



## Where Can I Get a Paper?

It was a quaint little bakery, coffee shop in Victoria, Minnesota, about twenty minutes west of Minneapolis. Lorraine had an appointment that lasted about two hours, so I hit the coffee shop.

After an hour and a half, I felt like I needed a break. It was Saturday, after all. I thought it would be nice to read the Minneapolis Tribune, so I asked a woman eating a sandwich at the next table,

"Do you know where I could get a paper?"

"I don't know," she said. "I don't live here. I'm from Chaska."

"Oh," I said. "I know Chaska. It's a nice town."

"I've only been there a year. I was in California before that." She was quite talkative.

"Wow! What are you doing way out here?"

"Work. My husband was transferred here."

"Victoria is a nice town," she said, probably fishing to see if I would divulge more information about myself.

"Oh, I'm not from here, either." I said. "I'm from Grand Forks, North Dakota."

"What do you do?"

"We have a ministry." Usually that is not enough information so I went on to explain that I produced youth events for several years that reached many thousands. Then I explained that I have written books, so we are taking another direction, now.

By now, it was obvious that I probably wasn't going to get a paper . . . and now I was nearing the point in the conversation when I could predict exactly what the next question would be, and the next, because I have had

this conversation many times.

She would ask, "What is the book about?"

I would say, "It's about reaching youth."

Then she would say, "How do you reach youth?"

. . . and that's exactly how the conversation went. At the "How do you reach youth?" question, I began to get uncomfortable, as I always do. That is because every committed adult Christian, it seems, wants to know how to reach youth. But when I tell them, usually they don't like what I say.

There are a few different ways to explain why we have lost our youth, depending on what angle you take. I decided to take the angle of the youth culture as contrasted against a traditional church service. "Well," I said. "In the traditional church across America, about 90% of the financing is given by those 50 and over, so the church produces a service they like. But the youth culture is driven by smart phones. Youth are on them several hours a day, and the cutting edge of the American culture comes down the shoot over the internet. As a result, they are saturated with today's culture, and they are constantly reminded to keep up, to be cool.



If they were to go into a traditional church service, it would seem very strange, way behind the culture . . . because it is."

*(David Kinnaman, in his book **You Lost Me** writes, "Young and old in America are poles apart.*

*Demographically, politically, economically, socially, technologically, the generations are more different from each other now than at any time in living memory.")*

"If we are going to reach youth, we have to give them a service that is on the cutting edge of their culture."

*Whoa! That got a reaction . . . as it always does.*

"We are not supposed to conform to the world," she said.

Well, that's been a heavy theme in our church teaching ever since I was a boy, and I'm sure a long time before that.

*"And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2 NKJV)."*

*Do not be conformed . . . what does that mean?*

I would guess that the first thing that comes to mind for the average older Christian is that awful music that young people listen to.

Now here is a great puzzle, and I enter into the subject reluctantly. When you start talking modern music, most church people, maybe the majority get very upset, some of them downright angry. The general opinion by far, is the music of the day is evil.

Well, for starters, a generation of youth has never in history liked the music of their parents. It has never happened. That is because youth want their own identity and their music is the first and most powerful element of that identity.

The thinking of the older generation is that if we have worship music that is like the music of the day, music you would hear on the popular radio stations . . . that is worldly! Horrors!

However, as my professor of music history stated, at the Bible college I attended, all Christian music after the fourth century was taken from the world's music forms. The simple way to state that is that all Christian music copied the music of the world, so in essence all Christian music came out of the world.

Here is what is so ironic. The Christian community lags behind, so they are always copying music styles that are several years old and usually have gone out of style somewhat in the secular venue by the time they copy them.

So if using the world's music is what Christians think of when you talk about conforming to the world, we do . . . always conform to the world. We just do it very slowly. We do it so slowly that by the time we have the music, it is old, so we don't think we are conforming to the world. So as long as we are behind the culture, I guess we think we are not conforming to the world. And we are behind the culture, perhaps decades behind.

So I checked out all of the major Bible commentators on the verse, Don't conform to the world . . .

Music never came up once. The verse means "Don't live like the world lives. Don't lie, cheat, slander, take part in drunken orgies, seek revenge

on those who did you dirty, don't curse them, and don't live like material things are the substance and meaning of your life" . . . stuff like that.

I told the nice lady about a church in Minneapolis that has a youth service, and two thirds of the congregation of over 3000 are young people. They have a service designed for youth, just like the traditional church generally has a service designed for 50 and over. Why shouldn't youth have a service they like? The adults do.

By the way, at the church I'm referring to, the worship team writes their own worship choruses. How cool is that?

*Tradition is the enemy of effective evangelism. Tradition says, "We want to keep doing everything the way we've always done it. We don't want to change...but change is the only way we are going to reach this youth generation. We should not be so selfish by not changing and hinder other souls from being saved."*

There is so much more to this conversation, so much that it would take a book to contain it. That's why I wrote one, and yes, we are getting closer to printing it. I still have some work to do and we need additional funding.

*Please keep praying.*

I never did get my paper that day, but the nice lady and I had a great conversation, and we parted with smiles.

*A special thank you to the management at our local M&H Station Store for allowing Lorraine to take the newspaper stand photo's for our newsletter this month.*

In His Service,

*George and Lorraine  
Halama*

George and Lorraine Halama

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scarlet circle

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