

'Unplanned,' 'Captain Marvel' and the State of the American Church

I'm thrilled to hear about the great impact that *Unplanned* is already having. It has exceeded box office expectations and, more importantly, the movie is changing many lives. How wonderful to hear of Planned Parenthood workers who are resigning after seeing it. At the same time, we can be reasonably certain that many more American Christians saw *Captain Marvel* than *Unplanned*. Why? It's because we'd rather be entertained.

Let's focus on just one segment of the professing Christian population of America, those who identify as evangelical or born-again, amounting to roughly 40 percent of the populace.

Even if we cut that number in half (which is quite drastic), that would still be 20 percent of the nation, meaning 1 in every 5 people.

Now, let's look at the box office totals for *Captain Marvel* and *Unplanned*.

The former has grossed about \$386 million so far, the latter about \$16 million, meaning that *Captain Marvel* has out-earned *Unplanned* by about 24 to 1.

You do the math. You tell me what movie Christians were flocking to see. The answer is obvious.

To be clear, I'm not criticizing someone for seeing *Captain Marvel*. I haven't seen it myself, so I don't know what's in the movie. And I have no problem with believers enjoying some clean entertainment (again, I have no idea where *Captain Marvel* fits in that spectrum).

What I do know is this: Most American Christians are so apathetic about abortion that we can't even take the time to see a powerful, even watershed, pro-life movie. Think about that for a moment, and let the weight of reality sink in.

It's one thing to share the gospel in front of an abortion clinic. Or to adopt a child destined for abortion. Or to volunteer time to serve at a pro-life pregnancy center. Or to make a sacrificial donation to the pro-life cause. Not every Christian can (or will) do this.

But to see a movie? We can't even do that? No wonder *Roe v. Wade* is still the law of the land.

Over 50 years ago, Scottish evangelist James Alexander Stewart addressed the superficial state of the church in the West. Of our public gatherings, he wrote, "The atmosphere of these meetings is so much like Hollywood that one might almost expect some comedian or film star to rush on the platform." (Remember: He wrote this more than 50 years ago.)

He said:

I refuse to entertain sinners on their way to hell. . . . I want to preach every time as though it were my last chance. I do not want souls to curse my name in the lake of fire and say, "Yes, I went to such-and-such a Gospel meeting, but that preacher Stewart only entertained and joked. He made Christianity a farce!"

The old-fashioned method of evangelism was to make people weep, but the modern "Hollywood" way is to make people laugh. Everybody has to have a jolly good time. . . . We must have plenty of jokes or it would not be a good meeting. That is why there is such a woeful lack of conviction of sin in modern evangelism. The Holy Spirit cannot work in a frivolous atmosphere.

Here is a solemn truth that very few of God's people seem to

*see: Everything depends on the atmosphere of the meeting. . .
. For example, if you were saved in a jazzy sort of
atmosphere, light and frivolous, with the song leader more
like a clown and the preacher merely glorifying himself and
using fleshly effort, you will also turn out to be a jazzy
frivolous Christian with no depth in your spiritual life.*

Does that not speak to the state of the church in America today? We would rather be coddled than convicted, entertained than exhorted, babied rather than burdened.

The famous missionary C. T. Studd also addressed the phenomenon of spineless, superficial Christianity in his little classic, "Chocolate Soldier."

He wrote:

EVERY TRUE CHRISTIAN IS A SOLDIER—of Christ—a hero "par excellence!" Braver than the bravest—scorning the soft seductions of peace and her oft-repeated warnings against hardship, disease, danger, and death, whom he counts among his bosom friends.

THE OTHERWISE CHRISTIAN IS A CHOCOLATE CHRISTIAN! Dissolving in water and melting at the smell of fire. "Sweeties" they are! Bonbons, lollipops! Living their lives on a glass dish or in a cardboard box, each clad in his soft clothing, a little frilled white paper to preserve his dear little delicate constitution.

And then this biting poem:

*"I must be carried to the skies
On a flowery bed of ease,
Let others fight to win the prize,
Or sail thro' bloody seas.*

Mark time, Christian heroes,

*Never go to war;
Stop and mind the babies
Playing on the floor.*

*Wash and dress and feed them
Forty times a week.
Till they're roly poly—
Puddings so to speak.*

*Chorus:
Round and round the nursery
Let us ambulate,
Sugar and spice and all that's nice
Must be on **our** slate."*

The good news is that, "GOD NEVER WAS A CHOCOLATE MANUFACTURER, AND NEVER WILL BE. God's men [and women] are always heroes. In Scripture you can trace their giant foot-
tracks down the sands of time."

May that same spirit of heroism and valor rise up in the church of America today.

Or, if that's too much to ask, how about a spirit of decency—enough to get us off our couches to see a life-changing, redemptive movie about the slaughter of the unborn on our watch.

Is that too much to ask?

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