

How to Succeed at Christianity without Really Trying

Back in the late 1980s, I did a stint as a landscape guy. I was a mower operator for a commercial company and I lived my life as most of my colleagues did. My typical day was to be up at 5 a.m, work until 6 p.m., drink until midnight, pass out, and repeat.”

Other than the occasional night that carried into the morning, where I often went straight from drinking to working, that was my life. And like every guy, I think I got to a point where I thought, “There has to be more than this.” After all, I was in my 20s, I had a girlfriend of sorts, an apartment ... I was a man, I suppose.

I worked side-by-side with a guy named Bruce, who was an overtly born-again believer. He used to tell me, every single day, that I needed Jesus.

Jesus who? I had no idea who Jesus was, but Bruce kept on me. I finally began questioning him about life, space, Noah’s ark, creation ... anything that popped into my head. He did a great job of answering all of my questions, so finally, during our typical lunch-in-the-truck, I had the stones to ask him about marriage.

After a little pause, Bruce told flatly me that, as part of following Jesus, he and his wife felt that sex was strictly for procreation. He said that they were done having kids, and that he hadn’t touched his wife in more than 12 years. And thus marks the abrupt end to what we’ll call: “Exploring Christianity with Bruce.”

Fast forward to just a few years ago. I was then the master of

ceremonies at Christian men's events all over Florida, and it was almost time to take the stage and launch into eight hours of sheer, albeit overproduced, manliness. At zero hour, two older (much older) men approached me, pointed angrily at the stage and shouted, "You can't have drums on the platform! It's not Christian!"

After digging deep into the dark recesses of my Old Testament knowledge, I informed them both that King David danced naked, and that we would be doing the same thing during the afternoon session. And thus marks the abrupt end to "My conversation with two old dudes about drums."

As I look back at my well-over-30 years of living a life without Jesus, and why I thought it was better than the alternative, I can narrow the main reasons down to just a few bullets. First, Christianity was all sacrifice and everyone was beyond dull. I felt, at this time in my life, that a man had to jettison anything fun in order to be Christian.

Secondly, and perhaps even more importantly, every Christian man I knew was "man repellent." I didn't see anything that I wanted to be, so I avoided them all. Ultimately, as many non-believers do, I came up with this simple math equation: Church + old people, divided by coats & ties + pipe organs = boring Christianity. Notice that God isn't in the equation, nor is Jesus Christ. But that was my reality. And it still is for a lot of guys.

So how does a man succeed at Christianity without really trying? Simple. Back it up 2,000 years, and let's take it from the Master Himself. Here are three simple guidelines that will make life as a believer easier, and maybe even lead a man who isn't saved right to the foot of the Cross.

1. It's all about love. Jesus gave us two commandments, right? Love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength (aka- everything you got) and love your neighbor as yourself

(Matt. 27:37-40). When in doubt, love. When the guy next to you in traffic flips you off, love him. It isn't about wardrobe, doctrine, music, Bible translations or pews. Jesus narrowed all the rules into one word: Love!

2. Live life as a paradox. Think backwards to live forwards. If the world tells you it's right, it's probably wrong. Love your enemies (Matt. 5:44). When you are weak, He is strong (2 Cor. 12:10). We must die to live (Rom 8:13, Phil 1:21).

3. Edify, don't destroy. Ephesians 4:29 says "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen." When you want to level someone with your tongue, just don't. James 1:26 says it best: "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless." I don't know about you, but my mouth gets me in a lot of trouble. Check out Proverbs 18:21 and James 3:1-12.

We need to drop our doctrine and take a good look at those three concepts. Apply them to any situation.

Your wife is all over you? Love her, serve her, love God with everything you have and speak kindly to her regardless of what she said. Boss at work is an overbearing jerk? Love him, work hard, love God with everything you have and watch what you say. Kids are out of control? Love them, love God with everything you have and don't exasperate them with your words.

It's really as simple as 1, 2, 3. Love, serve and edify. And guys like me will see something in you that they desperately want. Well done!

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