

The Gables – Christian on the Inside

Opening story:

From “How to know you’re a Christian,” by Greg Laurie, *Decision Magazine*, October 2010:

I heard the story of a man who had been down on his luck and was desperate to make a little money. After a few other doors had closed to him, he had the idea of going to the city zoo, hoping to land a job feeding the animals. The manager at the zoo had no openings but seeing how big this guy was, he offered him another position.

“Say,” he said, “our gorilla died the other day, and he was one of our most popular exhibits. If we got you a special gorilla suit, would you put it on and imitate him for a few days, until the new gorilla arrives? We’ll pay you well for it!”

The man was so desperate for work he agreed. In fact, after a few hours, he really got into the part – beating his chest and shaking the bars. Huge crowds were gathering. Maybe this won’t be so bad after all, he told himself.

But one day, he was swinging on a trapeze and lost his grip. His momentum carried him right over a tall chain-link fence into the middle of the lion’s den. Looking up at this intruder in his domain, the huge lion gave a ferocious roar. The crowds were mesmerized.

What was the gorilla to do? If he cried out for help, it would reveal his true identity.

He slowly walked backward away from the lion, hoping to climb the fence back into his own cage. The lion, however, with a hungry look on his face, began to stalk him step by step. Finally, in desperation, the gorilla hollered, “Help!”

Immediately, the lion answered in an annoyed whisper, ‘Shut up, stupid! You’ll get us both fired!’

You see... things aren’t always as they appear!

There are many people today who claim to be Christians – who may even think they are Christians – but they are not.

Rick & Donna Dialog (adapted from the Laurie article):

Rick: What does it mean to be a Christian?

Donna: You go to church, pray, read your Bible, obey the Ten Commandments, believe in Jesus, be baptized, and live a good life.

Rick: Well, that sounds good. But did you know that you could do all those things and not be a Christian?

Donna: No! Really? Are doing those things bad?

Rick: No, a Christian should do good things, but those are just things that are done on the outside. You have to be changed on the inside to become a Christian.

Donna: What do you mean?

Rick: Was the gorilla in the story really a gorilla?

Donna: No. He was a gorilla on the outside, but he was a man on the inside.

Rick: Correct. Did the people visiting the zoo think he was a real gorilla?

Donna: Yes.

Rick: So, the man wearing the gorilla suit fooled the people visiting the zoo. Everyone one thought he was a gorilla, but he really wasn’t.

Donna: Yes.

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Rick: It's the same with being a Christian. You can fool the people around you that you're a Christian. You can even fool yourself into thinking you're a Christian. But, you can't fool God. He knows what you are ... on the inside.

Donna: How do you become a Christian on the inside?

Rick: Well, there are several verses in the Bible that talk about that:

- "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again." (John 3:3)

Donna: What does "born again" mean?

Rick: You have to put your complete trust in him in order to live with him in heaven one day. Here's something else:

- "He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5)

Donna: And what does that mean?

Rick: It means that all the good works you've done in life won't save you. You can live an exemplary life, be religious, go to church, receive communion and believe that Jesus is coming back again someday and still not be a Christian.

Donna: How is that possible?

Rick: Do you remember what the Philippian jailer said to the Apostle Paul after the angels freed Paul from the prison?

Donna: Yes. He fell at the apostle's feet and cried: "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:31)

Rick: Correct. So what does believing really mean? The Bible says that even the demons from hell believe and tremble. (James 2:19)

Donna: I'm not sure.

Rick: There are four things you must do to become a Christian ... on the inside:

(1) Realize that you're a sinner:

- ✓ "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23) That doesn't mean some people, like only murderers and adulterers, but all of us. All people have sinned – including you and me.
- ✓ "Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) Who of us, if we're honest, can live up to that standard outlined in the *Sermon on the Mount*? We all should strive for excellence as Christians, but we'll never attain perfection in this life. Our personal righteousness, apart from Jesus, will never be enough to get us into heaven.

(2) Repent of your sins:

- ✓ Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you. For John came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the

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prostitutes did. And even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him.”
(Matthew 21:32)

- ✓ Jesus also said, “...unless you repent, you too will all perish.” (Luke 13:3b)
 - ✓ Repentance is more than being sorry. It’s an action. It’ is turning the direction of your life. It means being sorry enough to stop. It means asking God for help, and for forgiveness if you stumble and fall, then getting back up again knowing you’ve been forgiven (1 John 1:9).
- (3) Believe in Jesus:
- ✓ “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)
 - ✓ Believe that Jesus paid the penalty for your sins on the cross 2,000 years ago and rose from the dead three days later.
 - ✓ He paid for all of our sins – past, present and future.
- (4) Receive Jesus into your life:
- ✓ Why do we have to ask Jesus to come into our life? Because he’s a gentleman. He won’t force himself on us.
 - ✓ Jesus said, “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.” (Revelation 3:20).
 - ✓ Suppose you have a winning lottery ticket in your hand. Of what value is it? It has no value unless it is cashed in.
 - ✓ “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...” (John 1:12)
 - ✓ Our reward in heaven will be great if we become a Christian. (Matthew 5:12, Luke 6:23)

Be sure that you are a Christian on the inside and not just on the outside.