

Coffee and Christ

By John Cospers

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THEME: Church, watering down the gospel

CHARACTERS

Don- Music minister

Dave- Pastor

Erin- A "seeker"

Marty- A Christian teen unashamed of what he believes

[AUTHOR'S NOTE: This sketch was written as a response to some churches that have adopted the "Seeker Sensitive" style of worship and taken things too far. This is not a criticism of all seeker churches, as many of them present the Gospel without watering it down. Rather, it is intended to call into account the churches that apologize for the harshness of the Gospel, preferring to pass out coffee than to address the seriousness of a commitment to Christ. Jesus was never shy about telling a group of seekers to "take up your cross." Why then do we exchange those words for a good cup of latte?]

(The stage has a microphone at center. Stage right is a keyboard, and Pastor Don sits behind the keyboard.)

DON- Good morning to you, ladies and gentlemen. Welcome to the third morning service of the First Seeker Church of Smallville. We are glad you joined us for fellowship and worship this morning. We hope you enjoy your time with us, but we want to remind you, don't feel like you have to participate. We want to make you welcome here, and we don't want you to feel threatened in any way. And now, here's the man who will lead us before the throne, Pastor Dave Ruddell!

(Dave walks on stage, wearing a turtleneck and drinking coffee.)

DAVE- Hey there, thank you, Don, and good morning everyone. On behalf of the congregation here, welcome to First Seeker Church of Smallville. We're going to sing, we're going to share the word, and we're going to have fun but please, seriously, don't feel like you have to do anything that makes you uncomfortable, okay? Let's start with a little non-threatening worship, huh, Don?

(Don leads the song.)

DON- If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

DAVE- Thank you, Don. Folks, please help yourself to more coffee and Danish. If you're looking for a little something different, I recommend the vanilla hazelnut supreme. *(sips coffee)* Mmmm, delish! But folks, we're not here just for coffee

and music. No sir, no ma'am. We're here to celebrate a man. A man who is more than just a man, because he was also God. A man without whom none of this would be possible. *(with a wink)* I think you know who I'm talking about. So rather than hit you over the head with it, I'll just say... we're ready to introduce you to him. You don't have to feel pressured; please, don't feel pressured. But if you're interested in meeting him, and you know who I mean, you can make your way down that dark, private hallway to the Discovery Room, where one of our trained volunteers will introduce you to him in a gentle and non-threatening way. No one will have to know except you and the trained volunteer. In fact, to help you keep things secret, we have other trained volunteers by the door wearing the orange name badges who are part of our distraction ministry. So if you would like to sneak down to the Discovery Room, but don't want your family to know, just tap one of these folks on the shoulder and they'll distract your family while you slip away. And as a special bonus, everyone who visits the Discovery Room today receives a New Testament Bible and a free coffee mug.

DON- Oh, that's a nice mug.

DAVE- It's a handsome mug. And you can get it with or without the First Seeker's Church logo. That's right. We're not here to push you. We just want to love you and make you feel welcome. Well that wraps up our service for this morning. Yep, it was short, we keep it that way because we don't want to push anything on you... except maybe another cup of coffee.

DON- *(sings)* If you're happy and you know it, then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

DAVE- God bless you, folks, but only if you want it.

(Erin enters stage left, walks up to Dave. Don exits.)

ERIN- Excuse me, Pastor Dave?

DAVE- Yes, ma'am?

ERIN- That was a wonderful service.

DAVE- Thank you so much. What is your name?

ERIN- Erin.

DAVE- Erin, thank you for your compliments and for coming.

ERIN- I also wanted to say I truly appreciated your giving an invitation.

DAVE- Oh, ma'am, we don't give invitations. We don't want to make anyone nervous about making a decision for God.

ERIN- But what about your mention of the Discovery Room?

DAVE- That wasn't an invitation. It was an opportunity.

ERIN- Oh.

DAVE- Are you thinking of responding to that opportunity?

ERIN- Actually, yes. I've been coming here for some time.

DAVE- Have you had the coffee? It's good, huh?

ERIN- Uh, yes, yes it is. But I'm more interested in other things.

DAVE- Hot tea?

ERIN- Beg your pardon?

DAVE- We've been testing the waters to see if there's enough interest in hot tea to brew

some on Sundays.

(Marty stage right from behind Pastor Dave.)

ERIN- Well I do love tea, but that's not what I'm interested in. I want to know more about becoming a... What are you all called?

DAVE- Uh, independent, biblically-based, seeker-sensitive Protestants?

ERIN- No, it was something shorter.

MARTY- Christians?

ERIN- That was it.

DAVE- Oh, you want to know more about becoming a Christian.

ERIN- Yes!

DAVE- Oh, that's a wonderful thing. Simply wonderful.

ERIN- How so?

DAVE- Well, first of all, you gain a new best friend in Jesus.

ERIN- Jesus, huh? I hear he's rather peculiar about whom he befriends.

DAVE- Oh no, no. Jesus will be friends with any one.

ERIN- Really? No strings attached?

DAVE- None at all.

MARTY- Except of course you must forsake your mother, father, wife, children, siblings, home, work, and possessions. But that's not asking too much.

(Dave shoots Marty a horrified look.)

ERIN- What was that?

