**My Parents Religion**

The question I want to present to you today is: Do you have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ or are you living your parents Religion? How can you tell?

* If someone were to ask you why you believe in Jesus what would you say? (Is it only because your parents do?)
* If your parents stopped believing and quit going to church would you still find a way to go? Still read your Bible? Still pray?
* If someone were to question your faith and attack your religion would you be able to defend it? (Or is your faith only built on your parents)
* Why does a loving God let good people suffer?
* Why doesn’t God just revel himself so everyone would believe?
* Why do scientist say the world is a billion years old and the bible say it is only 10,000 years?
* Do you know where in the bible to find the answers?
* The real question is : Do you only believe because your parents do or do you have a person relationship with Jesus Christ?

If you don’t have the answer to all these questions, you are not alone. Many young people go through their entire life without ever knowing or even questioning their faith.

I was the same way. I was raised as a Christian by my parents and I attended Church and Sunday school. I admit I never really tried to understand it all. Probably did not listen all that much as my mind was always focused on other things (ADHD). But if you would have asked me, I would have said I was a Christian. But the truth was I was just playing the part because my parents told me I was a Christian.

The problem was, when I was in my high school years, because my faith was built on sand, I got pulled into the world and l walked away from my faith and left it far behind. I still said I was a Christian but you would not be able to tell by my actions. I Thank God that he kept calling me back time and time again!!! But is was a very hard road and I went through a lot before God finally got my attention.

God will let us suffer much in efforts to bring you back to him. Sort of like Jonah who ran the other way but ended up thrown off a ship in a storm and swallowed by a fish before he found his way back to God.

 In Matthew 7:24-27 Jesus Said “**Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them** will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

It does take work to be a Christian. Yeah it is good to come to Youth group and go to Youth camp but it can’t just be about the fun and games there has to be a point of realization that God is calling you to something greater than what the world has to offer and there needs to be some commitment to **following** Christ and learning what that means.

In the verse it says “Everyone then who hears these **words of mine** and does them will be like a wise man.” So obviously the first step is to know what words Jesus said. If you don’t know what he says how can you follow him. What will you do when faced with trials and temptations (The wind, rain & floods) your faith **will fail!!!**

So, what did Jesus teach

* Jesus Teaches us to **be humble**. He also teaches that you have to be a great servant to be a great leader
	+ Matthew 23:12 whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.
* He Teaches us we should **go the extra mile** to help others
	+ Matthew 5:41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.
* He Teaches us not to seek revenge when someone wrongs us but we should **Turn the other Cheek**
	+ Matthew 5:39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also
* **He teaches us to Love God** first and then love everyone else even your enemies
	+ Mark 12:30-31 … love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ and the second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

You’ve probably heard all these before. They are easy to remember but not so easy to follow.

* But it doesn’t end there. Jesus calls us to deny everything we desire for what He has to offer.
	+ Matthew 16:24 Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

Bottom line is: make Christ your personal savior. Studying his words and understand that you don’t need to know all the answer if you just know Him. He will reveal all that you need to know when the time comes.

John 14:26 the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you.

Is it time to make your faith your own? Do you really know Jesus? What are you doing to create that **personal** relationship with him?

First step is to really ask him to come in to your heart and change you from the inside out and if you really mean it, he will change you.

I will admit it sounds like Jesus is asking you to give up who you are and walk away from everything you enjoy, and he is, but he is offering you so much more.

The enemy will convince you that God is trying to take all the joy out of your life but you can’t find real joy and peace till you find Jesus.

The things that I thought I enjoyed most were all lies from the enemy and ended up causing me the most pain (Ask anyone who has walked away and found their way back). Really joy is excepting what Jesus has to offer.

The sad part is that some of you will have to suffer through great loss and pain before you realize this truth. (I Did)

**Some will fall**

Look at those around you. Statistics say that 80% of them will walk away from Christ after leaving Home. (Count people in room)

The Truth of the matter is some of you will fall away from Christ and I want you to know that when you do: there is a way back. In God’s infinite mercy and grace, he will open his arms to you. I just pray that you will come back or even better never leave at all.

In some way, I feel that God lets some of us fall away because he wants us to choose Him and not just follow him because of some obligation or because someone else told you that you had too.

Now that doesn’t mean it is Ok to walk away. Think of it this way: if you had your choice of a Mate for life would you want one that chooses you right of the bat and loves you with all their heart or would you want someone who says I want to go and sample some of these others first and then we will see what happens.

In a way that is what we are doing to God when we run off and follow the world, putting God on hold, just to come back some day and say ok God you were right. I am ready to follow you now.

 God want us to Love Him first because He loved us first.

Many times, it will come down to “Lord I need you now because I am so deep in trouble and everything has gone wrong.” Some will do this over and over for years before you are so deep in your own pit, fighting God at every opportunity, until you cry out, I can’t take any more Lord Please save me.

This was my life. I was raised in a Christian home went to a Christian school and was in church every Sunday but when I hit my junior year of Highschool I walked away. My life spiraled down and out of control. I thought I was having fun but looking back the pain far outweighed the fun. I almost lost my life multiple times. I was always in trouble with the law and ended up in jail quit a few times. Each time asking God to get me out, promising things would be different. I still have all the scars from that time both external and internal. This whole time, if you would have asked me, I would have said I am a Christian. I was so wrong and I missed out on so much I could have done for Jesus.

Thankfully God is full of Mercy and grace and He will take you back if you ask him to but there is always that chance that you will go too far, suffer to much where you can no longer see your way back or your pride will keep you from coming back.

Looking back, I can clearly see that God, like a good father, was letting me go to do my own thing, knowing I was going to mess up big time and then making my way back.

I used to ask my son: Where do you think this world would be if every kid learned from the mistakes of past generations and refused to repeat them but to build on the knowledge they received from those mistakes. Where do you think we would be? Much better off and we all know it! but we insist on repeating the same things over and over - Pride

 This world would be a great place – it would be heaven on earth if we could just learn from our mistakes and not repeat them. But we are hard headed and we want to see for ourselves. We think we can do it better than everyone else around us even when everyone around use has failed. Which brings us back to the underlying sin of all sins - Pride always thinking we can do it better. Have you ever said to someone “Well that’s not me”, “I won’t make those same mistakes” just to fail like everyone else? Prepare yourself, make a commitment now to Christ

Final thought

If I told you there is a place I really love. It is absolutely a wonderful place. It is so amazing. At least that’s what I am told. I have never been there and don’t know much about it. But I do know it is a great place and you should go some time. IT doesn’t cost anything to get there and doesn’t take much time it just takes commitment to go but, again, I have never really had the time myself.

How much would you say I love this place? Would you be convinced that it was a great place and want to go based on what I told you? Probably not

How convincing are you telling others about Jesus and the love he has when you yourself have never experienced Him first hand?

Take the time to experience Christ First hand. Develop a relationship with him and others will be able to see his light shine in you without even saying a word.

There are people you will meet in life that you will just know they are a Christian because they have so much love. They are always willing to help and listen. They may be coming to you because God sent them. God kept sending these people to me when I had fallen away to call me back. I am truly thankful and humbled to know that God wanted me.

Be that person to those around you! Let them see Christ in you and remind them how much Christ loves them. Don’t get discouraged if they don’t seem to listen (Deep down they are listening) just know that Christ is sending you! That should feel awesome!