

Chapter 3 (The outside people)

Isaiah 42:1 *“Behold, my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the Gentiles.”*

I am the last person on the planet who loves people that spend their whole existence quoting Bible verses. Why? It’s because I know what is behind their mask. We all have had experiences that have affected us bigtime. My wife will not go to animal movies. She shudders at the thought of a sad ending. I knew a friend that refused to use a public washroom after getting crabs. I don’t blame people. Somethings make an impression on us: good or bad. That goes for Bible quoting people. I’ve witnessed their other side.

I have found that most Bible quoter’s live dual lives. They can quote till the cows come home. They can also hide dirt in their lives till the cows come home too. People on the outside of church have no need to hide sin. They will admit it wholeheartedly in most cases that they are sinners. Usually they say “so what.” As honest as the world is about sin, people that quote the Bible a ton have another side, a very dark and un-honest side. They chose to hide their lives behind their Bible.

Years ago, I was not even close to being a Christian. I had good friends who claimed to be bigtime Jesus’ people. I was not interested. One weekend we all headed out to the mountains for some camping. We brought the beer and they brought the weed. Oh, wait a minute. They brought the weed? That whole weekend these two tried and tried to get us to come to church. In my mind, I began formulating a view. What is Christian?

During one of these nights, we got into a deep discussion about natives. These two believed that this race were the devils’ children. While we were in-between joints, we all took our clothes off and went skinny dipping. The conversation continued. Of course, we’re in the

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water so we talked about baptism and believing in Jesus. That's what you discuss naked in the mountain pools while high. Bible verses flew out all night trying to convince us of the merit of God. On the way home my wife and I mocked what a Christian say they are. A Christian seems vastly different from what we had believed.

I was one of the outside people. Outside the church, outside of God's kingdom, and outside his plan. Plainly, I did not care either. Everything those inside people did in private, I did in public. I was not opposed to believing in God. The only thing that separated me from them was church. The questions were there. What made them believe they were better than me? It was this: they believed that they were inside Gods plan no matter how they acted. The fact I did not attend church weighed heavily on their view of where I was headed. I was an outsider destined for hell. They were an insider destined for heaven.

Come to church they said. I wanted none of that. I had been to church a few times as a kid. Boring! If you think about it, life is made up of chances to experience this world. We could go to church or win a trip. Attend concerts or move from job to job. I could get married and (I guess) one day I'll die. What else is there? My Christian friends lived that way too. If my life was fun, why add boring church? If they did everything I did, then why feel guilty about it at church? Who needs that?

On the inside of church walls, we have Christians. They sing "we are the body." At the Christian music store they buy Nicole C Mullen yelling "can I get a witness here, ya, ya ,ya." At that time there were Christian anti-gay books and anti-rock and roll videos. They called everything outside church walls Satan's playground. These good people had John 3:16 bumper stickers, crosses hanging on their car mirror, and thorns tattoos. They stand around handing out

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tracks telling us that were all going to hell. What a riveting life they were selling me. I really wanted to be part of that group. Not!

That's it really. Why that group? They say that church people have cornered the market on love. Why? It's because of 1 John 4:8 of course "*God is love.*" Yet, even within that they got it wrong. Read the whole verse "*Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*" From the inside your telling me on the outside that I don't know love? My family loves. The afterschool kids club loves. The Scout club loves. I know love with my girlfriend, music, and books. I love a lot of things. Why your group? How dare you say that you know love better than me.

How do you corner love with your God? If a group of people condemn us all to hell, is that love? If I go to church and the pastor says I cannot take communion with the body, is that love? Is it love to call me secular and not a friend? Exactly how do you love more than me? From my outside chair, the world loves people much better than grumpy finger pointing church goers.

On the outside it's all of us against a few of them. Seriously, if church is that great then why do I hardly know anyone who goes there? I did know a few who went to church. Not once can I remember any of them inviting me to know Jesus. One guy actually told me that I am not his friend. I am a school chum. His friends? They were only on the inside of the church. I briefly had a girlfriend who sang in a church choir. Yet, did she go to church? Honestly, I do not think so. Another pastor's son invited me. I went a few times. It was so boring. Seems like a better life outside.

