 90 days, including our usual gatherings home gatherings and weekly service. This was so powerful and fruitful, I am not sure why we didn't do it more.

Should weekly Church attendance really take spot #1 as a barometer for spiritual health or maturity?

In most cultures of Christianity, your weekly attendance to a "Church" service may be applauded or appreciated, but you will rarely be asked how the home life is.

The family home should be the foundation of the disciple's life.

Does the family pray together?

The foundation of the family is the marriage.

Do the husband and wife prayer together?

So, Church attendance, as most American Christians think of Church, has created this Lie #2.

The intent of exposing this Lie, is to encourage you to design YOUR ministry around the clearer foundational principles of fellowship, which may or may not include a weekly larger gathering.

Go discover more . . . and deeper.

What we have now, an emphasis on going to a building once a week, isn't the answer. It certainly can play a role, but only one aspect in the disciplines of the disciple.

The scriptures admonish us to meet publicly AND in homes. NT saints did it DAILY!

Acts 20:20 "You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house."

HE assures us HE is there with us whether it is a large gathering, or just 2 or 3.

Matthew 18:20 "For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

This book isn't intended to reveal the design of fellowship we need in our American Church in these days, but simply to point out a few things to show how far off the American expression of Christian fellowship has wandered from Biblical revelation.

Lie #3: A Christian need a spiritual “covering.”

This Lie #3 is an extension of some of the previous material revealing the chain-of-command mentality found in the man-made Church world in America.

It is somewhat surprising that most protestants understand that there is NO man (or woman) that should be placed in our minds or hearts between us and our Lord.

The Catholic structure of a “Pope” is damaging to the paradigm of followers of Jesus direct relationship with the Lord. We have direct access to the throne of God that no human can, or should, thwart or stand between us and our Lord.

Yet . . .

Particularly in the broader Evangelical world, we find many and various teachings promoting that obedience to the “Pastor” is akin to obedience to God.

It is wise to listen to your Pastor, but not as a dictator or “boss” of your life.

Pastors and leaders primarily should equip the saints to hear and be obedient to the Lord. When advice or counsel goes beyond that into obeying a human’s command, that is dangerous.

Or to put another way, to obey any one Church leader and automatically assume you are obeying God, is not a scriptural principle.

As a teenager back in the 1970’s I was introduced to Bill Gothard’s teachings. He had a great deal of wisdom in his “Basic Youth Conflicts” seminars. Sadly though on the topic of spiritual authority, along with other teachers on this topic, they did much harm to the Body of Christ. Intentionally or not these teachings too often brought carnal control and abuse.

It was proclaimed: “The believer MUST obey his Pastor!”

Hmmmmmm.....

The paradigm of a soldier obeying his officer, or an employee obeying his boss – both normal and acceptable in those realms, was unfortunately brought into the Church world.

Obviously, those Pastors with control issues were the worst offenders of the abuse of power due to the militaristic chain-of-command unbiblical design.

Many did not realize the whole concept was man-made, not the scriptural revelation of how we should function with each other in Body of Christ.

As an example, in my early years after leaving the Air Force, my first Christian community was headed by a wonderful man in whom I learned much from. But in the area of spiritual authority, it had cultish overtones.

As an example, while Pastoring young single adults, he approved or disapproved any relationships between men and women that was more than platonic. He decided if they should get married . . . even if both sets of parents approved!

Of course, those that went against his “godly counsel” were unofficially labeled as rebellious, disobedient to God, and they usually left the community.

One of the Biblical verses used often to reinforce this unbiblical “control” was, and is . . .

Hebrews 13:17 *“Have confidence in **your leaders** and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”*

You will notice in this verse this is plural – a group of leaders, not an individual – “leaders.”

Any authority in your life should not come from 1 person alone, but “leaders” – not the chain of command Roman military model.

Truth be told . . . A Christian can benefit from a spiritual “covering” – BUT the man or woman who is part of our life as a mentor, Pastor, or spiritual authority, is NOT a covering between the believer and the LORD . . .

. . . but a covering between the believer and the DEVIL.

“ . . . they keep watch over you . . . “

The Shepherd protects the sheep, not from God, **but from wolves.**

Your decisions in life should be guided first by your pursuit of Biblical revelation as you learn to listen directly to HIS voice in your walk.

John 10:4 *“ . . . his sheep follow him because they know his voice.”*

As you seek the Lord to hear HIS voice, then listen and learn from godly counselors. Stay humble and submitted to the group of believers you most closely are walking out your faith with. Seek out those with in the office gifts, more experience, and leadership in your community.

A Church system designed by men, coupled with the cultural paradigms of submission and chain-of-command, can greatly thwart many young believers to fulfill their spiritual callings and destiny in the way the Lord wants for them.

Don't let that happen to YOU!

Appreciate Godly counsel and respect the multitude of counselors, but NEVER submit yourself to just one human individual. That place in your life belongs solely to the Lord Jesus.

Lie #4: The Lord blesses those that tithe to their Church.

