

Living Proof

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Already Gone

- An estimated 60-80 percent of teens and twenty-somethings leave the church.
- Sunday School attendance makes it LESS likely that kids will remain in church.
- History is treated as cute stories.
- Divine truth becomes entertaining.
- Better biblical instruction and stronger apologetics would help.
- Spiritual life is caught, not just taught.

Caught, not just taught

- Are young people abandoning Christian community because they have not been seeing or tasting the Christ-life there?
- Are dropouts lacking a living encounter with God, a delight in public worship, and loving communion in the body of Christ?
- Young churchgoers need to interact daily with the Lord and taste dynamic community.
- They need LIVING PROOF as well as teaching.

Why follow Christ when so many churchgoers are hypocrites?

- ✓ Often this is either a shallow excuse, or a deep wound. Listen to find out which.
- ✓ Were you ever hurt deeply by a church or by a churchgoer close to you?
- ✓ Don't judge Jesus by his worst followers.
- ✓ Are you perfectly pure and honest? If not, what makes you too good to associate with the flawed people in church.
- ✓ If you discovered a perfect church and then joined it, your very presence would spoil it.

Why follow Christ when so many churchgoers are hypocrites?

- ✓ It is harder for me to believe God is real when church gatherings seem dull, and when church people seem not to be full of Christ's life and the Spirit's fruit.
- ✓ It is especially hard for me to believe God is real when my personal walk with the Lord seems dull, when I have fallen into sin, when my own life has little evidence of Christ's life and the Spirit's fruit.
- ✓ Jesus says life and fruit are tests of truth.

Can other people see and taste gospel truth in you?

- You are the light of the world... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matt 5:14,16)
- Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Col 4:5-6)

Citizens of heaven

They live in their own countries, but as people whose true home is elsewhere... They have babies; but they don't destroy fetuses. They have a common table, but not a common bed... They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven... They love all men, and are persecuted by all.... They are reviled, and bless; they are insulted, and repay the insult with honor; they do good, yet are punished as evil-doers. When punished, they rejoice, yet those who hate them are unable to give any reason for their hatred... (Epistle to Diognetus)

Imitator of God

Do not wonder that a man may become an imitator of God. He can, if he is willing... He who carries the burden of his neighbor; he who uses whatever advantage he has over someone to help that person; he who takes what God gives him and distributes it to people in need, becomes a god to those who receive his benefits: he is an imitator of God. Then you will see while you are still on earth that God in the heavens rules over the universe. (Epistle to Diognetus)

By this all will know

- By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. (John 13:35)
- *The Ever-Loving Truth* (Voddie Baucham)
- Without true Christians loving one another, Christ says the world cannot be expected to listen, even when we give proper answers. (Francis Schaeffer)

The final apologetic

Let us be careful, indeed, to spend a lifetime studying to give honest answers. For years the orthodox, evangelical church has done this very poorly. So it is well to spend time learning to answer the questions of men who are about us. But after we have done our best to communicate to a lost world, still we must never forget that **the final apologetic which Jesus gives is the observable love of true Christians for true Christians.**

(Francis Schaeffer)

Your manner adorns your message

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be ready to make a defense (*apologia*) to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with **gentleness** and **respect**, keeping a **clear conscience**, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. (1 Peter 3:15-16).

Lives of irresistible holiness

- C. S. Lewis: “Where people can resist and ignore arguments they may be unable to resist *lives*. I am afraid, my dear lady, the only hope lies in you and in any other Christian friends she has.”
- Real holiness would be irresistible: “If even 10% of the world’s population had it, would not the whole world be converted and happy before a year’s end?”

Marked by God's holiness

When we talk about the holiness of God we talk about something heavenly, full of awe, mysterious and fear-inspiring. Now, this is supreme when it relates to God, but it is also marked in men of God and deepens as men become more like God.

(A. W. Tozer)

Kingly fragrance

It is a sense of awareness of the other world, a mysterious quality and difference that has come to rest upon some men—that is holiness... when a good man with this special quality and mysterious Presence is morally right and walking in all the holy ways of God and carries upon himself without even knowing it the fragrance of a kingdom that is supreme above the kingdoms of this world. (A. W. Tozer)

Glowing with glory

When Moses came back everyone could tell where he had been. The lightning still played over his countenance, the glory of the Presence remained. This strange something which men cannot pin down or identify was there. I lament that this mysterious quality of holy Presence has all but forsaken the earth in our day.

(A. W. Tozer)

Mysterious quality and Presence

If we are what we ought to be in Christ and by His Spirit, if the whole sum of our lives beginning with the inner life is becoming more Godlike and Christlike, I believe something of that divine and mysterious quality and Presence will be upon us. (A. W. Tozer)

Saints with holy brightness

I have met a few of God's saints who appeared to have this holy brightness upon them, but they did not know it because of their humility and gentleness of spirit. I do not hesitate to confess that my fellowship with them has meant more to me than all of the teaching I have ever received. I do stand deeply indebted to every Bible teacher I have had through the years, but they did little but instruct my head. The brethren I have known who had this strange and mysterious quality and awareness of God's Person and Presence instructed my heart...

Yearning for God's Presence

First, bring your life into line morally so that God can make it holy; then bring your spiritual life into line that God may settle upon you with the Holy Ghost—with that quality of the Wonderful and the Mysterious and the Divine... Oh, that we might yearn for the knowledge and Presence of God in our lives from moment to moment, so that without human cultivation and without toilsome seeking there would come upon us **this enduement that gives meaning to our witness!** It is a sweet and radiant fragrance and I suggest that in some of our churches it may be strongly sensed and felt.

The medium is the message

- **Truth:** knowing, explaining, and making the case for biblical, gospel truth
- **Goodness:** doing right as God commands
- **Love:** adoring God and loving others
- **Holiness:** communing with the Holy One and shining with His holy otherness

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- **Grow in knowledge:** Study Scripture and learn as best you can how to explain and defend the faith.
- **Grow in goodness:** Obey commands; bear fruit.
- **Grow in love:** Love as Christ has loved you. More persuasion-arguments; less bicker-arguments.
- **Grow in holiness:** Spend time each day with God, making sure you know him and stay connected.

When the church is filled with truth, goodness, love, and holiness, people may heed our explanations and evidences—but not until then. The reality of Christ must shine from us.