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Yet, we were all in the same school. Many of them had sex and drank booze with the rest of us outsiders. My mom was involved in a church as a young girl. She sang Jesus loves you to us as we went to sleep. Not once did we pray or attend church. Not once! She sent me to church several times. She always said it was good to her. I should go. She should go? My mom loved to party. She cheated on my dad several times. Go to church Patrick, it was good to me. Yeah, I can see that mom.

From my side of the cross why would I go? I am sure that many of you would flinch just a bit. Then the verses come out. The reasons are generic. You know the ones? God has a plan for you. Jesus loves you. Yes, I had heard them all. Yet, (Christian on Sunday) if your naked in a group of teens with me, what is your witness for Jesus? That group of teens loved me and you too, and we are naked, bonus! The verses, please! Is that all you have? So, your argument for being a Christian is a few obscure verses and being bored to hell in a church?

There is an understanding in science that to break a habit it takes around 30 days. It might be a myth. They also say that you can't quit something without replacing it with something equal or greater value. What this means is that to replace potato chips, you need something that looks and tastes equal or better. Is it celery or tofu? If you're not going to drink at a party then how do I have fun? The Christian says don't go to parties yet if you must then just drink water. Come to church! Is church equal, better than?

You see, from my outside point of view it's all about perception. Life was meant to be fun. If church is deemed boring then Houston, we have a problem. As someone who now likes church, I don't think church is boring. Yet, I have been on the other side. You're boring. Outside we are to eat, drink, and be merry because tomorrow we die. The Christian tells me that it's hell

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for me then. Oh, you mean a myth, fable, or threat? My God is real, Mr. outsider! Seriously? So, my perception is veiled threats, boring, and no parties? Where is your love?

From my side, where is God? Did he kill children in a fire? Did he create white people and the devil made the natives? Did he cause earthquakes that killed my friends because they were not Jesus' friend? Prove your God exists? He does in the Bible. A book? No, the Bible. Yes, let me repeat it from my perspective, a book? A big, old, boring, and irritating book. I can hear the Christians screaming "you're going to hell for saying things like that." That my friends, is the God we see from the outside. Not a friend but an enemy of people and quite possibly a myth to boot.

It seems harsh because I love God very much. Yet, when I was on the outside, not so much. God does not pay bills. Some say God promises joy and prosperity. I've heard those sermons. Take the Christian part out and it's as random as tarot cards. The Christian tells me to accept God and pray. God brings joy, peace, and a plan. The tarot cards offer wisdom to the plan. A peek inside the future. A lucky penny thrown in a well could bring luck, success, joy, and fulfilled dreams. Cheaper too. The church only cares about my money. The Tarot card takes my money too, but I get something back that claim to bring me joy, peace, and wisdom.

This is harsh for the Christian to hear this kind of talk. They offer such a good God. A good way. Yet, to the outside people it's all bunk, nonsense, and a dilution. Do you realize that from the outside, death is a certainty in the future? Christians have said that people will be given a chance (even near death) to repent. So, we do what any outside person would do. Eat and drink a ton before we die. Yet, if were close to death, then it's time to pray and possibly repent. Outsiders are not that stupid. We know death. We just don't think a God will save us from it.

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Outsiders will gamble that “if” there is a chance God is real, they will deal with that part later, much later.

By the way, to the outsider, why repent? Repent from what? If life has been good, then I have no regrets. Yes, Patrick but repentance leads to heaven. Ok, but I think I’m good enough. Patrick you’re not. You’re a sinner. You’re not my friend but a chum destined for hell. God says until you repent, you’re not good enough. From the outside that is ridiculous. I never killed anyone. I don’t steal. I only use white lies (the good kind). Plus, I have seen you treat people terribly. I’m better than you. Maybe, I’m in and you’re out Mr. Christian?

For most outsiders’ repentance means nothing. If we give time to the food bank and don’t kill anyone were good. Outsiders do know what bad is. In many ways the outsider ignores sin. It’s just part of life. We don’t look for sin, faults, and reason to send people to hell. In some ways it makes me sick as a Christian. Christians spend a lot of time pointing to sin. They do it all the time. Probably the main reason I never became a Christian in my younger days was the finger pointing. Outsiders wonder why Christians hate people so much.