DAVE- That was nothing. Nothing at all.

MARTY- Right, nothing at all.

DAVE- Uh huh.

MARTY- Some folks have given up their life for him.

ERIN- Excuse me? What does he mean by giving up my life?

DAVE- Yes, well, when you become a Christian, you do surrender certain facets of life.

ERIN- Such as?

MARTY- Lusts, greed, personal gain, jealousies, grudges, hatred, prejudices... anything related to sin.

DAVE- *(nervous laugh)* Ha, ha ha, he's such a kidder.

ERIN- Uh huh. Is he right, or is this all a joke?

DAVE- Umm, well, uhh... Let me just summarize by stating things this way. When you become a Christian, your life will never be the same.

ERIN- Really?

MARTY- Sure. Just ask the disciples.

ERIN- Their lives changed, too?

MARTY- Sure. They went from the peaceful daily grind of fishing, tax collecting, etc. to a life of a lifetime of homelessness, hunger, prison, beatings, floggings, stonings, piercings, boilings, flayings, stabbings, stranglings, and executions.

ERIN- Executions.

MARTY- Yes, ma'am, all of the disciples were executed except the apostle John. He,

however, was imprisoned, boiled in oil, and sent into exile to live out his days.

ERIN- Oh my.

MARTY- Also Mark, the author of the gospel of Mark, was killed. So was Luke, Timothy, the apostle Paul.

ERIN- Is this true.

DAVE- Yes, it is true. The early disciples did all die for their faith, many in gruesome and violent ways. I hate to tell you that, and I'm really sorry for it.

MARTY- Why are you apologizing for telling her the truth?

DAVE- What are you doing?

MARTY- Just trying to help a seeker find answers.

DAVE- Help? My goodness, man, I'm stunned to see she's still here. You keep up this death and dying and sacrificing talk, and she's going to walk away.

MARTY- Better to tell her the whole truth up front than to let her sink and drown in your watered down gospel.

DAVE- We have to water things down. It's a way of slowly introducing a person to Christ.

MARTY- What about that verse, "If you profess me before men, I'll profess you before my father in Heaven. If you deny me before men..."

DAVE- I know the verse. Look, she'll find out about the sacrifices in due time. She's not ready to know these things.

MARTY- Do you know that for sure?

DAVE- That's not what we do here. We try to ease people into Christianity in a non-confrontational, non-threatening way. That's the way you win souls.

MARTY- Someone in the early church must have missed that point. Back then converts were won over by Christians thrown to the lions and nailed to crosses. You're not proposing to introduce people to Mr. Rogers. You're calling sinners to repent, leave their selfish ways behind, and follow a man who sacrificed his life for the entire world. If they accept Christ, many of them will face persecution, prejudice, even death.

DAVE- But that's all ancient history. We don't have martyrs like that in today's world.

MARTY- No. We have even bolder martyrs today. Just like ancient Rome, many countries in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East have made Christianity illegal.

DAVE- Yes but in America--

MARTY- Christians are facing increasing persecution. Students are losing their rights to pray. Christians are becoming viewed as a hate group because of their views of sexually immoral lifestyles. How much longer will it be before praying and witnessing become crimes in America?

DAVE- Enough! That's not the way we do things around here. Look, kid, you can't just blurt out "take up your cross and follow me."

MARTY- Jesus did.

DAVE- We live in a different age. What kind of person is going to respond to that?

MARTY- A person with the wisdom to see that this world is doomed to destruction, and that laying down your life in this world leads to far greater treasure in the next.

DAVE- Look, I appreciate the input, but frankly, you're ruining my chances of leading this woman to Christ, So grab another cup of coffee and let the real ministers get back to work. *(turns to Erin)* Now, Miss--

ERIN- *(to Marty)* Excuse me.

MARTY- Yes?

ERIN- That was really amazing what you said. All those people dying for their faith in a man. What a sacrifice.

MARTY- Not to the people who know him. They considered it an honor and a blessing to be hated and executed for their faith because Christ himself was killed in much the same way.

ERIN- But what led them to give up so much

MARTY- Because they could see beyond this life to the inheritance they would receive: eternal life in Heaven.

ERIN- Eternal life.

MARTY- And life more abundantly here on earth.

ERIN- Do you think you could tell me more about this? Maybe over a cup of coffee?

DAVE- I'd be delighted, but we already have counselors in the--

ERIN- Not you. *(walks past Dave)* Please?

MARTY- Sure. Let's talk.

(Dave and Erin exit. Don walks over to Dave carrying a coffee pot.)

DAVE- That poor, lost girl. I just hope that young man doesn't lead her too far astray.

DON- Don't worry about her, Dave. I have this funny feeling she'll be okay.

(Don pours some more coffee for Dave.)

DAVE- I hope you're right. He's hitting her with stories of martyrdom, and taking up your cross. *(sips coffee, reacts to its strong taste)* Man, that stuff is strong!

DON- It's not watered down, is it?

DAVE- No but my eyes are watering. Gosh, that stings.

DON- It does sting a little at first, but it will wake you up and let you see things much more clearly.

DAVE- Don?

DON- Yes?

DAVE- You are talking about the coffee, right?

(They slowly look at each other. Blackout.)