To teach tithing as a principle to guide the believer's life in the arena of finances and giving is understandable and welcomed as a foundation for a blessed life. Unfortunately, the vast majority of Pastors do not teach or implement it in that spirit.

Most teachings from the pulpit for Church going people comes across clearly in so many words . . . "If you aren't giving 10% of your income to this Church, God will not bless you."

Although the principle of tithing did exist in the Bible before the Old Testament Laws were given, and Jesus did endorse the spirit of the law, most Church leaders teach tithing in the context and spirit of the Old Covenant Law . . .

One of the principles and sermons I preached in the work that I fathered many years ago was: "The Curse of the Law of Tithing."

I don't think most Pastors preach a "law" of tithing in a malicious way but have simply followed the example of those before them, or what they were taught.

But, if you are going to follow even ONE Law of the Old Covenant, in the spirit of the Old Covenant, then of course, you have lost your way . . .

Jesus fulfilled the Old Covenant Law and brought a New Covenant where blessings are a part of the free gift of salvation and the joy and privilege of walking in obedience with the Lord.

The same should be proclaimed in the area of giving. Holy Spirit led obedience in your tithing and giving is part of being financially blessed and free.

In the book of Galatians, Paul deals with the bigger picture here . . . Do we walk in freedom learning to be led by the Holy Spirit, or do we resort to a rule that must be obeyed?

Some believers were still trusting in the Old Covenant laws and principles. Paul let them know they were cursed by doing this!

One of the laws was circumcision, BUT this reality of being cursed can apply to ANY Old Covenant Law, including tithing. If you trust in it, you are harming yourself, not walking into blessing.

Galatians 3:10 *"For all who rely on the works of the law are under a curse, as it is written: 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.'"*

If you are trusting in the act of giving 10% of your income to your Church so that you can be blessed, you walked right into the trap of legalism, and the curse it can bring.

Just to be clear, a spirit-led believer will look back over time whether that be a month, year or decade, and should see that they MORE than fulfilled what the Old Covenant required in their giving simply by hearing and obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit in their tithes and offerings.

The point . . . over time, if you are NOT giving at least 10% of your income sowing into the Kingdom of God, you simply haven't cultivated an understanding of faith and obedience in the arena of finances in your Christian life yet.

BUT, when leaders present tithing as a LAW, and sincere Christians understand the message as they MUST tithe to avoid God's punishment or wrath – that is NOT in the spirit and intent Jesus had for His New Covenant people.

It actually brings a curse instead!

Paul gets very pointed to the Church in Galatia with those that want to find solace in obeying Old Covenant Laws. He was addressing primarily circumcision, but it applies to any Old Covenant Law or practice.

This LIE of obedience to the Old Covenant Law of tithing (which is antithesis to the Spirit led cheerful giver of the New Covenant) is most often yoked with the emphasis that the tithing MUST go to the Church you are attending.

Again, with my understanding of the Kingdom of God, a sincere Spirit led believer will find that they will give much to the local body in which they operate and receive from.

Makes sense...

BUT to coerce, demand, manipulate through the spirit of the OLD Covenant that all those attending a local Church will tithe to that place if they want the favor of God and to be financially blessed is simply OLD COVENANT LAW.

Why is this done then?

Most Pastors struggle with trusting God for the finances of their work, and trusting that the Lord's people will be generous in their giving into the work that they are participating in.

In the Israel Old Covenant experience much more than 10% was actually what they gave over time. More like 16% of their production, not 10%.

So, If you really wanted to go back to Old Covenant Law to teach tithing, the true % should be closer to 16% as that is what the Israelites gave over the course of years, feasts, etc.

As a reminder, this book is written for young people moving into ministry. If you are being led to start a Church or fellowship, don't fall into the trick and trap of practicing and propagating this lie.

Trust God for His provision for your work and trust the Holy Spirit in His leading His people to give into the works of the Kingdom that they are a part of. (Please note – “His” – not “yours.” That is where many shepherds' minds get clouded thinking somehow the sheep are his, not HIS.)

Tithing is a principle to be understood, seeking the Holy Spirit to guide you in your giving, not a law to be obeyed.

When you build your work, strongly resist the temptation of preaching tithing in the spirit of the Old Covenant Laws.

Teach your fellowship to be cheerful givers following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Lie #5: Your Church service is Biblical.

As I am writing this, I realize that many young people may never have seen the iconic movie “Wizard of Oz.” I would encourage you to watch it. Even though there is a “wizard” – it is not demonic – LOL.

In case you haven’t seen it, in this movie the main character, Dorothy, has a long dream in which she finds herself in a fantasy kingdom, the land of OZ, and is trying to get back to Kansas. (As a side note, if you have ever heard the expression “You’re not in Kansas anymore.” If you wondered what that meant – it came from this movie. Anyway . . .)

The climax of the movie is when Dorothy and her companions end up at the “wizard’s” castle and chambers in the city of OZ. The wizard supposedly has incredible powers in which Dorothy is placing her hopes to get back to Kansas.