I knew a man who could care less about Christians. He said “oh, I want none of that.” None of what? None of the abuse of children. None of the money schemes on TV. None of the finger pointing about hell. Maybe he could use Jesus? You see, I don’t know. He was a really good man. He made sure all our birthdays were sung to at work. He signed all the cards. Raised all the money for presents. This guy told a joke every day. I loved that man. Why did he need to be a grumpy Christian?

I have not met a Christian man who could compare. I did know one guy who the church struggled with. He was rough stock. I’m betting that he was not raised in a Christian home. He

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was a big man with a big heart and warm big hands. He was always there when we did things for the church and community. My first encounter with him was memorable. It was raining and cold. I went up to the church doors to see the service times. It was late at night and the church board were about to meet. This man opened the doors (locked) and took my hands to warm them up. I love than man too.

Yet, good men on the inside are far and few between. That's me included. I'm not Jesus good. On the outside I know plenty of good men and women. People who have no time for God. Yet, they have time for people. I have wondered if last minute "go to heaven cards" could be reserved for these people. They say that God's love is the only reason we love. Then from the outsiders view why do outsiders appear to love more than insiders? Possibly, those warm people without the love of God are special? How could they possibly love more than most without God? I wonder if they are the predestined ones. I also wonder if church would ruin them.

From the outside, church is a horrible place. A place of deceit, scams, and child endangerment. It's how non-Christians see church and religion. You can defend, argue, and explain the good virtues for Christianity all you want. Do it until the cows come home! The outsiders place Christians in with Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and more. A Christian and a terrorist have several things in common: killing, mayhem, and a God. I don't care if you think there is no connection. The outsides have connected it all together under one umbrella called religion.

I still can't believe this really happened. Have you ever seen funny pictures of Jesus putting his hands over his eyes in shame? I served at a an extremely well-off church. They had a humungous budget of over three million. For most churches that is big. Each Christmas they were famous for putting on a live production. The place was packed for several shows a day during the week leading up to Christmas eve.

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On that last show, the finance pastor got up and asked the visitors to tune him out for a minute. He then proceeded to ask the regulars to consider giving more in the new year. He said they were short on budget and needed people to consider giving up their tax returns to the church. This is a church of a thousand full seats. How many were non-Christian, spiritual seekers, and friends and family of the regulars? Do you really think they tuned it out?

That's the problem. Christians think they watch but nobody is watching them. Nobody is listening. What are outsiders expecting to hear? Probably about hell and money. On that night they got both. The problem is that outsiders expect to hear it but they hope they don't. How to attract new people to church 101. Number one is don't talk about money. Number 2 is don't talk about money during a Christmas concert.

The other word that gets batted around like a tennis ball in a doubles match is Hypocrisy. If I had a dollar for every time someone has mentioned that word, I'd be rich. I knew a pastor that was a skin flint with money. He only associated with certain types of people. Not people he knew but just the ones he liked. One fine Sunday he preached on being a better Christian. That might have perked a few ears.

He said he was an individual. In a passionate plea this man said he recognized that others are individual too. He was going to try and be a better Christian towards them. The problem was that he was the worst. If he did not like you then just try and start a ministry. He held the purse strings very tight. Just try and bring up a ministry. This man only picked ministry he deemed valuable. Meaning the ones offered by rich people.

Could he be legit in his claim to change? Maybe he did change his ways that day? Maybe? Yet, he didn't. It is what it is: as he is what he is too. The only reason I hated that

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sermon was the word hypocrite. That pastor was honest. I'm sure he wished he could change. Yet, after so many years in ministry he decided to repent and change now? My wife says I'm not being fair. He could change. I just think a known church skin flint would need to be hit by lightning to change. There was a reason I thought of the word hypocrite that Sunday.

Sometimes, that is what the outsider sees. We say "*we can change*" but our actions and personality tell a vastly different story. I shouldn't just pick on one pastor. I am a hypocrite too. More unsaved people have called me a hypocrite than I can count. What do they really see in me? I became a Christian right after my split-up with my first wife. There were so many people that laughed at the notion of me being holy. Why? They know evil, debauchery, lying, and many other fine sins. It takes one to know one. I believe with all my heart that non-Christians make excellent fact checkers. A sinner knows a sinner. In their eyes, I certainly could not change from what I was. I know what it means to be called a hypocrite.

