

THEY'RE JUST
PEOPLE

THE TRUTH ABOUT
CHRISTIANS

Donald G. Payne

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Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are taken from the *King James Version* of the Bible.

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This book is dedicated to my loving mother Leola
Payne who taught me the true meaning of love,
faithfulness and integrity.

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“For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.”

-Titus 2:11-14 (NIV)

PREFACE

When I first sat down to write this book, I wanted to share my disappointment in the behavior of the many people that I have learned to call my Christian brothers and sisters. I have come to the point where I thought I was losing my mind. I was virtually beginning to believe that real Christians no longer existed. I was trying to figure out in my mind how those who confess Christ and claim to live according to His Word can continue to live any way they want without having any fear of the repercussions of their actions.

I wanted to know how some of the so-called Christians came to the conclusion that it was okay to cheat, steal, deceive, fornicate and basically do whatever they wanted, all in the name of God. The answer, as simplistic as it was, came to me during a conversation I was having with someone. As we were discussing some of the issues, or should I say concerns that we had with some Christians, we both said simultaneously, “They’re just people.” We both agreed that since these individuals are just people that they will go astray and they would make bad decisions, but it is up to the friends, colleagues and followers of these individuals to keep them in check. These high profile

leaders may need to take some time out from the position they carry (if they truly want to represent a Christian lifestyle) to pray and ask God to get them back on track.

When I think of a Christian, I think of someone who has all of the attributes of Jesus. Know that I realize that no one can walk the line that Jesus walked, but at the very least a Christian should conduct themselves in a way so that they can be viewed as a Christian without having to say a word.

Certain events that have been reported in the media concerning some Christian leaders and some issues that I have witnessed throughout my Christian walk have helped spark my insistence on writing this book. Some may have a clue as to what I am talking about while others may be naïve to my conversation, but I can assure you that by the time you get to the end of this book your eyes will be opened to what I am trying to say.

The Body of Christ was commissioned to go into the entire world and preach the Gospel. The word “preach” in that Scriptures does not mean just those speaking from behind the pulpit. Everyone has the responsibility of sharing the gospel. Many Christians do not realize that their main purpose in life is to share the Gospel. In everyday life, more people are led to Christ by watching someone they know live for Christ than by having a complete stranger tell

them about Christ. You can preach the Gospel with your words, but you can also preach it with your lifestyle. In fact, your everyday attitudes and actions say a lot more than your words do. Ask yourself this question, what do you want people to believe concerning Christianity? Do you want them to base their opinion on what they see in the media? When was the last time you invited a friend or a co-worker to church? The world is a negative place and that is mainly due to the fact that the news reports we hear are so negative. Rarely will you ever see the news bring you a positive, uplifting story (especially when it concerns Christians).

In life we find heroes, people that we look up to, in just about every arena. One may consider a parent to be their hero or a teacher, politician or a sports figure. Whatever the case, I can assure you that these individuals, that someone may look up to can do no wrong. If they do something that others may not agree with, they will defend those actions until the very end. Why? Because many times people have a very deep-rooted love for their hero; they will put them on the highest pedestal in their life, but when their hero fails, many find it hard to cope. No one wants their hero to ever let them down; seeing one's hero fall from grace would just about crush an individual's spirit to the point where they will not believe in anyone or anything ever

again. This may explain why so many Christian leaders and other well-known Christian personalities can get away with any and everything.

I, for one, have just about had enough. I want the Christian community to wake up! No longer should individuals be able to steal money from the church they pastor or fornicate with various members of their church or group. I will even go out on a limb and say that false prophets should no longer be tolerated. It is time to take a stand against those who say they are Christians, but their lifestyle is far from what a Christian's life should be.

For far too long, the Christian community (that has been given all power in Heaven and on Earth) continues to let these individuals get away with these acts that are blatant sins. Why? As I stated before, these men and women have been put on a pedestal; they are heroes to many and idols to others. Some have even said that they are Jesus Christ returned in the flesh. The time has come for some accountability from the Christian community and to take a stand and say enough is enough. God will not be mocked!