Dorothy, her dog and companions enter this huge room with lights / smoke / noise, etc. Only to find out it was a “show.” The real wizard was simply a pathetic old guy, but with good intentions, pulling the strings of the show, all while hiding behind a curtain. It was impressive, but all fake.

Her dog, Toto, is actually the one that pulls back the curtain to reveal the charade – LOL. Often animals have more discernment than people! (FYI - another common idiom that comes from this movie. “Pull back the curtain.”)

This scene describes most Church services in America over the last hundred years. A lot of theatrics, smoke & mirrors – but no real power. The Pastor hides behind distorted or weakened doctrines, either in denial or justifying their lack of power and impact on people and society.

Most Churches have become a house of entertainment or preaching, but not a house of prayer led by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I truly hope if you attend Church services, it has helped you. My encouragement is to discover the many directives and clues in the New Testament as to how our gatherings could be so much more impactful.

One of the clearest revelations of a gathering of believers we can find in the NT is in I Corinthians chapter 14. I encourage you to leave all your preconceived ideas and experiences behind, and pretend you are there in Corinth, looking and listening to a “service” as the New Covenant believers living out their faith in Corinth were being instructed by the Apostle Paul as to what should happen in a Church service, and how it should flow.

Here is the peak we get . . .

I Corin 14: 26-33 “What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the Church may be built up. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the Church and speak to himself and to God.

Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.”

Does this describe any service you have ever been to?

Probably not.

Let me underscore just a few of the stark differences between what the Bible reveals a service looks like, in contrast to the American Church Model.

#1. Every attendee was expected to come with something to give or participate with. Not just be a spectator.

#2. The gifts of the Holy Spirit were flowing through many individuals, so much so, that this may have been the main reason Paul wrote to them about this, to bring better order and effectiveness.

#3. The Pastor wasn’t preaching. *Let that sink in.*

#4. A group of leaders were in charge, not 1 person.

What appeared normal is that recognized gifted people such as prophets would bring the fresh word from the Lord, and it wasn’t just ONE main dude. *Let that sink in.* To such an extent, that if a prophet got a revelation while another was speaking, they would interrupt and go with that.

Please know, I am NOT saying your Pastor shouldn’t be preaching the word in your weekly service, BUT can you see how that is not the Biblical pattern we find in the New Testament?

Let me digress because I don’t want you as a young pioneer to disregard these observations I am making just because they seem so unfamiliar.

Automobiles, digital clocks, and thousands of other things aren't mentioned in the New Testament writings. That doesn't mean we shouldn't use them, or they are bad for some reason.

Many of our traditions are not bad either but are often useful. I am just making the point that they are not a Biblical mandate or pattern.

Like myself many years ago, many well-meaning "Pastors" were forced into a "Pastoral" role and title because that is what was modeled. It was, and is, the most common and accepted way to make a living in full-time ministry.

Many "Pastors" are actually prophets, teachers, apostles, or evangelists. It is our American Church culture and traditions that have limited the expression of Church life, or a Church service like we see in I Corinthians 14.

So, this Lie **Your Church service is Biblical** – doesn't mean the service you observed or attended is wrong or bad. It is just short of how the Holy Spirit intended believers to interact when they gather together.

When YOU start, or help start, the next work God puts on your heart, throw off the traditions of men that you have learned, and pour into the New Testament and let the Holy Spirit give you His leading and creativity to design a house of prayer that would please HIM.

Footnote: The reality is that some scripture needs to be interpreted in light of the culture at that time and applying those scriptures to present day cultures. This is needed at times, but also becomes vulnerable ground to lose the pure and complete revelation of the Bible. In this portion of scripture, I encourage you not to "throw the baby out with the bath water."

Paul address women in Church settings. In light of full NT revelation and cultural considerations, I do believe women can speak in church services.

But, I see no cultural relevancy argument to look at the rest of this passage in that same way. These gifts were new to the Jewish believers in Corinth; thus no established cultural relevancy would apply. Also, there is no scripture in the NT bringing any contradictory position of the dynamics Paul addresses in this passage.

Lie #6 – Jesus is coming back to rapture His Church . . . before the end.

It is a fair question as to why to include this Lie in the 7G's. Truly, I have no interest in debates over eschatology.

The point of this book is to expose those mindsets, paradigms, and traditions of men that have led to an overall weak and powerless Bride to impact the American Culture over the last few decades.

The intent of exposing this Lie #6, is to examine the potential damage it holds for the Bride of Christ to be vibrant and victorious in these last days, not to convince someone for or against the theology of a Pre-Tribulation Rapture. (The Bible reveals that there will be a last 7 year period of human history called the "Great Tribulation.")

The reason this Lie is so damaging, it creates the mindset in the disciple that they will not go through these tribulations and suffer. That mindset is dangerous and weakens the Church in America.

If we are going to be "rescued" before it gets REALLY BAD, then why train so hard?

If you were asked to prepare for a running race, naturally you would want to know what the distance is. If you thought you were preparing for a 10K and it ended up being a marathon, you would be in trouble. If you prepare for a marathon, and it ends up being a 10K, you will be OK. You will finish the race.

Dear young man or woman of God . . . You will suffer if you intend to build the true Kingdom.

