



## When I Was A Young Kid

By Dr. Gregory Wiens

When I was a young kid growing up, I questioned everything. My mother used to tell me at times that I could not ask “Why?” any more, because I wore her out. I seemed to be continually bothered by why things were the way they were. I know it was frustrating to my parents, but it was also frustrating to my Sunday school teachers; because I questioned everything I saw in the church as well. In the early Sixties, this wasn’t a necessarily valued attribute!

I really wasn’t a bad kid, just a curious one. I remember specifically asking:

- If you died walking up the altar to accept Jesus, would you go to hell?
- If you swore as you were in a car accident and died, would you go to hell?
- If Christians don’t smoke for their health, why are they so fat? Isn’t that as much of a health concern?
- If we have to wear a tie because we are going into God’s house, what about God seeing us naked in the shower? Does he have a problem with that?
- If Christians are supposed to love each other, why do they talk behind each other’s back so much?

I was really bothered by people just going through the motions without thinking. Fortunately, my parents were sincere and there was integrity in their lives so I didn’t reject Christ. However, when I went to college, I left the church because I found so few people who were really interested in thinking honestly about their faith. I have now come to realize in a dominantly churched culture, there is significant pressure for people to conform to the behaviors of the majority. That is what we had in the Fifties, Sixties and early Seventies (and still today in some portions of our state and nation).

For most of Florida, this dominant Christian culture no longer exists. In our present culture, people are free to act, dress, speak, think and feel just about anyway they want to. The unfortunate side of this is the rampant way sin has become so acceptable in our world. MK and I recently ran into a couple who were obviously about six or seven months pregnant and as we began talking with them they told us how they wanted to get married in a year or so. They obviously felt there was nothing inappropriate about the chronology of events in their relationship. Every day we are presented with the devastating impact of sin in our culture: pornography, affairs, murder, cheating, lying, divorce, abductions, stealing, child abuse, abortion, and starving people to name a few.

However, there is an upside to this culture, it allows you to see what people are really like. You are more likely to see what a person believes by their actions. If people don’t feel pressured to conform to a set of expected norms of behaviors, then you will see their real beliefs lived out. This is true in the world of people who are far from Christ. They really don’t care what churched people think.

It is true of those OUTSIDE THE CHURCH. However, I am afraid it is seldom true of those INSIDE THE CHURCH. I can’t tell you how often I have seen a church hurt by people putting up a front. In the church, we still play the game when we pretend to act like people wants us to act. It doesn’t matter what is actually going on in the rest of our lives, we simply put up a false façade.

How many pastors do you know who kept an image that everything was okay, while their lives were falling apart? It is so easy to think we look spiritual when we have no problems; so we don't share any problems until they are in our past. It is always so refreshing for me to talk with alcoholics who are diligently working through their Twelve Step programs. This is because they have no façade; they simply are who they are. They are not afraid to talk about their issues, addictions, sins (past and present), weaknesses, desires, failures and hopes. Their recovery depends upon their total honesty.

Most of us in the church could not stand long in a culture of such honesty. I am not suggesting that we launder our sins in front of the whole congregation, but I am suggesting that we get honest first with ourselves and then with others. We need to stop trying to act like we all have our lives so together.

I find it refreshing when I meet with a pastor and he/she tells me, "I really can't tell you why our church is growing"...or as I had a famous pastor tell me, "I haven't worked much on a sermon in years, I download online sermons or read them in books and just adapt them". I love such honesty.

It isn't that we have to agree with each other all of the time, but we should be able to be honest with each other all of the time. That's what Paul meant when he said in Ephesians 5 <sup>14</sup>*Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming.* <sup>15</sup>*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.* <sup>16</sup>*From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.*

He says when we are mature (verse 13) then we will not be led astray, but rather we will speak the truth with each other in love...and then we will be like Christ. Jesus clearly had a tough time with the Pharisees because they said one thing and lived another. My observation is that we can never have healthy dialogue until we have healthy honesty. Jesus did not hesitate to tell people where He stood, if it would help them or the discussion.

I still ask questions a lot, but I am not a skeptic. I am still very curious, but I have faith. I do like hanging out with people today, who are not afraid to ask tough questions without giving simple answers. I do enjoy honest and authentic people who continue to walk by faith in Christ. I pray that is the kind of body we can be. One that as we all seek to know Christ, understand His word, walk in the Spirit and become obedient to Him that we are able to lower our guard and let others see what God already knows.