

Don't Believe Like the Demons Believe!

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One of our pastors shares a favorite story: a young man in Sweden, while trying to get rid of the watermark on his trial software so he could use it illegally, did some online research that led him to a YouTube film clip from our church (Watermark Community Church) making the case for waiting to have sex before marriage. The twenty-something had never heard of such a thing, and while it sounded crazy to him, he continued to watch more clips, which intrigued him further, and he did more research that led him to the conclusion, "Wait a minute, there's something really different about these people."

So he called the pastor. From Sweden. "Hey man, I don't know your God, never heard of your Jesus, but I want to know Him. I've been tracking with you guys online, watched a ton of sermons, and I want to know that God." J.P. led him to the Lord, and he trusted Christ over the phone in Swedish.

He called again some time later. "Hey, we always go out and get drunk, and I'm having a hard time doing that all of a sudden. Yeah, we always pride ourselves on taking some girl home that we don't know, and all of a sudden that doesn't feel right to me. What's wrong with me? This isn't any fun anymore. Something happened!"

That's what lifechange looks like. That's the kind of transformation that happens when someone puts their trust in Jesus Christ and surrenders their heart and their life to a new kind of supernatural God-life. The New Testament talks about two kinds of life—the merely physical, and the supernatural, eternal, abundant life Jesus said He came to

bring us (John 10:10). This eternal life invades our merely physical life.

I've been engaging in an email conversation with a dear man who is wondering why he hasn't experienced any lifechange stories like the new Swedish Christian. When I asked his understanding of what it means to be a Christian, he indicated he had prayed a prayer that Christians had told him to pray. But nothing had happened, nothing had changed. In decades. When I asked him who he thinks Jesus is, he said whoever Christians told him He was. He's now considering that all this time, he hasn't been a Christian after all, and I think he's right.

His dilemma illustrates a heartbreaking truth: there are a lot of people who think they are Christians because they have prayed a prayer or they mentally assent to some spiritual truths. But then they don't see anything different in their lives, because they have been offered a false gospel of "say this prayer" or "believe these things" and they think they've got their going-to-heaven ticket punched. But they continue to live the same way, simply adding Jesus to their mental cubbyholes, ready to call on Him at the moment of death.

The people who saw radical changes in their lives in the New Testament were those who opened themselves to being invaded by Jesus Christ's startlingly different, supernaturally powerful eternal life. As the true gospel spread, fueled by God's Spirit manifested through Jesus' lifechange in these people, the world was changed forever. I love how Dallas Willard writes:

So, C.S. Lewis writes, our faith is not a matter of our hearing what Christ said long ago and "trying to carry it out." Rather, "The real Son of God is at your side. He is beginning to turn you into the same kind of thing as Himself. He is beginning, so to speak, to 'inject' His kind of life and thought, His Zoe [life], into you; beginning to turn the

tin soldier into a live man. The part of you that does not like it is the part that is still tin.” (The Divine Conspiracy, San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1998, p. 20)

Why do so many people not experience the kind of lifechange of our Swedish friend? I respectfully (and, to be honest, somewhat fearfully) submit that their belief is that of demons. They believe the same thing the demons subscribe to, but it's not a saving, life-changing kind of faith. Biblical faith is about trusting our entire self into Jesus' hands, not merely nodding in intellectual assent or saying the words of a prayer. James 2:19 says, “You believe that God is one; well and good. *Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear*” (emphasis mine).

“I believe in God.” *So do the demons.*

“I believe Jesus is God's Son.” *So do the demons.*

“I believe Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world.” *So do the demons.*

“I believe Jesus rose from the dead.” *So do the demons.*

What the demons *don't* do is repent, turning 180 degrees from going their own way to surrender to Jesus, receive His love, and follow Him in obedience. They *don't* entrust themselves into Jesus' care. They *don't* receive Jesus into the core of their being (John 1:12), as a response to Jesus drawing them into the core of His heart.

But we can. We must.

Biblical Christianity is about *relationship*. The Father, Son and Spirit invite us into Their circle of mutual love and affection, glory and grace. Jesus made it possible for us to be reconciled to God by taking our sin, that horrible barrier to relationship with His Father, out of the way at the cross. Biblical Christianity—being “injected” with eternal life—is SO

not about mere intellectual assent or praying a prayer. It's about surrendering to an amazing love and an amazing relationship.

Make sure your faith is about trust, and surrender, and joining the circle of God's family. Make sure your faith is so much more than what the demons believe!

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