But, you will not incur God's wrath poured out on Earth in these last days.

The overall revelation on the topic of a believer suffering in the Bible is that God is with His people through the suffering. Even times of God's wrath such as the Exodus story he was with them. Israel suffered in Egypt but were not the victim of God's wrath. God was with his people to protect them and lead them through those tribulations.

Most Christians do not know that the concept of a Pre-Tribulation rapture is not found in the Bible.

In the Church through the millenniums, up to the 18th Century, there was very little thought on this theory. It hadn't been formalized and propagated by a man yet.

John Darby did this in the late 1800's and included it in his version of the Bible, The Scofield Bible. Unfortunately, many mistook the Pre-Trib rapture teaching as Biblical, even though the theory was only in the footnotes.

This fact alone is that through most of Church history the Church didn't even think of such an idea as a Pre-Trib rapture should cause a truth seeker to dig in deeper.

For those of Charismatic, Pentecostal, or Full-Gospel orientation, please note this is the same John Darby that is credited with the spread of dispensationalism - believing the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not for today.

Like the pre-tribulation rapture theory, neither of these "doctrines" had any significant place in the true Church for most of Christian history.

If you are a staunch believer in the Pre-Tribulation rapture, it is not a doctrine we should quibble over. Believing it, or not, will not impact you going to heaven! That is not the intent of this writing.

It is really the zealotry of many that propagate this view that I needed to include in the 7Gs. The mindset a Pre-Trib Rapture creates is not one of a Powerful Church, but one ready to escape trouble when the world needs the Church the most.

Here are just some straight Biblical facts at least to consider:

1. The Bible clearly teaches that Jesus will return on the "Last Day."
Note: 1 Day. There is no reference to an earlier day, or "rapture."
2. The comparison of Noah's day to the End Times as described in Matthew 24. Those who embrace and teach Pre-Trib quote this verse:

"Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come."

Who is "taken" is completely out of context with Pre-Trib theory. It is the unrighteous that are taken – not the saints!

"For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away."

"Them" is the unbeliever!

3. The Parable of the Weeds Jesus teaches us that it is the wicked that will be removed. Matthew 13: 37-43 *"He answered, 'The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man.' ³⁸ The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sows them is the devil. **The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. 'As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the***

age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Whoever has ears, let them hear."

4. A reading of Luke 21: 7-19 makes it clear that Jesus was preparing His disciples to go through this last period of human history. There is no hint that they will be rescued from it.

If you looked at scripture as Christians did from 300 AD to 1800's AD – you understood there was 1 last day. There was no speculation on another day we call a Pre-Trib rapture.

Certainly, there will be a "rapture" on the last day. It will be like the Day of Noah's flood. We as believers will be caught up in air (as Noah and his ark was lifted above the earth in the flood waters). The world and its evil will be destroyed, and we will come back to earth with King Jesus. All on the ONE last day. This scenario is congruent with the verses in Matthew 13 & 24 above.

The Bride of Christ must be ready.

Consider the Pre-Tribulation Rapture view of Jesus taking us away before the last few years of human history . . . does that create the attitude and preparedness of a Warrior?

As a young Kingdom of God builder, consider this point of view, and at a minimum, avoid promoting the Pre-Tribulation rapture emphasis of the culture you build.

Do you want to build and to be part of a tribe of Warriors ready for anything, including suffering and persecution for the Glory of God . . . or part of a tribe looking to escape?

Lie #7: The Ultimate objective for a Christian is “Jesus”

A personal and passionate relationship with Jesus is central to Christianity! It is the very essence of our Faith. The more we can preach the God News and have sinners surrender their lives to our Saviour, the more glorious that would be!

But, if it leaves out or neglects the reality of a Triune God and how a follower of Jesus should also develop a relationship with the Holy Spirit and Father God, it falls short.

Let's consider the relationship that Jesus intended for us to have with the other 2 Persons of the Trinity . . . one at a time:

A. The Holy Spirit:

Jesus and The Word of God make it crystal clear that His design and plan for His Church is that all would be baptized in the Holy Spirit.

John the Baptist in Mark 1:8 *“I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”*

Luke 24:49 *“I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.”*

The saints waited, and the story picks up in Acts where born-again believers were then introduced to the Baptism of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2, 8, 10, etc) Please note, believers receive the Holy Spirit when they are born again, but scriptures shows us that it is just the beginning of your Walk in the Spirit.

Unfortunately, much of the American confessing Church ignores this critical dynamic of a disciple's necessity to be in this relationship with the Holy Spirit, or worse denies it is meant for all Christians throughout time.

The Holy Spirit came like a “mighty rushing wind” in the 1970's through the main line denominations in what became known as the “Charismatic movement.” I was a part of that wonderful season having grown up Lutheran. I became a Christian at a Lutheran Confirmation camp as an 8th grader. Later that year, I experienced the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in that same Lutheran Church.

Many mainline Churches rejected this move of God. As that movement slowed many mainline Church attending believers found other denominations or streams

that embrace the truth of the Holy Spirit's role and relationship in the life of Disciple of Jesus.

