

David Bowie: A Portrait of America's Youth

I received some inspiration from David Bowie's life and recent death. As an old rock-'n'-roll lover, I've always been intrigued by iconic personalities with brilliant minds and creative artistry—you know, the poets of this world who write or sing their philosophical views, of religion and politics, and of the ever changing times we live in.

I'm intrigued with Bowie because he is an enigma, and I see the youth of America in his life. I have not listened to his music since my college days, but after his death I found myself perusing some of his lyrics, curious to know where he stood with God. He seems like so many today, disenchanted with religion more than his concept of God.

In one interview with comedian and talk-show host Ellen DeGeneres in 2007, he recounted his life's spiritual journey and search for truth:

"I was young, fancy free, and Tibetan Buddhism appealed to me at that time, I thought, 'There's salvation'. It didn't really work. Then I went through Nietzsche, Satanism, Christianity ... pottery, and ended up singing. It's been a long road."

Here is another compelling quote from one of so many interviews he did over the years:

"Questioning my spiritual life has always been germane to what I was writing. Always. It's because I'm not quite an atheist and it worries me. There's that little bit that holds on ..."
—David Bowie.

I hope he hung on until the end and made the discovery that it is not religion he needed but the risen living Jesus. I trust he went to his grave understanding how futile life's

accomplishments are and how vain life is without Jesus.

Yes, David Bowie represents a generation today called the nones who are not religious per se, are generally bored with the status quo of anything, question everything, and really want to believe in God.

In a way, Bowie even represents bored Christian youth who have a growing feeling that something is missing from their Christian life and church experience. In addition to the predictability, they see the hypocrisy of friends who attend church out of cultural habit and tradition without producing any life change in them. They see superficiality and the church's obsession with image over authenticity. They hear the same regurgitated messages and familiar songs and clichés week after week.

They don't want 'cool' 'hip' or 'trendy' as much as we think they do; they just want real.

Here is what one anonymous 20-something said:

"If we are interested in Christianity in any sort of serious way, it's not because it's easy or trendy or popular, but it's because Jesus Himself is appealing and what He says rings true."

Let's get something straight. The large percentage of young adults who are leaving church are not doing so because of a lack of 'cool.' Heck, I started out in a little traditional Pentecostal church out of the Stone Age, with no sense of style or savvy, with older people that I thought were rather very uncool, but they had pure joy and excitement about Jesus that made Him real.

The Holy Spirit has come to make Jesus real. There's not much more this generation needs besides that. The Holy Spirit is the one who keeps everything from being predictable, monotonous, and traditional. He is the one who supplies the

power and revelation of Jesus.

Years ago I was preaching in a small church in Dakar, Senegal, a 90% Islamic nation. At the end of one particular meeting a Senegalese Muslim man came forward and asked the local pastor if he and I could come to his house to minister to his sick wife. She was very weak and in pain, and her mobility was extremely limited. She could not lay down flat on her bed or walk very far. The man told us that he had gone to witchdoctors and paid money to have her healed, but she had only gotten worse.

When we arrived at this man's house, we found his wife just as he had explained to us. I asked her if she believed Jesus Christ could heal her. After replying in the affirmative, I anointed her with oil and asked her to do something she couldn't do before. As she began walking and bending, all her pain and symptoms disappeared. But the story gets even better.

After I had left the country I received an email on the background and progress that this man and his family had made in the faith. I discovered that this man was formerly a gangster for the devil. He would gather young men and send them to churches to harass and trouble them in various ways. Even the Muslims in his neighborhood and area were afraid of him.

However, when his wife was healed and experienced the power of God this man began to testify of Jesus. In the email I received, it reported that he was telling the Muslims such things as: "You are all blind and fooling yourselves! Jesus Christ is the Son of God!"

I've lived in Islamic nations as a missionary, and I can tell you that no one makes bold statements like that for fear of offending the Muslims for they adamantly deny Jesus as the Son of God. In some nations such statements can even get you killed.

When a young person finds fulfillment in Jesus, his life comes into divine order. The kingdom of God dominates his thinking as it started to with me decades ago.

Enough of the coolest fads, newest trends, and most interesting and engaging programs. Let us get the raw, street-level, dynamic Jesus back into our lives, our pulpits, and our churches—the One who saves, heals, and delivers.

When Jesus becomes real everything changes. To know Jesus and to make Him known — that alone should be our aim.

The Holy Spirit knows how to do that. Listen to Him. Follow Him. And if you don't know how, find someone who does and learn from them.