

What Anne Frank Can Teach Us About the Modern-Day Church

My family and I recently visited the Anne Frank House and Museum in Amsterdam, Netherlands. It was very sobering for me to walk through the Secret Annex. I had read *The Diary of Anne Frank* several times in middle school, but to visit the warehouse where her family was hiding brought a flood of emotions. It shows the indomitable human spirit to do whatever it takes to survive and overcome, but it also reveals the savagery that humanity can show toward others.

During the tour, one can look up into the attic where Anne and the others in hiding would go look out at the city. Not too far from this location is the Westerkerk church. I couldn't help but wonder what, if anything, the Christian church did to help her family? In her diary, Anne Frank mentions how the clock tolls from the church were comforting to her. She said, "I liked it from the start; it sounded so reassuring, especially at night." But besides the reassuring sound of bells chiming, where was the church during these perilous times to feed, clothe and rescue her friends and family?

There is a sign at the Anne Frank House that says, "Silence is acceptance." This struck me deeply, as some places in our world seem to be on the verge of chaos. Christians are martyred in the Middle East, children struggle for air as their government uses chemical weapons on them, riots and racial tension are in the streets.

At the United States Holocaust Museum, there is a quote by Martin Niemöller, a German pastor during World War II. He said, "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not

speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me.” I can’t help but ask if the church today would speak up or stay silent?

Every Christian should know that God created mankind in His image, according to Genesis 1:27. This means that every person has value. When we are in Christ, we reflect Him to the world as we are being transformed into His likeness according to 2 Corinthians 3:18, which is accomplished by the Spirit. Every human being has priceless value as God formed each of us in our mother’s womb (Ps. 139:13). Just meditating on how intricately and beautifully He made us should draw us to prayer. But it should also motivate us to make sure that no one is treated unjustly or unfairly. The church should be at the forefront of loving everyone and speaking out against injustice and cruelty, even if the message is not popular nor accepted by the culture. The apostles understood this and most were martyred for their faith.

I think that we are guilty of being silent and that many Christians lack the courage the disciples of Jesus had after Pentecost. We are silent when we see the images of poverty from the slums of India, and we may be unaffected by the image of the young girl who posted pictures of her scars from cutting, crying out for help. An image of a child suffering in a war is pinned alongside a picture of what someone just ate for dinner and we may keep scrolling. Horrendous events and images no longer stop us in our tracks as we continue to scroll through our social media feed, overloading our senses with images of where our friends are as we post our latest “selfie.” Our society is currently overinformed but unmoved to act.

We have the convenience to close out our app and go on with our lives, unchanged in the moment. During World War II, groups of people were mocked, ridiculed and beaten in public, and people just kept walking by. In the 1800s, some people preached the gospel but bartered for slaves. This is tragic

and should never happen again, but we are guilty of the same.

It seems that no matter how barbaric the act, it can be viewed in an instant by hundreds or even thousands of people, but we have become desensitized and keep scrolling through our news feed, doing nothing.

If you saw someone bullying someone else on social media, would you speak up or keep scrolling? Or if you witnessed a fight in public, would you call the police, or record it hoping that it goes “viral” on your YouTube channel or yell at the police for doing their job?

Again, when we are silent, we are accepting it, and by accepting it, we are allowing it to get worse.

What the world needs is a heart change, and this can only come about by a real and authentic encounter with the risen Lord. Lives are changed by the preaching of the gospel and through the transforming work of the Holy Spirit as we apply biblical truth. As friends of God, we are to spread His love to all people and carry His kingdom everywhere we go. We need the courage that the apostles had after Pentecost, which was an empowerment to expand the kingdom of God on Earth.

The Lord’s Prayer says, “Your kingdom come; Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven” (Matt. 6:10). When we share the love of Christ and His message of hope, the Spirit draws people to Jesus, and hearts are transformed. And as we walk in the authority He has given us, we are participating with Him to bring heaven to earth. And the positive news is that by His Spirit, culture can be changed for His glory. I believe that when we are filled with the Spirit of God, He changes us so dramatically that we must tell others about Him and do whatever it takes to help a hurting world, showing love and dignity to all people.

The church is the light of the world and should expose the darkness and not be silent when things are wrong. The Bible is

our source of truth as the Spirit of God empowers us to be courageous and speak up to save lives, seeing culture transformed as the kingdom of God comes to earth through us. We must reveal God's love to every human being, speaking life and destiny to them, empowering them to see how much God treasures them. {eo}

Jared Laskey is starting *Destiny Open Bible Church* in Virginia Beach, Virginia, and is a contributing writer to *Charisma magazine* online. He lives to see Jesus awaken this generation to the power of His Holy Spirit. You can follow him on Twitter @jaredalaskey. For more information check out .