It wasn't too long after that many Pentecostal or Full Gospel streams and denominations tragically drifted away from this emphasis of the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in the Believer's life and journey.

Your Saviour, Jesus, wants you to be baptized in the Holy Spirit, receive the gifts He has for you, so you can walk more intimately with the Lord and with more power.

This book exposing the 7G's isn't intended to be a doctrinal study. I'm not going to expand on the Gifts of the Holy Spirit and all the various ways different streams implement that into their Church life.

The Baptism of the Holy Spirit was the plan of the Father and is executed by Jesus so we could walk in greater closeness with the Triune God.

Suffice it to say, the gifts of the Holy Spirit are for today and enable us to enjoy our relationship with Jesus and the Holy Spirit more. On this point I simply leave you with Paul's exhortation that we all speak in tongues.

I Corinthians 14:5 *"I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy."*

B. Our Father

Once born-again, the discipleship journey of a relationship with Jesus begins.

John 14:6 Jesus said *"I am the way, the truth, and the life . . . "*

Pause right now and respond to this question:

What was the point Jesus was making in this statement . . . *"the way to . . . "*

"The" Way" to what?

Pause.

Answer: _____

Another question to ask: Why did Jesus come?

Pause.

Answer: _____

There are many right and good answers, and the answers reflect what we as an American Church has emphasized. The overwhelming answers would be like this . . .

- A. Jesus is the way to heaven!
- B. Jesus came to save us so we could go to heaven.
- C. Jesus came to save us from Hell.
- D. Jesus came to pay the price to save us from and forgive us our sins.
- E. Jesus came to give us a better, abundant life . . .

All good, and many more . . .

What has not been emphasized enough in our American culture is the Bible does reveal the MAIN reason Jesus came . . .

“ . . . no one comes to the FATHER, except through me.”

He was saying clearly, *“I am the Way to . . . the Father.”*

We love John 3:16 because that is the message. *“God so loved . . .”* The initiation of Jesus coming to Earth was the FATHER. Jesus came because he was sent!

John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

Jesus came to grab your hand & heart and bring it into the bosom of His Father in Heaven.

Jesus' end-goal, if you will, was, and is, to get you into a powerful relationship with the Father. This is His burning desire.

As Jesus leads you on the way to the Father, do you get to be forgiven?

Yes.

Do you escape hell and have hope for a place called Heaven?

Yup.

Can you access the power of the Gospel through the Holy Spirit and the gifts?

Yup.

All great stuff, but Jesus' driving heart passion was out of Love for His Father . . . and to accomplish this mission **for The Father.**

The 17th Chapter of John has deep insight and meaning in this still mysterious and beautiful relationship between The Father and The Son. We get insight to the prayers Jesus has for us as we go deeper into a relationship with His Father, and Our Father.

To finish this work up in a positive and hopeful light, I believe the next massive move of God, some may call it revival, some make call it an awakening... whatever it is called, it is going to be saturated with the presence of the Fatherhood of God.

Many full gospel, charismatic, and evangelical streams believe there is a second experience call the Baptism of the Holy Spirit that brings a follow of Jesus into a closer and more powerful relationship with the Holy Spirit, and thus the Triune God.

Is it such a stretch to think that there can also be an experience where someone that loves Jesus is introduced to the Father?

Just as the Baptism of the Holy Spirit in Biblical revelation is often a unique experience from being “Born Again,” Jesus’ timing, and our readiness, to meet the Father can also be unique.

The Charismatic movement was mostly in the 1970’s – 80’s. Throughout the mainline Christian denominations was a sovereign move of God giving revelation and insight to Christians’ deeper aspects of their relationship with the Holy Spirit, one of the 3 entities of the Triune God Head.

This next movement will be similar as disciples of Jesus will have the eyes of their hearts enlightened and come into a deeper understanding and relationship of their Heavenly Father.

Malachi 4:6 *“See, I will send the prophet Elijah to you before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents; or else I will come and strike the land with total destruction.”*

When I met the Father . . .

My wife had just given birth to our first born, Heather. I got to hold her for about an hour right out of the womb as my wife had some medical complications and the medical team was attending to her. My first hour with Heather was amazing. Some people said at that time that newborns’ eyes didn’t see right out of the womb. They were wrong.

Driving home later that evening, with my wife and daughter at the hospital, I just started to thank the Lord that everything was fine, and they were both safe and healthy, etc.

That is when I met the Father.

His presence flooded my car, and in silence I began to weep.

I am sure some of it was stress relief, but HE was there.

I can't tell you how I knew it was the presence of the Father, I just knew.

I had met Jesus at 12 years old. Jesus baptized me in the Holy Spirit expanding greatly my relationship with the Holy Spirit. Now, I was meeting the Father.

After a few minutes of a holy silence, He asked me a question . . .

"Curt, you really love Heather, don't you?"

My answer seems funny now, but at that moment I racked my brain for an answer, after all, this was THE FATHER.

