

“Outsiders”: 16–29-Year Olds Attitude toward Christianity: Barna Poll Shows the Benighted Condemn What They Do Not Understand

- 5) **Too involved in politics.** I agree. The church should stay out of politics. This does not mean that the political circumstances of the day are not to be addressed from the pulpit. This, too, is free-exercising as well as freedom of speech. Interestingly, the Lord’s public ministry was peppered by political intrigue on which He often commented, occasionally with fire and spice.
- 6) **Out of touch with reality.** This is due to differences in worldview. Critics of Christians and some Christian denominations are justified. But those who are critical of Christianity base their opinions on a secular or Progressive worldview. I would assume that most unbelievers would conclude that those who subscribe to biblical principles are out of touch with reality. One the other hand, those with a biblical worldview rightly think that the Progressive worldview is out of touch with reality. This is called freedom.
- 7) **Insensitive to others.** Some are, but emphasizing political correctness when people’s souls are on the line is to engage in the picking of nits. This was a dilemma that concerned the authors of *UnChristian*:

The main group we studied is “outsiders,” those looking at the Christian faith from the outside. This group includes atheists, agnostics, those affiliated with a faith other than Christianity (such as Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Mormonism, and so on), and other unchurched adults who are not born-again Christians. According to the research, part of the problem is we often describe these people with derogatory labels and terms, which they find offensive. Christians use terms like “pagans” or “the lost” or worse. Other phrases are also inadequate, such as “nonChristians” (which defines them simply by what they are not) as well as “nonbelievers” or “seekers” (labels that are not necessarily true of all outsiders). Labeling people can undermine our ability to see them as human beings and as individuals.

So, what word would best define a person who observes and draws conclusions about those the authors refer to as “born-again Christians”? The writers choose the term “outsiders” in order to be politically correct. But their effort is not really meant to define but to be benign.

There are a number of words that we “born-again Christians” could legitimately call such people but the way these “outsiders” are defined it is impossible to broadly apply them. They would not necessarily all be progressives, or Christophobics, or elitists, or antireligious fanatics, or secularists.

But no one can accurately evaluate or analyze what he does not understand, and it is impossible for someone who is said to be “outside” the “born-again” element of Christianity to draw fair and objective conclusions. There is a Latin term that addresses this problem: *damnant quod non intelligent*: “they condemn what they do not understand.”

And who are those who do not understand what they observe and then critique? The benighted! Such a person is defined as “existing in a state of intellectual, moral, or social darkness: unenlightened”;¹ “in a state of pitiful or contemptible intellectual or moral ignorance, typically owing to lack of opportunity.”²

Those who are in the dark cannot see and thus are unable to understand those who are in the Light. Those who do not have a human spirit do not have the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit and therefore lack the opportunity to understand what they cannot comprehend. Therefore, their assumption that the “born-again” are being “insensitive” is due their benighted status.

If expressing the gospel and a biblical worldview is perceived as insensitivity they are going to be incensed exponentially upon their arrival in Torments if unbelievers and banishment to the back 40 if believers.

- 8) **Boring**. There is certainly nothing wrong with being boring. The presentation of divine revelation often demands the observance of detailed exegesis in order to get a precise translation from which is drawn principles, doctrines, and applications. For those who are “outsiders” this level of boredom is apparently more than they can bear. Also, they may be attending mainline churches.
- 9) **Not accepting of other faiths**. This is to be expected of those who subscribe to any given system of beliefs. This is called “free exercise.” To accept principles that deviate from one’s own is contradictory and such a person would suffer from spiritual bipolar disorder. However, the Christian should always direct unconditional love toward all, regardless of their religious beliefs or absence of them.
10. **Confusing**. See number 7, above.
52. The church is losing its impact on our society because the message has been flawed by decades of watering down the gospel and subsequently the watering down of biblical teaching from the pulpit.
53. The tragedy is that mainline Christianity is populated with an overwhelming majority that is not even saved and as a result has fallen into the trap of salvation by works.

¹ Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 11th ed., s.v.: “benighted.”

² The Oxford American Dictionary, s.v.: “benighted.”