

Megan's Story

BEHAVIOR CHANGES ATTITUDE TOWARD GOD

Megan is an "All-American girl." Like other freshmen in college, she considers herself "modern." She communicates by iPhone and all social media, is comfortable with her "sexuality," strolls through Victoria's Secret with her boyfriend, and, ready for a serious relationship, scheduled an appointment to discuss birth control with a Planned Parenthood counselor.

Megan also considers herself to be a Christian. Growing up, she attended church regularly with her parents. She was educated in Christian schools. Her friends are Christian. She knows the Bible stories and sings praises to God.

Megan believes Jesus is her Savior. If you were to ask her if she is a creation of God, she would answer "Yes!" Megan knows that when she forgets to pray or skips worship for another activity or sins in any way, God remains her heavenly Father. This gives Megan comfort. She adores her "awesome God" on Sundays. But, on Mondays, she returns to the "real" world.

In the "real" world, Megan is in love and being responsibly adult. Planned Parenthood thinks it can help her separate the act of sex from procreation. One weekend while visiting her parents, Megan did the usual thing by attending church with them. But what happened took Megan by surprise. This day, the pastor seemed to look right at her. The Word he spoke did not comfort but, instead, convicted. Megan heard him say that those who follow the flesh by being sexually immoral, impure, and sensual are in danger of missing heaven (Galatians 5:19-21). Megan also heard him say that a new person in Christ is equipped to guard against passions and desires (vv. 23-24).

Megan was conflicted. She did not leave church that morning in a good mood. What did it mean to be a "new person?" How did that fit with being a "sexual being" as she had been taught to see herself? Couldn't she love Jesus and know He died for her, yet be "modern" in her thinking and behavior? In an honest moment with her parents, Megan expressed fear. "I've always known God loves me, no matter what. No matter what, right Dad? Right, Mom?"

In a way, Megan was asking: If disobedience or sin cannot make me less God's child, what does it matter what I do? Why is it so important to obey God? Why can't I just follow my instincts and do whatever feels right for me depending on the situation? Won't it all work out in the end? After all, Jesus died so that my sins are forgiven!

This is most certainly true. Jesus died for a world of sinners. You. Me. Every person ever conceived. But, dear Megan, our behavior matters. Why? Because our behavior changes our attitude toward God.

Evidence of this abounds. It is seen in a culture that determines for itself what is "right" and "wrong." It is the Christian parent who asks the pastor not to speak about the sin of living together lest his daughter who is living with her fiancé stop coming to church. It is the pro-life Christian who has four children but isn't married to any of their daddies. It is the Christian woman whose choice of clothing reflects her glory rather than God's and, intentionally or not, becomes a temptress. It is the Christian father who, fearing for his daughter's future, insists she have an abortion. It is the Christian mother who defends her son's homosexual lifestyle, saying, "God made him that way." It is all of us who want Jesus to wrap Himself around the desires of our hearts.

The heart, says the world, is good and can be trusted. The heart, says God's Word, is deceptive and not to be trusted. The fickle human heart thinks it is healthy even as the mind and body are behaving in sinful and worldly ways.

Is Megan doing what we Christians too often do? She knows she is saved and has the promise of heaven. But, does she want God to fit into her world? She acknowledges God as her Creator but, depending on her circumstance, does she re-define what He has made? She says Jesus is her Savior, but does He have anything to say about her relationships and choices? She finds hope in being a "new person in Christ," but is she talking and walking like a sinner bound to sin?

Megan's identity matters. "As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15). Megan is set apart from the world for God's good purpose because of what Jesus did for her. She has a rich inheritance. *Megan's behavior matters.* How does a daughter honor her Father? How does she reflect His agape love? His patience? His holiness and purity?

Megan's identity as a child of God will never change. But her choices and behavior can change her attitude toward God and place her inheritance at risk.

When we separate our God-given identity from what we call our "real world" identity—at any given time, in any given circumstance—we are in danger. We are in danger when we re-define things of God such as the value of human life, being male or female, and marriage. We are in danger when we follow instincts of the flesh and stubbornly defend every personal choice. We are in danger when we exchange His Truth for our opinion. These are dangerous behaviors that change our attitude toward God. It is idolatry to make God what we want Him to be.

But, when we believe that God calls us His "holy ones" and make use of His living and active Word in daily life, we begin to see that this world does not hold us captive. This world is temporary. It is a place we journey through on our way home to our Father's Kingdom. Our journey here gives us opportunity to think, speak, dress, work, play, love, care, and choose in ways that encourage others to ask: "Who is your Father?" "Why do you do the things you do?" "What is your hope?"

This world with its false promises will fade away. But the promised inheritance of the King to his daughter Megan is "imperishable, undefiled, and unfading" (1 Peter

1:4). It is with trust in this promise that Megan makes a holy difference in an unholy world.

TALKING POINTS

Megan wants God to fit into her world. She wants His blessings, but her will to be done. **Does this sound familiar to you?**

Megan's moods may change throughout the day, yet she thinks she can trust her feelings when making life-changing decisions. She seeks the opinion of friends, the internet, and pop culture. There is that hissing sound heard by Eve, "Did God really say...?" Did God really say you can't define your own image? Your relationships? Your lifestyle? **Do you hear this hissing sound? How do you respond to it?**

Eve responded poorly. She spoke God's Word, but inserted words of her own that He did not say (compare Genesis 2:16-17 with Genesis 3:1-3). **Are you ever tempted to add your own words to God's Word? Think of some examples.**

We are in danger when we tamper with things of God. We are in danger when we follow instincts of the flesh and stubbornly defend every personal choice. We are in danger when we exchange the truth of God for the lie. **How do these dangerous behaviors change your attitude toward God?** Think of the First Commandment: You shall have no other gods before Me. **How is this Commandment broken when we shape God in our image and make Him to be what we want Him to be?**

The world tells us to evolve—to break free from old ways of thinking. To step over boundaries, never asking why they were there in the first place. The world tells us to be sexy. But God says, "Be holy, for I the Lord your God am Holy." Holy means controlling our passions and respecting boundaries. Holy means being set apart for God. Holy is the opposite of common. **What does holy mean in 2 Timothy 2:21? Who is the "master?" Who is the "house?" What privilege do you have?**

We do "good work" when we worship God by the way we dress and with the words we speak, choices we make, and ways we treat others. **What examples can you give?**