I don't remember my exact words, but I answered that I did love Heather, and that I was astounded at HOW MUCH I LOVED her right out of the womb . . . thinking back of the hour in the operating room with her.

What He said next, rocked me to the core . . . deeply . . .

"Curt, I love you more."

Now, I knew Jesus loved me. I knew the Bible taught that God loved me. But at that moment I understood for the first time. "God is Love." The Father doesn't just love. He is love. (I John 4:8)

I kept driving, although looking back I should have pulled over as I could hardly see.

I cried and we sat there together, His presence still thick.

Then he asked me another question . . .

This short conversation and encounter shattered all my head knowledge of the Gospel, and grew and softened my heart to understand way beyond the mental assent of divine love . . .

"Curt, what did Heather ever do to earn or deserve your love?"

I didn't want to give a quick, knee-jerk, answer. After all, it was the KING of KINGS, the Father asking me these questions . . .

So, my earthly father had taught me to use a legal pad when analyzing something or needing to make a decision. Put a line down the middle and put Positives on one side, Negatives on the other.

So, I pulled up my legal pad in my brain . . .

Negative:

Caused my wife discomfort and pain.

Lost a night's sleep (I really thought that LOL)

Will cost us about \$2000 in medical bills

Heather was not physically beautiful. She was bloody with a deformed head, which is common with newborns.

Positive:

???? . . . ?????

I couldn't think of anything, so I answered . . .

"Lord, she has done nothing to earn or deserve my love, in fact I can only think of negative things."

Then He said this . . .

"Curt, you will never do anything to earn or deserve my Love."

What I had known from the Bible and my walk with Jesus and the Holy Spirit exploded into a deeper reality in my heart.

I continued to weep.

By the time I got home, His presence had left the car.

But, the Father's tangible presence left me knowing that I would know at the deepest part of my being that He would " . . . never leave me or forsake me."

I had met the Father.

It was much like when I had met Jesus when I got born again. He is Real.

Jesus' desire and purpose created the WAY - He wanted me to meet His Abba. (John 17)

He wants you to meet Him also.

When I met Jesus, I didn't become any better or worse than anyone, just forgiven. When I met the Father, I didn't become any better or worse than anyone, I just comprehended His love more deeply.

The timing and sequence of these events of encounters or tangible visitations of the three persons of the Trinity I am sure are different for everyone, but the intent and expressed purpose of Jesus hasn't changed.

He came to seek you out, have you surrender to Him, and take you on this journey laid out in the Bible to baptize you in the Holy Spirit, and introduce you to His Father.

I have gifts, talents, short comings, failures . . . still a long way to go in many areas of my life, so please accept this testimony as my hope and prayer for you...

. . . you will need to be fearless in the days ahead.

The days when men's hearts will fail them out of fear. (Luke 21:26) You are called to be a courageous warrior in these coming days as you walk with Jesus through them, not failing or escaping. That is YOUR destiny!

I John 4:18: *"Perfect Love casts out Fear."*

Having met the Father and believing in this perfect Love of the Father, *I have no fear.*

There are times when I have the human emotions of anxiety, but they are mostly easily defeated and do not affect my plans and actions.

Isn't that the way it is supposed to be for us?

II Timothy 1:7 *"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."*

The Lord has used this characteristic in my life in many ways. By his power I have been able to enter into crisis situations and know what to do, and how to help. Not because I am smarter or better, but because there is no fear in the equation. I can think and act clearly.

You will need this in the last days. It is His plan and promise.

Having personally experienced meeting the Father, I pray for every Spirit Filled Christian to meet HIM also. Jesus is longing for you to meet Him if you haven't.

If you are not sure if you have met the Father, you most likely haven't. You cannot mistake it or forget it. I am sure there are exceptions to this just as the varied experiences people have when they are born again.

Ask Jesus to introduce you to His Father.

I am not attempting to create any new doctrine here. I am also sure many believers meet the Father at the same time they meet Jesus.

A benefit or result of this expanded relationship with the Lord, the Triune God, is that the Father's perfect love will make you fearless. This will be needed in these treacherous, yet exciting last days of human history.

As a military veteran, I enjoy war movies and appreciate and value the culture of our American military.

A common theme among those who did heroic things under intense situations is that they considered themselves . . . already . . . dead.

FEAR arises when you are trying to protect your "life."

This military analogy is comparable to what we as followers of Jesus are intended to be . . .

Dietrich Bonhoeffer*: "When Christ calls a man, he bids him to come and die."

Galatians 2:20 (My life verse picked when confirmed as Lutheran at 12 years old)

*"I have been crucified with Christ and **I no longer live**, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."*

The next revival or "great awakening" that is coming to America will not only include the components of previous movements of Jesus and the Holy Spirit but will also bring a revelation of the Fatherhood of God and His overpowering LOVE that creates the FEARLESS end times Victorious Bride needed in these last days.

Summary & Conclusion:

These 7 Great Lies of American Christianity leavened the Church to become mostly an impotent and compromised Bride in America over the last few generations.

My hope is that this generation that is rising up now since the assassination of Charlie Kirk, will throw off any and every doctrine, lie, and any man-made tradition that helped create a weak Church in America.

