

IN THE BULB THERE IS A FLOWER

We live in a society that seems hostile to Christ, or worse still, indifferent.

There are people who will 'bad-mouth' Christianity, without having a shred of Biblical knowledge, **nothing** on which to base their opinions. They do not even have the decency to learn about our beloved faith, before trashing it.

There are people, brought up in the faith, who say that they have had enough church to last them a lifetime. They were children who were **made** to go to church by their parents.

There are also people who just cannot be bothered. "I've got lots of time before I need that kind of 'mumbo-jumbo'."

There are those who just can't get their heads around the *mystery* that is Christianity - Three in One, raising the dead, turning water into wine, Ten Commandments, loving our neighbour, Jesus dying and then coming back to life to redeem us. It's all too much for me!

Every one of us knows people who are living entirely different lives than God wishes.

The world is a very dangerous place for us Christians. We hear every day about robberies, murders, mass shootings, internet scams, prostitution of children, gang violence, corruption in high places, ex-American presidents being indicted for all kinds of criminal activity.

I have spoken with police officers and Children's Aid workers, whose careers put them in harm's way, and whose on-the-job experiences have made them sick-to-their-stomachs on many occasions.

The world is a very scary place. People used to spend their evenings walking down Yonge Street, window shopping and just experiencing what we used to call, 'Toronto the Good.' Now, prostitutes pry their trade in a most offensive and aggressive manner. Muggers are arrested every night. People do not feel safe being in such places.

All big cities around our planet though, are suffering from the same kind of '*Sodom and Gomorrah*' feeling. Some people are even happy with this situation - likely because it brings 'big bucks' into the coffers of the cities, the casinos, the businesses, and the criminal communities, with their exploitation of women and children.

Feels like the world hasn't changed much in the last 2,000 years or so, doesn't it?

What has changed since then? What has caused the big shift away from the church? Let's consider some reasons:

1. We think we are smarter than our ancestors. We are more sophisticated. We don't really **need** or believe in a supreme being.
2. Our scientific knowledge is far more advanced than previous generations - we are more educated.
3. We believe in the 'Big Bang Theory,' and the Darwinism of being evolved from apes.
4. We have other things to do on a Sunday morning rather than to go to church.
5. We play on a Sports Team.
6. We have a job at the mall because we **need** to be able to buy stuff, so that others will look-up to us.

We are a ME generation, all wrapped up in self. We know too much! Knowledge is almost instant. We type our question into Google and get hundreds, if not thousands of answers. Which ones are right? Which ones do we believe? Remember the old saying, "Garbage in, garbage out!"

News is instantaneous. We turn on our 65-inch colour TV and we are instantly in Ukraine with bombs exploding all around us. The war is in **our** living rooms. God has been excluded from the classroom for at least two generations. Quite a bleak picture to paint, isn't it? How can we live a Godly life surrounded by such evil and danger?

Thousands of years ago, during the Great Exodus, the Israelites became rebellious. They were missing their creature comforts, the worldly things to which they had grown accustomed. They began to lose their faith in Moses.

God called to Moses from the mountain. This is what God told him to say: "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, how I bore you on eagles' wings which brought you to Me. Tell my people, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you will be my treasured people, indeed the whole world is mine. You shall be for me, a priestly kingdom, and a holy nation. These are the words you shall speak to the Israelites."

So, Moses told the people all that God had communicated to him, and the people said, together, "Everything that the Lord has spoken, we will do." When God speaks, we are all supposed to listen and act accordingly.

Jesus sent out his disciples, into a very ungrateful and scary world. He told them, "Be calm, never be driven to anger. If the people of a city do not want to hear the Good News, then move on, kicking the sand of that place from your sandals. If they are not interested, go to the next town. Maybe my stories, my Word, will ignite a flame of love and the story will be spread."

Do you remember the great meetings led by Billy Graham? People flocked from far and wide, just to be a part of a revival. There were folks who wanted, no, needed to know about Christ. Back in those days, children were taught about Jesus from infancy, at home and at school, and they were part of the Sunday connection with their parents in worship.

Okay, so we are not Moses or Jesus. We have no tools by which we can affect change in this all too worldly world. Think **you** don't have the right equipment to make a change?

If each of us could bring one friend to Jesus, our churches would become 'self sustaining' and would have fewer financial problems. There might even be something left over.

You, and me, we *are* evangelists, like the few disciples Jesus sent out into the world to tell the stories, which grew the Christian faith. There were just twelve of them, and they built our amazing world church from nothing. They called upon Christ when the going became tough. They listened for His Word, His Holy Spirit and were guided by what He said.

Brothers and sisters, God is not asking you to become a Billy Graham, leading Tent Meetings and saving thousands. God is asking you to be aware, in your sphere of influence, of opportunities that could lead another to Christ.

The smallest seed will surely grow in fertile soil. Never hesitate to share about what has impacted your life, with whomever God places in your path. Remember, if a seed germinated inside you, then the same seed can grow in others.

When we share because we care, our effectiveness increases...people will, in turn, begin to care more, and that is the very building block for strong relationships.

Candy Lightner had a 13-year-old daughter who was killed by a drunk driver. She founded Mothers Against Drunk Drivers...MADD for short, and it has reverberated throughout the world. MADD has been responsible for many legislative law revisions that have reduced drunk driving.

J.K. Rowling, the author of the Harry Potter books, has affected an increase in the literacy of young people.

Greta Thunberg, a Swedish schoolgirl who, at age 15, became an activist for climate change. This sparked such awareness that the ethic resounded around the world.

And finally, let's not forget Rosa Parks, the woman of colour who said 'no' when she was told to give up her seat to a white passenger on a bus. This was a pivotal moment in human rights' history, which changed the law and outlawed discrimination.

My brothers and sisters, 'In the bulb there is a flower!' Let's be the seeds that grow those flowers!

AMEN