



Faith in Flux

Adapted from “Tag! You Are It” Series by Jimmy White

The landscape of America has changed. Christianity has a different meaning today than it did generations ago. If this generation is going to be won, it must be by going into their world with true love and passion. Pew research gives believers a powerful insight to the reason faith is in flux. Consider their findings:

Americans change religious affiliation early and often. In total, about half of American adults have changed religious affiliation at least once during their lives. Most people who change their religion leave their childhood faith before age 24, and many of those who change religion do so more than once. These are among the key findings of a new survey conducted by the Pew Research Center’s Forum on Religion & Public Life. The survey documents the fluidity of religious affiliation in the U.S. and describes in detail the patterns and reasons for change.

The reasons people give for changing their religion – or leaving religion altogether – differ widely depending on the origin and destination of the convert. The group that has grown the most in recent years due to religious change is the unaffiliated population. Two-thirds of former Catholics who have become unaffiliated and half of former Protestants who have become unaffiliated say they left their childhood faith because they stopped believing in its teachings, and roughly four-in-ten say they became unaffiliated because they do not believe in God or the teachings of most religions. Additionally, many people who left a religion to become unaffiliated say they did so in part because they think of religious people as hypocritical or judgmental, because religious organizations focus too much on rules or because religious leaders are too focused on power and money. Far fewer say they became unaffiliated because they believe that modern science proves that religion is just superstition.¹

¹ “Faith in Flux,” Pew Research Center, April 27, 2009, <http://www.pewforum.org/2009/04/27/faith-in-flux/> (accessed July 28, 2017).

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COURAGE

C1: What were some of the songs you sang in church growing up? If you weren't raised in church, what were your thoughts regarding church?

C2: Billy Graham said about the church, "Never have so many done so little." Read and answer the following.

1 Peter 1:13–15 (ESV) Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.

Habakkuk 1:5 (ESV) Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.

- From these verses, what do you glean about the church and its role?

C3: Before sinners will join a church, they will notice how Christians deal with imperfect people. Read and answer the following.

Matthew 9:35–38 (ESV) And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

- From these verses, what observations do you have about lost people?

STRENGTH

S1: Read and answer the following.

Matthew 9:35–38 (ESV)

- Look up the definition of the words below:
 - HARRASSED
 - HELPLESS
 - LABORERS
- From these definitions, what do you glean about Jesus' thoughts about lost people?

S2: Religion is always great at separating our conscience from the needs of the lost. God desires to use men to awaken a dying world. Read and answer the following.

Galatians 5:22–26 (ESV)

John 15:12–14 (ESV)

- From these verses, what two things do you glean about our attitude toward people?
- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on each of the fruit of the Spirit. Write out a plan to improve in these areas.

S3: We must change who we are in order to present who Jesus really is. The day of knocking on someone's door to declare an uncompromised Gospel is over. Our culture has changed. Read and answer the following.

John 4:9–10 (ESV)

- From these verses, what do you glean about the way Jesus reached lost people?

- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you enter into the world of a lost person. Write out a plan to improve.

ENDURANCE

E1: Christians often mistakenly presume that lost people are miserable, empty, and fear death. Most sinners are having a great time, rarely think about God, and often feel sorry for Christians because they think we are missing out on some good sin. The church needs to awaken to the heart of Jesus for the lost. Read and answer the following.

Luke 15:3–7 (ESV)

- From these verses, what are two things you glean about lost people?

E2: Read and answer the following.

Luke 15:8–10 (ESV)

- From these verses, what do you glean about a lost person?
- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate yourself on how well you take care of the souls placed in your care. Write out a plan to improve.

E3: Read and answer the following.

Luke 15:11–32 (ESV)

- From these verses, what do you glean about lost people?

E4: On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very high and 4 being not high, rate yourself on how well you have a vision for lost people. Write out a plan to improve.