Charlie found strategic paths of taking the Truth and Good News outside the walls of a “Church building and Pastor” to the real world, including dangerous places. His creative and courageous spirit is certainly one to emulate.

To young men & women zealous for the True Kingdom of God – consider these things as you move forward to advance the Good News.

The “old guard” mostly failed this nation over the last few decades, in part, because these 7 Great LIES of American Christianity were part of their man-made culture, while often taking the Word of God out of context to justify it.

Don’t allow your time, energy, youthfulness, zeal, passion be stolen or spent for anything except expanding the Kingdom of God as the Bride becomes the beautiful and powerful Bride worthy of the Bridegroom!

A religious system can keep you busy and seemingly doing God’s work, but too often it is meaningless in advancing the Kingdom of God. Worse yet, it can be counterproductive.

When Jesus made a whip and cleared the temple in Jerusalem, the main reason he did it is often missed. Sure, the money thing matters. There probably were vendors that had dishonest scales, etc.

Let’s look at the passage and what Jesus quotes out of the Old Testament to get down to what was really burning in His heart . . .

Matthew 21: 12-13: *“Jesus entered the temple courts and drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves. “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer,’ but you are making it ‘a den of robbers.’”*

The vendors were performing a needed service to travelers so they could purchase items like doves to be used in sacrifices. The main issue, that stirred up Jesus’ zeal, was they were taking up the only physical space in the temple that those outside of the faith could come and seek the Lord! The actual court that gentiles could come and inquire...

Jesus quotes out of this part of Jeremiah, 7:9-11 *“Will you steal and murder, commit adultery and perjury, burn incense to Baal and follow other gods you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which bears my Name, and say, ‘We are safe’—safe to do all these detestable things? ¹¹ Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord.”*

The obvious point here is the emphasis on “den” not so much the robbers. They were hiding in their “safe” religious structures, while their lives were not following Kingdom principles. I couldn’t describe the average American Church system of weekly services any better.

In Mark’s version of this event, we see that Jesus was also quoting Isaiah 56:7 *“ . . . for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations.”*

His heart was, is, and always will be for the “Nations.”

The vendors took away the very place at the Jerusalem temple where “the nations” could come and discover the Lord. It has been referred to as the “Court of the Gentiles.” The only area non-Jews were/are permitted.

Metaphorically, this same dynamic is in the American Church. Religious busyness that excludes the time and availability for the Lord’s people to evangelize or impact the nations. Religious busyness actually angers the Lord for its diversion from expanding and propagating His true Kingdom.

The story of Jesus clearing the temple is perhaps the most revealing of His righteous indignation. He also showed us the intensity of His dislike of traditions that harm His people. Matthew 15: 1-20 is a great passage, here are some snippets . . .

“ . . . Jesus replied, ‘And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? . . . you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition. You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you . . . their teachings are merely human rules.’”

“Jesus called the crowd to him and said . . . ‘Leave them; they are blind guides. If the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.’”

These are some passionate exhortations from Jesus! Let’s earnestly seek the LORD in our quest to build His Kingdom His Way. Building with man-made traditions evidently isn’t something He cares for!

It should cause us to want to seek answers and ask ourselves questions such as: “Am I following a tradition of men here, or am I building on solid scriptural ground?”

Don't let your gifts, talents, energy, time . . . **your life**, be consumed by well-meaning Church leaders and institutions that may be providing needful things (as the money changers were.) Just because we are busy doing Churchy things, like the money changers, doesn't mean we are advancing the Kingdom.

I always thought I would still be here on the earth when Jesus returns. I'm 67 years old as of this writing. In light of prophetic fulfillment, I still may be . . . every day brings us closer.

Whether here on Earth, or already on to the next chapter of my life in eternity, I will be cheering you on as you join together to become the victorious, powerful and beautiful Bride Jesus deserves on His Return!

God Bless You.

Curt

PS: I am part of the old guard. I don't have much to offer you young man or woman, other than hope that there is a higher way. Go forth and discover and pioneer for Jesus the new ways so that the Glory due the Lord in these last days will be awesome.

What I would like to share with you are some of those people and resources that have been highly impactful in my walk with Jesus and may assist you as you discover and create a better way.

Appendix A:

A few of My real-life mentors:

John Wimber: Founder of the Vineyard movement. He was a true Apostle and modern day “Father” among us. Known mostly for his emphasis on healing and fresh worship.

Francis Frangipane: Founded and was leading the River of Life Ministries in Cedar Rapids, IA for many years. This was close to Rockford, IL so we attended his conferences and brought him to Rockford. His heartfelt prayer is to see established in every city, Christ-like Pastors and intercessors, united before God, revealing the love of Christ to their communities.

Roberts Lairdon: Before his fall and restoration, I learned much from his prophetic giftings. I credit him heavily in helping deliver me from a “religious” approach to ministry into a more Holy Spirit led life and ministry. His work on God’s Generals is exceptional.