Outsiders that knew me before I was a Christian have reasonable doubts about me. They heard the swearing, drinking, and porn. They knew me. People like me don't change. Through their eyes what do they see? A terrible person that claims their good. I still can't shake the stigma of a hypocrite even though I believe I have changed.

To be fair, many sinners are going to church. They are trying to work on it. Holiness is a work in progress. However, when church people pretend to be holy, all hell breaks loose. Who do they think they are fooling? Certainly not the regular sinners. The outsiders call the insiders hypocrites directly because they can see it. It's far scarier when the insiders can't see anything in their own actions. Yes, if you're working on being holy, you will fail from time to time. Yes, that is exactly the moment that sinners from outside notice, and call you a hypocrite.

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It's like the idea of being open. I post my life on Facebook. I believe it's the honest way to live. Some well-meaning people believe that we should be private people. There are good arguments both ways. Yet, a pastor mentioned to me that we should have two lives (the one in public and the one in private). That attitude is directly responsible for the over-use of the word hypocrite. Outsiders do know what holiness means. Attaching the word holiness to church and church goers is a bad idea. Especially, if church going sinners are a work in progress.

Matthew 5:14 *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden."*

The best part about this verse is the conformity between Bible versions. Sometimes pastors will read other versions of the Bible to get the best fit. However, one version (KJ) worked for a very long time. I'm not sold on the changing the word (meaning) (version thing) to make Bibles sound better. I thought Gods word speaks to the heart? Is changing the words in the Bible about making God look better or people look better? So, the word "cannot" in Matthew 5:14 is constant in most of the versions. You should really get that changed. "Cannot be hidden" is a problem for hypocrite Christians.

Some outsiders have told me that dirty Christians are all over the news. Who wants that religion if it's full of hypocrites? I tell them this. God does not like hypocrites either. Exposing the light on a hill can be taken two ways. One is to show the world who you are. Christians were supposed to be the light of the world. To share their lives with everyone. Consequentially showing the love of God in our lives. The flip side is hypocrites.

The reason they are in the news so much is because God hates hypocrites too. If you're a Christian that is not living a good Christian life, then God has a problem with that. The reason there is so many in the news is concerning. Yet, we should rejoice. God will expose Christians to

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the world: for good and for bad. Bad Christians in the news means God is doing something about the hypocrite. The word “cannot” now might have some deeper meaning. It means that if we are the children of the light, we will be exposed one way or the other. God “cannot” have it any other way. Expose the goodness and expose the badness.

The reason outsiders complain is because so called Christians are not acting like they should be. They are right! That brings me back to the word “cannot.” To the Pastor: just try and live a holy life on the outside of church while living a hypocrite life deep within. Just try. I have known so many ministry people that quit over the years. Some were in the music industry and others were working in churches and ministries. Far more than I can count have had a life altering moment. A moment where their inside must be outside. They feel compelled to expose themselves to the world. It’s either live as a hypocrite or quit? Many chose to quit.

Did they quit or did God push them out? To the outsiders it figures. They knew that those goody two shoes had an extra shoe to drop. A bad side? Just wait and they will slip up. The outsiders have no mercy. To them, church people should not only claim to be holy, but be holy. Imagine that! The problem is that sinners attend church. They are working on that sin. Hypocrite is really spelled misunderstanding and impatience. How long does it take to beat sin? In the meantime, the outsiders are watching Christians in a fish bowl. Just waiting to pronounce the hypocrite word.

It’s not that many outsiders are angry with the church. It looks that way. Sure, they mock Christians. I watch Doctor Who. They mock Christians too. The Simpsons mock religion. Do these creators of TV know Christianity? Some of these mockers are like me and have experienced the inside of church life. Others just believe the rumors. Most people who mock religion have no clue why. They don’t really have examples or facts. They just believe all

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religion is bad. Is it fair? Unfortunately, it kind of is. The church has a terrible track record with sin and hypocrisy.

