

BRAND NAME CHRISTIANS

by Carl McMurray

Advertisers really know their stuff, don't they? They spend millions to come up with a catchy phrase that will stick their product firmly into our mind. Have you ever noticed, however, that the "product lines" which etch themselves into our thoughts all have something in common. They touch a basic emotion! The advertiser will take a principle of life that we already consider as trustworthy and apply it to his product. Thus he gets instant credibility. The slogans that are used to sell food, drink, and athletic gear also apply to other areas of our lives. Consider, if you will, the church...

For almost two generations we have watched PEPSI Christians at work. They're the ones who think that the gospel is for a new generation. They are caught up in youth ministers, youth groups, church sponsored recreation, day schools, bus evangelism, free dinners, etc. Youth are catered to such an extent that even those young people get to thinking of themselves as extra special. Play time takes the place of study time. Wisdom, careful consideration, experience, and other advantages of age are traded in on excitement and zeal without knowledge. One congregation comes to my mind that had about 1400 in attendance on Sunday mornings. Out of that number, their "senior" (60 and up) Bible class consisted of about 50 to 60 people. They had the same elders for over 15 years. Where was the maturity? Where were the ones to slow down the fervent excitement and help those young Christians learn the lessons of past mistakes?

Then there are the BURGER KING Christians. They are the ones who want to have it their way. The only times it seems that there is any realm of judgment, is if it is *their* judgment. If something is suggested that they don't like they will "vote it down" or fuss and complain. Or something that gets them even more attention and even some sympathy is they will walk out. Opinionated problem children who are not open to honest study and change. This is good for Burger King and sad for the eternal King.

UPS Christians. They run the tightest ship in the shipping business. Emphasis here is on "tight." Year by year the price of EVERYTHING goes up. Paper, books, utilities, supplies, wages - everything goes up, except their contribution. The work of the kingdom goes wanting in so many areas while these get more and more comfortable, surrounded by their wants and desires. Is our giving really in accordance with what the Lord provides for us?

But all is not negative, thankfully. There are still NIKE Christians among those serving the Lord. These are the ones who just do it! These Christians don't get much attention, but I can't help but think that God will give them a great deal of it someday. You don't notice them very often because they don't complain or fuss when someone else doesn't do things the way they would like them done. They're just glad that someone thought enough to make the effort and try. When volunteers are needed, they don't spend a whole lot of time thinking about it, they just do it! Whether it's to clean the building or go door to door, be part of a visitation group or prepare their lesson for class, they just do it! When we need a teacher, they just do it! They even take extra turns teaching when someone else won't. If there is a project or a meeting on Saturday, or an evening, or a workday, they will be there. They will be present every time the door is open, and get this - they enjoy being with Christians and look forward to being with them eternally. If something in the church needs doing, thank God for this wonderful group, they just do it! They don't fuss, complain, criticize, compare themselves to others, try to get it all changed, or quit! Whether it is in a classroom, in the efforts of the congregation, or in a mission field halfway round the world, they will roll up their sleeves, and to the best of their ability, just do it!

And don't forget the DAIRY QUEEN Christians. They're the ones that are not satisfied with the way "we've always done it." They are mak'in it right. They're the ones looking at our business meetings and saying, "Is this the way it was done in the first century?" They look at the programs of work and say, "Is this all the Lord wants out of us?" They look at the teaching and preaching and question as to whether it is really scripture, opinion, or tradition that is being taught. With their help we discover our problems and lacks, and we also are able to improve and "make it right!"

Right alongside of the above group we find the GARBAGE BAG Christians. They're the ones whose attitude seems always to be don't get mad, get glad. They are the peacemakers which Jesus called the sons of God. They're the ones who are always rejoicing in their life. They are happy to be Christians and they make others happy to be with them. They expect good things, overlook small cuts and hurts, and put away things like anger, impatience, and discouragement from their attitudes. They are the ones that leave good impressions with visitors and make the gathering of Christians together a pleasant experience. "Rejoice in the Lord?" Their lives say, "Amen."

And let's not forget those COCA COLA Christians. They're the real thing! Some of the above groups overlap, but this is really what it boils down to. These people love God with all their hearts. They don't always understand everything that's happening. They sin and pray fervently for forgiveness. They hurt others unintentionally and are hurt themselves when they find out what they have done. They ask others to forgive them and they forgive others. They don't have all the answers, but they keep studying. They have human tendencies to get satisfied and resist change, but they try to keep their hearts and minds open and stay out of that rut. They are aware of base passions in themselves like envy, anger, or selfishness. And being aware, they actually do work at conquering those things. They stumble, but in Christ's name, they keep getting up. They slip back but keep moving forward. They keep their eyes on Christ, and often unbeknownst to them, they get better every year. They love the Lord and their brethren...and we love them. They are "just a little lower than the angels" right now, but someday will be exalted above them. They will not quit, or walk out, or give up, because their faith is not something they "do," it is them. God bless them.