Danny Curle: Missionary to Zimbabwe. Close friend and mentor. Learned so much about the Kingdom of God culture vs. societal culture, and deliverance. He suffered more persecution than anyone I know personally in building the Kingdom of God in this lifetime. He also participated in seeing the dead raised in Africa and many other miracles. Unfortunately, he didn’t leave much in writing, but here is a Youtube clip so you can get a feel for his heart. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ewq4y0nXURk> I miss him.

Loren Cunningham & other YWAM (Youth With a Mission) Leaders: The first book all of us “YWAMers” read was Loren’s book Is That Really You God? My family has been so blessed to be a part of this stream. Note to Dave Cole & Tauble Toki: Kay & I continue to pray for you always. It was such an honor to work with you in that season. Great men, like Charlie Kirk, are rare. You are on my list of the best.

John & Paula Sandford: Pioneers of Inner Healing ministry. John was not just a mentor, but I considered him one of the elders in the Body of Christ that I submitted myself to for direction and counsel. Their books The Elijah Task: A Call to Today's Prophets and Intercessors & Transforming The Inner Man are a great study.

Randall Terry – Founded Operation Rescue. I was part of and helped lead this movement for a short season in the 1980’s. I was deeply impacted by his courage to stand against evil in our culture. I was arrested, spent a few days in jail, was sued, etc. Learned so much about obeying man instead of God. Acts 5:29 “*Peter and the other apostles replied: ‘We must obey God rather than human beings!’*”

I'll digress here for a moment. When the Lord called His Church to fight for the unborn babies in this season, most of the "Church" didn't heed the call. Worse yet, Church leaders came up with fine sounding arguments as to why we must obey civil authorities rather than the Lord. You will face these impasses in the days ahead. Prepare now.

Mike Bickle – founder of the International House Of Prayer. My heart breaks over recent events, but that does not negate or erase the enormous impact he had on my life and ministry. We travelled to Kansas City many times in the 1990's to participate in intercession there and learn from him and the staff of prophets and teachers.

Authors of Lifetime impact/mentoring:

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: I was introduced to The Cost of Discipleship in Bible College at the age of 20 and have studied it over the decades. This is a life to be learned from. I've read every work of his many times over.

Eric Metaxas: His works are also fresh and powerful regarding the life of Bonhoeffer:

Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy

A letter to the American Church

Oswald Chambers: "My Utmost for His Highest." A classic daily devotional I've read with my Bible almost every day for the past 50 years. Especially suited for those looking to full-time ministry work.

Appendix B

I thought I would include a few names that are not well known, but I hold gratefulness to these mentors. After getting out of the Air Force, I went to Bible College, graduated and then went into full time ministry on a staff with these men.

My relationship with these men will hopefully assist you in the understanding of “5 Fold Ministry.” (If this is a newer concept for you, see below for a brief explanation of 5 Fold Ministry as laid out in the letter to the Ephesians.)

I was so blessed in my first work in full time ministry to be on a staff of “Pastors” that I joined in 1981. I’ll just use their first names since I didn’t reach out to get their permission.

John was my example of a Pastor. Deeply cared for and prayed passionately for the sheep. Equipped me to shepherd God’s people

Dale was a Prophet. Taught me deep respect for the Word of God, Truth, and how it could apply in the days to come. Equipped me to love truth.

Ken was an evangelist. Equipped me to share in the Father’s passion to go find the lost!

Dave was a teacher. Loved showing us how to seek the Lord through study and meditation of the Word of God. Best Bible teacher I have ever been honored to learn from.

Danny Curle, mentioned above, was an Apostle to the Nation of Zimbabwe and learned so much from him. Not on our staff, but came to America often, and I was blessed to go to Zimbabwe also.

Unfortunately, the three “Senior Pastors” I served under while on this staff in that season of my life were significantly flawed men each in their own way. I don’t judge them, just observed how the “system of men,” can cause even good men to fail in building the Kingdom of God, and end up using their efforts to build their own kingdom – a part of the American Church world.

There are still a lot of good men and women trapped in flawed and often corrupt religious systems.

Ephesians 4:11-12

The Lord gave all 5 of the office gifts to his Church so we could be fully equipped.

The Pastor: The Pastor imparts to us and equips us to share God’s heart for His Church. His Children. His Bride.

The Prophet: The Prophet imparts to us and equips us to share God's heart for His Truth, and how His Truth impacts people, events, and nations in the days ahead. .

The Teacher: The Teacher imparts to us and equips us to share God's heart for His Word and how to Walk in the Ways of the Lord as revealed by the Bible and the Holy Spirit.

The Evangelist: The Evangelist imparts to us and equips us to share God's heart for lost.

The Apostle: The Apostle imparts to us and equips us to share God's heart for His Kingdom. This office has the passion for the structure and propagation of the Kingdom of God. Most Apostles will have a measure of an anointing for the other 4 offices also, possibly with a strength in one of them.

(Per the 7Gs – a warning . . . If any man needs to be called by one of these titles, then I question either their authenticity or maturity. If you feel the Lord has anointed you with one of these office gifts, as you build your work with your comrades, don't use titles.)