

BIBLE-BELIEVING CHRISTIANS CAN WELL LEARN A VITAL LESSON FROM A TEENAGER!

First an introduction:

WE MUST LET THIS SINK IN! George Barna, a sociologist and research expert, compared the lifestyles of Christians and non-Christians, using 131 different measures of attitudes, behaviors, values and beliefs. His conclusion: **“In the aspects of lifestyle where Christians can have the greatest impact on the lives of non-Christians, there were no visible differences between the two segments.”** **“Our gospel,”** laments Dr. Henry Blackaby, **“is cancelled by the way we live.”**

This is not a new problem: Even in the New Testament era, the great tragedy was church folk whose lives BLASPHEMED the Gospel, rather than adorning it! (1 Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:5) In the Old Testament era, King David’s sin gave the enemies of God great occasion to blaspheme the holy Name of God! (2 Sam. 12:14) **In powerful contrast, holy living adorns the gospel of Christ!** (Titus 2:10)

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, Almighty God warns us: Hebrews: 3: 12-13-- ¹²**Take heed**, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

Hebrews 10:24-25 ²⁴And let us consider and give ^[b]attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities, ²⁵Not forsaking or neglecting to assemble together [as believers], as is the habit of some people, **but admonishing (warning, urging, and encouraging) one another, and all the more faithfully as you see the day approaching.**

HERE’S REALITY: THERE EXISTS A GREAT CHASM between the genuinely saved who are now in Christ and in the Kingdom of LIGHT and those who are yet lost and still abiding in the black night of the Kingdom of Darkness.

QUESTION: IS IT POSSIBLE... AND HOW IS IT POSSIBLE FOR LIGHT TO IMPACT, (EXPOSE, DEMINISH, DESTROY), DARKNESS?

The prevailing wisdom of the day goes something like this: You go into the Darkness and see what the slaves of darkness like and love. You mimic what they like and love. Why? Because those in the dark hate the light. They love darkness! Give them what they like, with a mixture of light! Masses are flocking to this method in varying degrees, because it is successful! This is not a new strategy. **The prophets of Jeremiah's day used it. The people loved it. They hated Jeremiah.** They were led to believe that they could be true worshippers of God and keep their idols. That's what the false prophets, (and compromisers like Aaron, Exodus 32), always say!

GOD'S WISDOM AND METHOD IS RADICALLY DIFFERENT! The brighter the light and the more consistent the light and life of Jesus Christ shines through us, the more the darkness is over powered! God is calling us to "let the light shine!"

SO, HERE ARE TWO OPTIONS:

I. RELIGIOUS ENTERTAINMENT followed by Emotional Manipulation... and a bad eternity!

OR:

II. *"There is NO HIGHER POSITION than to be a child of God; and NO GREATER HONOR than to be a voice for Him!"*

PART I—RELIGIOUS ENTERTAINMENT and EMOTIONAL MANIPULATION

In many Evangelical circles today the culture-wise pastors and other leaders tell us that people's attention span is short. So, they pay big bucks for all manner of exciting entertainment venues because they must get the crowd to come. Then once they have the crowd and they have entertained them for a while, the professional entertainer, (who may be a preacher or an evangelist or a comedian or a sports hero or an illusionist, etc.), MUST next DRAW THE NET! They have to go for the close. They have to manipulate the emotions of the crowd and get them down the

aisle. Next, they guide them through a 'sinner's prayer'... which is followed by human pontification that all such ones are SAVED!

Sadly, in short order, from 75-90% of all these deceived souls get back to their normal living for sin, self, satan, and society lifestyles. AND UNLESS they are later savingly brought to Christ, they die and go to hell. The professional religionists know all about these deadly stats; however, they will not change their methods. They just gear up for the next big show.

The above method, or variations of it, may indeed build an impressive harlot; but not the Bride of Christ. MOREOVER, REGARDLESS OF 'ATTENTION SPAN'...

What the lost really need to witness is REALITY. They need to SEE genuine Christians who are seeking to live holy lives, whose lives overflow with love, with forgiveness, with kindness, and who love Jesus and His Word and who live with a holy boldness for Christ.

PART II. AN EXAMPLE OF A GENUINELY TRANSFORMING ADULT AND YOUTH PROGRAM FOR A LOCAL CHURCH! *"There is NO HIGHER POSITION than to be a child of God; and NO GREATER HONOR than to be a voice for Him!"*

Cornelis Aertsz de Man lived in the Netherlands. Around the year 1544-45, Cornelis witnessed an Anabaptist being burned at the stake, for refusing to recant and bow to Romanism. In the flames the man prayed for his tormentors. **Cornelis, age 14**, was so moved by such a beautiful faith that he searched and FOUND A HOME where Anabaptists were having Bible study. "Their witness of faith, their serious study of the Word, their joy in life and their concern for love and moral integrity all excited him."

WISELY, that local congregation did not march Cornelis off to the youth fun and games department-- no, he was right in the mix of all the adults who were seriously studying God's Word! Their adult, youth, and children's program was all the same: THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD and by the power of the Holy Spirit, sinners are converted to Christ; and then, they are to be DISCIPLED. Within a few weeks Cornelis was converted,

baptized and being disciplined. **BY AGE 17** he was so strong in the faith that the powerful Roman Catholic institution leaders thought if they could capture Cornelis and get him to recant they could make a major dent in the Anabaptist movement.

They captured Cornelis and threw him in prison. Day after day they sought to get him to recant. Finally, they brought him into a castle court room where they lined the walls with Romanists priests. There they promised that if only Cornelis would renounce his simple Biblical faith and return to the state Romanist church that he would be give a FUTURE OF POSITION AND HONOR.

Cornelis calmly replied: "***There is NO HIGHER POSITION than to be a child of God; and NO GREATER HONOR than to be a voice for Him!***"

Over and over and day after day, Cornelis stunned and overwhelmed the learned preachers with his Christ-like spirit and powerful speaking forth the truth of Scripture. They mercilessly tortured him until at about age 21, being convinced that he would not recant, they burned him at the stake. BUT SO QUICKLY, Cornelis was absent from the body and PRESENT with the LORD FOR ALL ETERNITY!

BOTTOM LINE: The above account of how Jesus builds His Church is much like reading what is found in the Acts of the Apostles. WHICH METHOD WILL WE EMBRACE AND WILL WE PROMOTE?

1. RELIGIOUS ENTERTAINMENT followed by Emotional Manipulation... and all too often a bad eternity!

2. OR: The way modeled in the Acts of the Apostles; by an Anabaptist being burned at the stake... praying for his tormentors; by an Anabaptist church overflowing with, "... witness of faith,... serious study of the Word, ... joy in life and ... concern for love and moral integrity...."; and by a 17 year old (about 3 years old in the LORD) setting forth a powerful, godly witness: "***There is NO HIGHER POSITION than to be a child of God; and NO GREATER HONOR than to be a voice for Him!***"

[The above historical account is drawn from the 1978 book, **FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH:** Fifteen Young People Who were not Afraid to Die for their Faith, by Myron S. Augsburger]