Ex Marks the Spot: Why Young Adults Leave the Faith

My friend Abe was raised as a Christian, but abandoned his faith during college. "I don't know what happened," he said with a shrug. "I just left it."

When I heard about Abe's deconversion, my mind jumped to the last time I'd seen him. It was at a Promise Keepers rally the year after we graduated from high school. [Neither] he nor I had been strong Christians in school, but watching him standing next to his father in the coliseum, it was clear something had clicked. He seemed solemn yet peaceful, totally absorbed in God's presence...

Fast-forward six years from that Promise Keepers rally and Abe's sitting in my studio apartment, sucking a cigarette. The intervening years had taken us each down very different paths. His experiences had changed him - most significantly in his views about God. When I broached the subject, his voice grew quiet.

"When I left the faith, I thought it would feel really bad. I assumed I'd come right back, but I didn't feel bad. I felt nothing... Growing up, I had an uncle who wasn't a Christian; we prayed for him all the time," Abe said wistfully. "They probably pray for me like that now."

Behind the Exodus
Why do young people leave the faith? Whenever I ask people inside the church, I receive some variation of the same answer.

I'm told they leave because of moral compromise. A teenage girl goes off to college and starts to party. A young man moves in with his girlfriend. Soon the conflict between their beliefs and behavior becomes unbearable. Something has to give. Tired of dealing with a guilty conscience and unwilling to abandon their sinful lifestyles, they drop their Christian commitment.

They may cite intellectual scepticism or disappointments with the church, but don't be fooled. These are just excuses, smoke screens designed to hide their real reason for leaving. "They change their creed to match their conduct," as my parents would say.

There's even an academic basis for this explanation. Psychologists call this cognitive dissonance. Basically the theory goes like this: Opposing beliefs or behaviours cause psychological distress. We seek to resolve the tension by dropping or modifying one of those contradictory beliefs or behaviours. Once we do, our psyche's harmony is restored.

I think there's a lot of truth to that hypothesis - more than most young leavers would care to admit. "The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting," wrote G.K. Chesterton. "It's been found difficult and left untried." Even practicing Christians can attest to the truth encapsulated in that clever verbal twist. Living the Christian life is hard; and when you're falling short, as we all do, it's easy to forfeit relationship with an invisible deity in order to indulge sinful, real-world desires.

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**THE HELP** is a drama set in the 1960’s era of civil rights struggles, with a focus on black maids in Jackson, Mississippi who begin speaking out against the bad treatment they receive from their white female employers.

**THE HELP** has some positive Christian content, but it also has some Romantic, feminist content and severe foul language. At its heart, it is a story of Christians loving their enemies. A main theme is that many of the young white women that verbally and emotionally degrade their maids claim to be Christian and are clearly not living up to Christian teachings.

Despite their bravado or protestations, party, alcohol and drug addicts are usually very aware of their need for transformation and desire to expunge themselves of the guilt they feel from their lifestyle choices. They are looking for someone possessing the mind of Jesus Christ to reach out to them.

Can you be that light today?

*Taken from www.movieguide.org*

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**September Hits**

**Rise of Planet of the Apes**

**Entertainment Weekly’s Greatest Characters in Movies & TV in the last 20 years**

1. Homer Simpson from *The Simpsons*
2. Harry Potter from the *Harry Potter* series
3. Buffy from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*
4. Tony Soprano from *The Sopranos*
5. The Joker from *The Dark Knight*

*Taken from www.popwatch.ew.com*

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**Emma Watson** *(Harry Potter series)*

Says Greene to *Glamour*, “I’m not going to get drunk at a bar. There are younger girls who look up to me. So I do my best not to stray too far.”

How would you define hypocrisy? Does conversion to Christianity imply having a sense of responsibility to others? Are we accountable for what our choices do to others?

*Taken from www.popreacher.wordpress.com*

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**Internationally known as the music download site of choice, iTunes is already dominating the music industry, and the iTunes Top 5 Songs - September list is no exception.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Song Title</th>
<th>Artist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Somebody That I Used to Know</td>
<td>Goyle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moves Like Jagger</td>
<td>Maroon 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Make Me Feel...</td>
<td>Cobra Starship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonight Tonight</td>
<td>Hot Chelle Rae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheers (Drink To That)</td>
<td>Rihanna</td>
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*Whatever, it doesn’t matter, oh well! We’re going at it tonight tonight There’s a party on the rooftop of the world Tonight Tonight - Hot Chelle Rae*  

*Take from www.movieguide.org*