AGREE TO DISAGREE

Before I begin, I want to take time to apologize. Some people who read this book may be offended, or they may be convicted. My goal was not to create controversy or to ridicule anyone, anything or any denomination. My overall goal is to simply inform based on the teachings that the Bible has provided. After spending many confused nights Praying to God for some type of revelation, I came to the conclusion that people get frustrated. They get frustrated with repetitive church rhetoric or the lack thereof, which has caused many to follow their own rules and fall farther and farther away from the love of God.

Depending upon how a person was raised, what they may have been taught as a child or depending on their cultural background, the fact is that we are all different. Regardless of the situation or circumstance it is just fine to have an opinion. Everyone has an opinion concerning different things or maybe even different ways of life. This is what makes this world a great place. If everyone shared the same ideas or had like minds, one could only imagine where we might be today. When God created man, He gave him a free will; He gave man the mind to think and do whatever he wanted.

However, during the creation process, a set of tried and true rules had to be put in place based upon the Word of God, but this is not what I am referring to. What I am referring to is the free will to make decisions and to have opinions. We all have the ability to make decisions and to form an opinion; some things we can all agree on and some things we will never agree on. Having a mind of our own and being able to express our thoughts helps us to understand each other.

We can learn a lot about a person based on the opinions they have. Opinions usually bring judgment, and these judgments can carry over into various actions. In the Christian community, certain actions can affect the entire body of Christ causing everyone connected to the body to be found guilty. One person is not a representation of the entire body of Christ, especially if that person is a bad representation.

I have many friends who are religious, yet we all go to various churches, with different denominations and different religious systems. Are we all Christians? Do we all believe in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit? Without taking a survey on the matter, I would have to say that the answer is yes, but it would be wrong to group us all together based on one individual's actions or opinions.

God loves everyone; He died for us all. He died so that all people can be saved. He only asks that we do one thing, and that is to follow the rules. Unfortunately, these rules are easily broken, and there is no immediate punishment for disregarding them. Our job is to let God do His job in dealing with us all individually. A time will come when we have to give an account for our actions, and on that day God will decide who will dwell with Him in His Kingdom. Until that time it would be wise to not take people so seriously, because at the end of the day, they're just people.

Let's look at the Church. Many people look at the church and they say that the church is all about the people. The church consists of people, but the Church is all about God. When you let people detour you from the plan that God has for your life or you no longer honor God in your service as a Christian, it becomes a problem; you have to understand that people are just people. You cannot make a sound judgment on whether or not you will attend a church service or serve God because you are fed up with people. God has a plan for you, God has a plan for the Church and that plan is to preach the Gospel throughout the nations. That is what we should be focusing on.

America has given many individuals the opportunity to openly speak their minds; this is called "freedom of speech" which was given to them based on the Declaration

of Independence. The same holds true for a person that has decided to preach; basically anyone can call himself or herself a preacher, pastor or evangelist. Many mail order shops and Internet sites have made obtaining a license for this practice way too easy. Unfortunately, not everyone that has decided to pick up one of these generic licenses can really call themselves a Christian. They may know the Bible in and out, but their lifestyle is far from being Christ-like.

There was a situation some time ago that sparked some negative attention to the Christian community—especially in the urban communities. Someone who had a few dollars to pay for a ministerial license and a little more money to pay for a cable television program called “Spirit of Truth” decided to set up shop and preach. Well, this individual (in my personal opinion) was a true mental case. The show had this individual reading from the Bible, discussing what was being read and taking phone calls from listeners. The phone calls that were answered caused the “show” to go from really bad to extremely worse. As the callers called in to ask questions, they were immediately cursed out. If they spoke negative of this individual, then they were hung up on. What may have been the worst part of this show was that the cable company continued to air it.

I am not sure if anyone ever took this individual seriously, but what if they did. The fallout behind a stunt like this can and has caused many to take Christianity lightly. To this day, you can still find clips of this court entertainer floating about in the vast world of the internet.

The overall idea of this book is to help the reader understand that you cannot base your Christian walk on a Christian stereotype. What other people have done or what you see taking place in the media should not affect your beliefs. The main focus of any Christian should be on Jesus and Him alone.

