

Simply One Page-Meaning or Mechanism

This piece was created from my own reflections and vision. I used ChatGPT as a tool to help shape the text from my original concepts and structure. The final form is the result of thoughtful revision and my own editorial hand. Mike Haddorff-2518

As a follower of Jesus I claim a theistic worldview: God exists, God speaks, God is present. But often, perhaps without realizing it, I have slipped into functional materialism. Functional materialism is living as though the material world is all that matters, even while professing belief in God. It shows up as I white knuckle down on my efforts, technique, or control.

I may acknowledge that God is present and God is for me, but often I have treated prayer like a vending machine transaction. Insert the right words, the right posture, the right formula, push send and wait for God to dispense what I think I need. The emphasis is mechanical. The posture is control.

This is materialism in disguise. It reduces prayer to a technique, and God to a reactive force. Rather than prayer being the space where I am reshaped by the presence of God, it becomes a christianized way of managing my circumstances.

The same mechanization shows up in how I have treated other people. In my earlier years I understood God's view of people primarily in legal or transactional terms: in or out, forgiven or condemned, clean or unclean. Unknowingly I objectified others. To me people were as variables in a system: rule followers or rule breakers, insiders or outsiders, savable or lost. My engagement was not with persons but with categories.

Ironically, even in the name of grace, I created a system where one's spiritual state became a kind of social coding. In this way of thinking, people are not beheld but sorted. And in the sorting, I lost the wonder that each person is already known and loved.

The truth is, the gospel is not mechanical. It is deeply personal. Our story is not about mechanical outcomes but receiving a Person. Salvation is not a courtroom decision or striking a deal with an angry God. Rather it's union, which welcomes communion leading towards transformation. And others are not objects on a moral conveyor; they are sacred, image-bearing souls caught in the same mysterious, grace-filled presence as me.

Think About:

To pray is to listen—not to control.

To relate is to reverence—not to categorize.