

Something to Pray About

By Cindy Sears – October 2009

"CASUAL OR CAPTIVE"

According to George Barna's research (*The Seven Faith Tribes*, c2009), roughly 80 percent of adults in America call themselves Christians. Of this group, 80% or nearly two out of three Americans are in Barna's *Casual* Christian category—roughly 150 million people. The rest of the Christians fall into Barna's *Captive* Christian category. What's the difference? And does it matter?

Casual Christians tend to be more interested in personal comfort than the condition of their souls. Though they follow a core set of values that are somewhat biblical, they remain "open to a wide array of moral perspectives and lifestyles." (p. 30) Although 74 % claim to have a personal commitment to Christ, less than 2% hold to a biblical worldview. They don't believe that Satan or the Holy Spirit actually exists, and though they accept the Bible as God's Word, they believe it contains errors and cannot be taken literally. They value self-reliance and tend to believe "that God's highest desire for them is that they be happy." (p.36) They seem to use Christianity as "a comfortable safety net" that they only access when things get rough. Less than one in five (18%) of Casuals engage in the three big Christian practices in a week: church services, Bible reading, and prayer.

Captive Christians are at 16% of the adult population—roughly 36 million adults. "The name Captive Christians stems from the fact that they are, as the apostle Paul described himself, voluntary slaves to Jesus Christ." (p.41) Captive Christians are easily and readily distinguishable "from the more lax, cultural form of Christianity seen in the lives of the Casual Christians." Captive Christians see this world as a battlefield and a temporary abode. They live their lives according to biblical principles; not only going to church, but actively participating; they believe the Holy Spirit lives within them and voluntarily submit to His will. Captives "have the lowest level of stress of any of the faith tribes" because of their trust in God. (p.44) They tend to live within their means and feel financially comfortable no matter what their income. They are deeply committed to Christianity and the church. Faith and family are their highest priorities. "Captives are... the least likely to view pornography, get drunk, gamble, use profanity in public, gossip, use tobacco products, or commit adultery. They are the tribe that is most likely to serve the homeless, help the poor, discuss moral issues with other people..." They back up their beliefs with cash, too. "They donate the most money to the poor (71 percent above the per capita national average)..." They give the most in other areas, also and surpass the national norm of church giving by a 10 to 1 ratio. They distrust the media and have the lowest levels of exposure to media content. They teach their children absolute moral truths. Politically, they are consistently conservative. Ninety percent of them believe the Bible is God's Word, that it is correct, and the only guide we need to know how to live a meaningful life. Most believe in Satan, the Holy Spirit, and the actual resurrection of Jesus Christ, and accept other miracles in the Bible, too. All of the Captives say that they are born-again Christians, and the majority believe that salvation is a gift from God, not something earned by doing good works.

If you want something done in the church, who would you call on, a *Casual* or a *Captive* Christian? How many of the *Casual* Christians will be told by Christ, "Depart from me, I never knew you"?

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