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THE CHURCH'S OF OLD

I was in conversation with a friend of mine, Joe, and we began to discuss the corruption that we are witnessing in the church today. I asked the question as to why so many people have decided to veer away from the truth. I wanted to understand why the love for God had grown cold and when this disregard for the Gospel had began. Joe explained to me that this corruption had been with us for so long that people simply do whatever they want to do without conviction. He went on to say that if these same individuals only knew how much this hurt God, and that if they cared for Him at all, they would stop what they were doing immediately. Based on our conversation, Joe asked me to look into some of the corrupt churches discussed in the Bible, specifically the church of Laodicea and the Nicolaitans.

The Spirit was apparently leading Joe in his instruction to me because this was the information that I had been looking for while I was in the process of writing this book. The pertinent information that we can learn from these two churches is invaluable. Let me share with you what I learned about the corruption in the church even during the days of old.

The book of Revelation talks about an area in the days of old called Laodicea which was a banking center, proud of its wealth and beautified with dazzling temples and theatres. It was also noted for manufacturing fine garments that included black glossy wool and a medical school that made powder for treatment of various eye conditions. (Unger's Bible Dictionary, 1988, p.756)

This city was known for spreading a false doctrine that upset the Apostle Paul. Although Paul never visited the city, he constantly received reports about them spreading false doctrines. Paul had written an epistle to the Colossians which was called the message of the Spirit and can also be found in Revelation 3:14-22. He wanted that same epistle to be read in Laodicea. The message brought with it a warning to that church. (Revelation 3:18, Footnote NKJV, p.2336)

The Laodicean church had become so arrogant and complacent with their wealth that they had become self-satisfying and did not have the presence of Christ among them. In fact, they were so busy indulging in their worldly treasures that they never even noticed that they had lost God. Revelation 3:20 explains that Christ is on the outside looking in, refusing to come into their sanctuary. He is saying that the corporate body will no longer admit His presence. Therefore, He is standing outside where there is

freedom and liberty without barriers inviting them to share in the Spirit of God outside of their false religion.

To further understand how God felt, turn your attention to Revelation 3:16 where He mentions being lukewarm to the point of disgust that He would rather regurgitate than to tolerate a person who is unwilling to serve Him wholeheartedly. For a person to spew something out of their mouth, it must be pretty bad. The church in Laodicea had become lukewarm; they no longer stood for anything that was Christ-like. Christ prefers outright opposition. He would rather you be hot or cold than to ride the fence. There was an expression that some of the saints of old used to get the young people on track. They wanted us to understand the consequences surrounding sin. They told us that if we refuse to follow God, then we should not pretend. They would say, “If you are going to make Hell your home, there is no sense in going in coach. Don’t let the church stand in your way; go first class.”

The condition of the Laodicean church describes the spiritual lukewarmness and the worldliness that we are beginning to experience in the church today. In the very near future, many of the churches that we have come to know will become so self-satisfied and contented with becoming rich, cultured and religiously ritualistic that they will exclude Christ all together.

Imagine having a church that not even Christ Himself would want to come in. "I stand at the door and knock" was a representation that God's presence was not there, as if He was a stranger in His own house. There are some churches today that claim to operate in the name of Jesus Christ but are really operating for their own glory. They have absolutely no respect for the true founder of the church, which is God All Mighty. 2 Timothy 3:1-8 also gives us an indication of the corrupt moral conditions of the end-time church.

If a person can overcome the need to be self-absorbed, self-satisfied and contented in worldly pleasures, they can look forward to a seat next to the Father according to Revelations 3:21. This is to suggest that many who have started out as Christians may be falling prey to the world's way of doing things. Some of the old cities during the time of Paul, which had good churches, are still flourishing cities. Laodicea on the other hand, which had a corrupt church, is now deserted and uninhabited.

Although some may not believe it, we are the end-time church. Church leaders have always said that in the coming days or in the far off future these words to the Laodicean's will apply. I want to tell you that these words are very prevalent to the church of this day. The Scriptures as they pertain to the church of Laodicea were written as a stern