

God Fraud

A Christian since junior high, Carl was finally a senior. And although he'd been active in youth group for the last seven years, this year—what with his job stocking shelves at the grocery store, football practice in the fall, basketball practice during the winter, and track practice in the spring—well, he just hadn't made it to church very often his senior year.

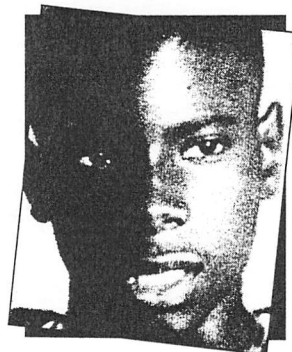
And he discovered that, being away from the church, he was beginning to have serious doubts about Christianity. Until this year he had been so close to the church and the youth group, he didn't realize what others said about Christians. And though it wasn't flattering, Carl had to admit that much of what he was hearing was true.

Despite his off-and-on attendance to youth group, Carl's youth pastor still respected him enough to ask Carl to speak to the entire congregation on youth night. Carl made a quick decision: this was the moment to confront the other kids and the church with the truth. He didn't tell anyone what he was going to talk about until he got up that Sunday night and started speaking. This is what he said:

Our church is one of the largest churches in town. It's the place to go. We have thousands of members and hundreds of kids in the youth group. Many of the kids go to my high school, and they're all popular. Our youth pastor is friendly, athletic, and a great speaker. We have the greatest programs and the greatest camps. We seem to have plenty of money in the youth budget, and we have regular mission projects as well. The adults in the church really support us.

There's just one problem. It's all a fraud. Or worse, a joke. I'm not saying we're all phonies. We're just another social club. The kids in the youth group go to the same parties as everyone else. In fact, there isn't one difference between most of the kids in our church and the rest of the kids at school. The youth group kids have sex with their girlfriends and boyfriends, they make fun of people, they swear, they drink, they go to R movies or worse. They do what everyone else does—except they go to church.

I'm not saying we're hypocrites. I'm just saying we don't see what the point is—we come to church and behave one way, and then go to school or work and behave another way. I think it's time for all of us to be honest. Christianity doesn't make any difference, so why even go to church? It's just another place to go. I don't go anymore. At least I feel more honest.



"What bothers

me about Christians is they don't like the truth. They like to sweep it under the rug in the name of 'not offending a brother' or 'not creating dissension'. All they really want to do is avoid conflict. Yet I believe that conflict and confronting wrong is good. Christians are too nice for their own good."

Corey, 17

The Stats

Among Christians who classify themselves as born again:

- ☐ 39% believe "if people are generally good or do enough good things for others during their lives, they will go to heaven."
- ☐ 29% say there are some crimes, sins, or other things that God cannot forgive.
- ☐ 15% say the Bible isn't "totally accurate in all of its teachings."

Barna Research Group
March 18, 1996

By the Book...

When they heard this [Stephen's severe sermon], they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

Acts 7:54-60

1. What do you think of Carl's speech? Do you agree or disagree?
2. What would you have said to Carl after his speech?
3. Do you think Carl should have said this in church without warning anyone?
4. Compare Carl's speech with some of the speeches Jesus gave to religious groups of people. What do you find?