Think of a relationship as having a love bank. Your love and attention fill the others love account. They in return draw from that account and return love to you. It's a symbiotic union. Theoretically, God's love is in Christians. They love the world as God does and the world loves them back. It's a nice idea. Yet, the world does not love back for many reasons. Usually, Christians blame the Devil. Of course, the world hates us because it's the devil's playground. Yet, our actions in the world are not filling the love bank either.

Well get into it later, but love is a vicious game. Were told in one verse to hate the world. Were told in another verse to love the world. What is the poor Christian to do? The trouble for outsiders is the confusion. Who are you church? You blow up buildings with planes. Yet, you say you have a loving religion. Wait a minute! That was the Muslims. Then the Muslims scream it was the extreme Islamists. The outsider yells back aren't they Muslims too? The Christians then pipe in that they are not part of religion. The Catholics demand that they are the only religion. Confused much?

Offer outsiders service with love, but confuse the hell out of them. Tell them there is an inside and outside. God's children are in and the devil's kids are out. Add different religions to the mix. Who is Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, and Mormon? Put Baptist, orthodox, catholic, and Alliance on the door. Religion makes it easy for the outsider to choose God. There appears to be 2500 different flavors. Religion isn't coming to you. No, they want you to choose. Then they want you to come to them. So much for "go" and tell them. What a mess!

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To the outsider, it's all religion. That includes astrology and terrorism. Why do people choose McDonalds over Burger king? It could be the taste or the advertising. How do you taste religion? The only advertising is in the actions of the people within. Taste? You have to go in to try them out. That is the problem. There is a saying that people will never "darken the doors of a church." This phenomenon happens for many reasons. Why won't people come to church on their own accord? The big daddies are the rumors and the actions of the religious.

Jesus said that only the Father draws them in. It very well might be God the Fathers role. He draws. Yet, Jesus did send Christians out into the world to tell the good news. To be the good news. Either way, I mentioned in chapter 2 that God notices. God does notice outsiders. Most churches don't really notice until the hinge on the door squeaks. Who is responsible for the ones outside the church?

To me it's all in the look. I don't want church to look fun more than looking serious. It's Gods house. I don't want church to be stiff and no fun at all. It's God's joyous place. J Vernon McGee thinks some parishioners were weaned on a pickle. Why all the sour faces? I am not an Asian (sushi) guy. There was a place in my city years ago that boasted great food and a great time. I guess it was customary to drum with your chop sticks. I went there and had a great time. Yet, only once. They drew me in with fun and food. Yet, nothing held me to come back. What is a good reason to come back to church?

All the outsider wants is a good reason to come back. Let's not push them away with money. Let's not scare them off with hell. Don't give them food, yet show them very little love. Make the place warm but not too hot. Be interesting because you're interesting. One of the things that makes the Bible fun is the interesting verses and stories. The dynamic and complex verses

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that bind the different books together. Make the church experience touch the heart and mind of an outsider.

All they want is to engage. Engage in conversation. Engage in the meaning. Be part of a community that cares. Best friends take years to be best friends. Through all the ups and downs, they remain friends. That is our God too. Why eternity? It just might take that long to turn me around. An outside is a foreigner to Christian language and customs. Yet, we must speak to them on their level. In many cases in their playground. Respect and honesty are huge with outsiders. Why? Because, in the devil's playground, you will not find those two things very much. It's a dog-eat-dog world. Church needs to remain different than the world. It must have better manners, character, and charm.

One church perception killer is being a hypocrite. It's making 317 denominations. It's making hundreds of religions. It's driving a jaguar while feeding the poor. To the outsider it looks wrong. Why? Because it is wrong. Do you honestly think God is in control of religion these days? No, I think he has turned his back on the corrupt hypocritical mess. Why send Jesus to the religious rulers if God was in favor of their ways. Read Matthew 24 several times and then say God had favored them. Jesus came back because the religious had turned their back on God.

How dare I say God has favored me. How dare you say that God is happy with your church, life, and ministry. Do you honestly believe that it's all hunky dory? I have to ask you. Who would Jesus sit with today? The church? Which denomination or religion is God speaking at? Or, would we find God; yet again, hanging out with the outsiders. Speaking their language and feeding them loaves of bread. Burning a bush in their desert. The outsider could come in to your church, but he probably found Jesus outside the locked doors waiting for him first.