

[ARM Prison Outreach International](#)

"Ministers' Minute" Volume 8 Number 3

[SERIES: "WHAT THE NEW GENERATION THINKS ABOUT THE CHURCH -- WHY IT MATTERS AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT" -- PART 5](#)

Editor's Note: This "MM" is the third email message of 2009 in a series that ARM is sending as an encouragement to preachers, chaplains, and Christian workers around the world. This issue is the 87th "MM" sent. All are archived -- just [click here](#) to see links to all messages sent since January of 2002.

This month's message is the fifth of a series of seven being sent on this theme. Larry Farthing, my older brother, deals with some crucial issues for the church and its reputation in each community. How are Christians perceived by the non-believers in our culture? How are congregations seen by non-members in their communities? It is my prayer that this message will encourage you and those you teach, lead, and encourage.

May God bless your labors! -- Rod Farthing, Development Director

The Mailbag

Thanks, Rod, for another really good "Minute". I have always appreciated your straight-forward, relevant sermons. People don't want to be scolded, but they do want to be challenged. And I think they want to have their toes stepped on. How convicting it is when the only Christian witness they see is me... Hope your day blesses. D in Indiana

SERIES: "WHAT THE NEW GENERATION THINKS ABOUT THE CHURCH WHY IT MATTERS AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO ABOUT IT"

#5: "You Don't Live in the Real World!"

INTRO:

According to the research data published in David Kinnaman's book, *Unchristian*, the "outsiders" or non-practicing Christians among the two younger adult generations, called the Busters and the Mosaics, describe the church as:

- The Titanic – a ship about to sink but unaware of its fate;
- A powerful amplifier being undermined by poor wiring and weak speakers;
- A pack of domesticated cats that look like they are thinking deep thoughts but are just waiting for their next meal;
- An ostrich with its head in the sand;
- A hobby that diverts people's attention.

They characterize Christians in these six ways:

1. They're out of tune with real-world choices, challenges, and lifestyles they face; their Christianity is antiquated.
2. Their Christianity is a predictable religion of rules and standards; it's boring.
3. Their Christianity insulates them from thinking; it makes them brain-dead; they can't relate to the rest of us.
4. They live in their own little world; it's like they live in a bubble and don't know how to function on the outside.
5. They speak their own language; they use words and phrases no one else understands.
6. Their Christianity is confusing; it isn't in step with people of today's world.

WHY DO THEY THINK THIS WAY?

Four reasons are offered:

First, Kinnaman says, "If you have spent much time with people in their twenties or thirties, you know that Mosaics and Busters are the antithesis of 'sheltered.' This is one of the reasons Christianity, in its sheltered, clueless, non-intellectual form, makes no sense to them. Trained to believe they have control over just about everything and expecting to participate in reality, young adults don't resonate with a vision of cloistered Christianity. A faith that sidelines them is not tenable. Their existence is anything but bubble-bound" (Unchristian, p. 125).

The twenty-somethings and thirty-somethings, with all the media, the internet, movies, magazines, music, and television at their disposal, are exposed to more information, philosophies, and ideas about life than any generation in history.

Second, they have grown up as one of the most "protected" generations in history, from car seats and air bags to public limits on smoking and other community safety standards. This "overprotection" seems to fuel their willingness to "defy" the safe life, the routine, and try something new, especially if it means breaking free of parental boundaries.

Third, they resist simplistic answers. Kinnaman writes: "They are not bothered by contradictions or incongruities" (p. 125). (This explains some of their enthusiasm for Barack Obama.) They tend to think that life is so complex that the answers they hear from the typical church or Christians are too simplistic, so they reject them. "Spirituality that is focused on 'dos and don'ts' rings hollow."

Fourth, Christianity doesn't seem up to the challenges their world presents. They have lived in a world that is so much different from the world we older generations grew up in. Their *schools* have been more diverse and violent. Their *homes* have been more fractured and a lot less of a safe place. They have lived in the aftermath of the "sexual revolution." *Substance abuse* has been at an all-time high during their lifetimes. *Profanity* has become a natural part of their conversations and self-expression. Half of them admit to being "stressed out." One out of six has *contemplated suicide*. One out of twelve has *attempted suicide*. And they don't think

Christianity has the answers.

HOW SHOULD WE RESPOND?

From a scriptural perspective, I think we should respond in at least the six following ways:

First, we need to remember what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, recorded in Matthew 5:13-16:

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

We need to get out of the shaker and touch the lives of people. We need to live our faith more openly.

Second, we need to quit being afraid of the world. As Paul said to Timothy in 2 Timothy 1:7,

“...God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline.”

And as John wrote in 1 John 4:18,

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear...”

Paul reminds us in Romans 8:38-39,

“...I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

We tend to be afraid of the world, of rubbing shoulders with it, of having relationships with those who live in it.

Third, we need to quit being offended by the world. Jesus said in John 16:33,

“I have told you these things (about what was going to happen to him) so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.”

We need to be like Paul was in Athens. He saw his being surrounded by pagans as an opportunity, not a time of persecution. He didn't take offense at their pagan philosophies; he took advantage of an opportunity to give them the truth.

Fourth, we need to see Christ's "Great Commission" as the ultimate purpose of our lives. We are here to make disciples, baptize, and teach, especially those in desperate situations. Jesus

said in Matthew 9:12-13,

“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. . . I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Fifth, we need to be Daniels. He grew up in an ungodly society, held to his godly standards, and became the most influential man in Babylon.

Sixth, while we are not *of* the world, we are to be *in* it. Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17:14-18,

“I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”

While we are to be unspotted or unaffected by the world, we are still called upon to affect it – to be salt and light. If the world never sees the life of Jesus reproduced in our lives, it has no reason to glorify God.

SO WHAT CAN WE DO?

Talk to people.

Ask questions. Listen to their answers. Open up your life to anybody you can engage in conversation.

Do something.

Set some goals for your life that have to do with encouraging people to consider their relationship with God – goals other than just getting them to church.

Join your faith to some action.

Show Jesus-type love and concern in some specific ways. Help some people in need.

Allow yourself to get excited about the kingdom of God.

Chuck Colson says, “The excitement of Christianity won’t come back because of ‘happy music’; it will come back when we understand the vibrancy and vitality of the biblical story of what the kingdom is all about.”

Unfortunately, we have made Christianity boring.

CONCLUSION:

Several months ago I told you about a dear friend of mine, the minister of worship and music at the Round Rock church. He and his wife, along with two of his daughters, had become a part of a Christian community just outside of Selmer, Tennessee. Well, I received an e-mail recently that announced their intention to leave the Dove Creek Community and go back into ministry with a local church. He said, “It is time for us to leave Dove Creek and seek a position in the

ministry again.”

I was glad to hear that. The only way they can be salt and light for a spoiling, dark world is to get out of the shaker. Perhaps they needed the time at Dove Creek to “recharge their spiritual batteries” so to speak. I pray the Lord will use them as He did Daniel.

Remain faithful unto death .." Rev. 2:10B

**Rod Farthing, ARM National Development Director rodfar@arm.org
3127 Hwy K, Salem, MO 65560**

**Check out our web sites: www.arm.org www.abarc.org www.raphahouse.org www.daughtersofruth.org
In 2008, ARM donated almost 40,000 FREE Bible courses to prisoners!**