



Two Parties—or what is your religion? (Part 1)

The first party occurred spontaneously when Tony Campolo was on missionary business in Haiti. As he approached the entrance of his hotel, he was intercepted by three young teen girls.

The one in the middle said, “Mister, for ten dollars you can have me all night long.” He was stunned by what she had said. He turned to the girl next to her and asked, “Can I have you for ten dollars, too?” She nodded approval. He asked the third girl the same question and got the same response.

“Fine! I’ve got thirty dollars! I’m in Room 210. You be up there in a half hour. I’ll pay you then and I want all three of you for the whole night!”

Rushing up to his room, he wasted no time getting on the phone and calling the concierge. “Could you please send every Walt Disney cartoon video you have up to Room 210.”

Next, the restaurant. His order? “Banana splits! Huge—with extra everything! Extra whipped cream, extra chocolate syrup, extra nuts. Four of them, please!”

Within the half hour the videos came, the three girls came, and the banana splits came. The girls sat on the edge of the bed devouring the banana splits and thoroughly enjoying video after video until about one in the morning when the last of them fell asleep. It was probably the nicest party they had ever had—and maybe the only one!

As Tony sat there looking at their small bodies strewn across the bed, he thought, “Nothing’s changed. Tomorrow they will be back on the streets. Tomorrow they will be selling their bodies for ten dollars a throw, because there will always be rotten, ugly men who will destroy the dignity of little girls for ten dollars a night.”

Then the Spirit of God spoke to him and said, “But, for one night, Tony, you let them be little girls again. For one night, you let them be kids. You didn’t change their lives, but for one night you gave them back their childhoods.”

It's sad that such things exist in this world, but it's also a reminder that there is always something we can do, even if it's small, to touch a life with the hope for a better future in His kingdom. I am convinced that one night *did* make a difference in those girls' lives—in their spirits—in that they had felt God's love in a beautiful way and would never forget it. That unusual act of kindness was the little seed of love that was planted in their lives and would change things in some way—if not in their circumstances, definitely in their hearts and spirits. If they didn't know before, at least *now* they knew that real love existed.

I'm fairly certain that these girls found the way to God that night by taking Him into their hearts so that they truly were changed in the most important way possible. No matter what happens to them in this life, the Lord will always be there with them, helping to make things more bearable, even though they may be unaware of it. And after this short life is over, they will be received into His wonderful arms and everything will be made right—forever! So, was it worth it? Oh, so worth it! A major win!

We should not mistake faith for rites and ceremonies. A pure life and a heart full of love and compassion are the best proof of a healthy religion.

Let's do everything as though we were in the presence of God Himself! He who sees every heart has a different standard than we do for judging what is true or false in our religious devotion.

Let us always remember that in God's eyes, the only useful faith is the faith that works by love.

The Bible: James 1:27: Pure religion and undefiled before God is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

SO WHO ARE YOU GONNA THROW A PARTY FOR THIS WEEK?