



CHAPTER 7

Messing with Religiosity

One of the Enemy's most pervasive attacks goes like this:

"I can't get them to TURN their BACKS on their FAITH, but ..."

- * If we're clever, we can subtly TWIST, DISTORT, CORRUPT it → Give them a COUNTERFEIT that looks deceptively like the real thing.
 - * We can turn MINORS into MAJORS.
 - * Stir up a CRITICAL, RELIGIOUS SPIRIT: Get them ARGUING instead of WORKING TOGETHER.
 - * If I can pander to their OPINIONS & AGENDAS, tickle their PRIDE so they become UNTEACHABLE: That'll stop them GROWING.
 - * Make them JUDGMENTAL, then we won't need to worry about the power of Gospel seed, because everyone will RUN A MILE as soon as they open their mouths.
 - * i.e. Turn them into PHARISEES.
- *What does that 'counterfeit' look like? Why / how do people fall into it?*
- *What minors did the Pharisees turn into majors? What minors have you seen other Christians turn into majors? Are the things that the secular press criticise about modern-day Christianity majors or minors?*
- *What does it mean to be 'unteachable?' How do you get there? What are the results?*

3 STRONG POINTS FROM MARK 7:1-23

1. IT IS POSSIBLE TO HONOUR GOD WITH YOUR LIPS WHILE YOUR HEART IS MILES AWAY (v5-8)

THE DANGER IS WHEN WORSHIP BECOMES ROUTINELY ABOUT

- a) PERFORMANCE: It's what I DO, not who I AM, let alone WHOSE I am ... Utterly misses the point of GRACE
- b) OUTWARD APPEARANCE: It's what I look like to OTHERS, blow the MESS I am on the INSIDE ... Just check out my fancy mask!
- c) SUPERIORITY: My way is clearly BETTER because my INTERPRETATION is right, obviously ... After all, what was the truly Superior One like?

The GOSPEL is the exact REVERSE in all 3 cases:

- a) It's not about MY performance, but JESUS' → I just concentrate on being His child.
- b) People are going to JUMP to their own CONCLUSIONS about me anyway, for good or for bad, so just let that DIE → My only concern is Christ at work in my heart.
- c) It's hard to act/feel SUPERIOR when you're FLAT on your FACE in WORSHIP.

→ *Religion is about my performance; Christianity is about Jesus' performance. Discuss!*

→ *Do you tend to wear a mask? What does it look like? Why do you wear it? What's the solution?*

→ *How can you 'die' to other people's opinions of you?*

2. IF WE'RE NOT CAREFUL, OUR MAN-MADE TRADITIONS COMPLETELY NULLIFY THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD (v9-13)

- * The Word has SUPERNATURAL, MIRACULOUS, DYNAMIS power, yet it can be NULLIFIED → Power to change our circumstances, heal our heart, renew our minds and transform our lives.
- * If it gets 'SQUISHED' in our minds by a combination of man-made TRADITIONS, twisted INTERPRETATIONS, personal OPINIONS and DISAPPOINTMENTS, HALF-TRUTHS and UNTRUTHS, we can almost completely STOP it working in our lives.
- * Let God's Word be the DOMINANT POWER, INFLUENCE, AUTHORITY in your life; reduce your 'MAN-MADE QUOTIENT' to as close to zero as possible.

→ *Give some examples of man-made traditions that 'squish' the Word. What about twisted interpretations or personal opinions? How can personal disappointments nullify the Word?*

→ *Where are you on the continuum from 0% Word + 100% man-made tradition to 100% Word + 0% man-made tradition? How does one move along the continuum? Is it possible to go up and down?*

3. UNDERSTANDABLE TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT ALL THAT DEFILEMENT OUT THERE, BUT ACTUALLY IT'S WHAT'S IN YOUR OWN HEART THAT DOES MOST DAMAGE (v14-23)

- * Pharisees were terrified of UNCLEAN, but failed to recognise the STATE of their own HEARTS = closed, hard, judgmental, critical, selfish, sinful, unteachable.
- * The very things they thought were MOVING them CLOSER to God, were actually DRIVING them in the OPPOSITE direction.

→ *Are you terrified of unclean? Should you be? How should you deal with unclean?*

→ *What was driving the Pharisees away from God? Why did they think it would move them closer? What moves you closer to God? What drives you away?*

THE PROGRESSION: If your WORSHIP becomes half-hearted and religious, the WORD starts to take a back-seat in your life, and you start FEARING everything on the OUTSIDE rather than allowing God to TRANSFORM you on the INSIDE.

- * If you lose the ENCOUNTER (MEET), you will start to lose the INTIMACY (which is your WALK), and before long you'll lose the LIFE (SERVE).
- * WORSHIP will become RELIGION will become TRADITION, and before you know it, you'll be a POWERLESS PHARISEE!

CHALLENGE QUESTIONS

→ *Is your WORSHIP LIFE half-hearted or whole-hearted? Has it become routine, repetitious or passion-free? Maybe it's time to go back to heart of worship*

→ *What PLACE have you given WORD in your life? I'm not just talking about whether you're doing NT in year, but what priority does it have in your thinking, decisions, actions? How much self / world / opinion is being mixed in and thus nullifying truth?*

→ *Are you looking to OUTSIDE or INSIDE? Is well-being / attitude / mental-health more strongly influenced by circumstances on outside or life of god on inside? have you simplified it down to 'thank god he's at work in my heart?'*