

# Beyond 'Jesus and Me'

## Making Disciples

By Chuck Colson | Published Date: September 11, 2009



*What is the Christian faith all about? One thing's for sure—it's about a lot more than your, or my, personal happiness.*

For many years, Willow Creek Community Church outside Chicago was the model that many evangelical churches sought to copy. Its growth, facilities and programs seemed to scream “success.”

That is, until Willow Creek took a closer look.

The “look” was in the form of two-year comprehensive study that sought to determine which of its programs were helping its members to mature spiritually. The shocking answer was “not many.”

As pastor Bill Hybels courageously put it, some of their highest profile and best-funded programs didn't do much, if any, good. On the contrary, the things that people were “crying out for” went under-funded and starved of resources.

Hybels called the result of the study a “wake-up call.” In his words, “We made a mistake.” In place of the “seeker friendly” program-centric model, Willow Creek seeks to instill in its members a desire to discover “what God is doing and how he's asking us to transform this planet.”

Christian Smith of the University of North Carolina wouldn't be surprised at all at what Hybels and others have learned. Smith, a sociologist, has studied American Christianity in depth. In his book *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Life of American Teenagers*, Smith writes that the “de facto dominant religion” among American teenagers is what he calls “moral therapeutic deism.”

According to this “religion,” God created and watches over the world but otherwise is only to be called upon to solve problems. All He requires is that people be nice and fair to each other, “as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.” Not surprisingly, “the central goal of life is to be

happy and to feel good about oneself.”

Smith notes that moral therapeutic deism is “more than a little visible” among conservative protestant teenagers. And it’s not only teenagers. As theologian Albert Mohler has pointed out, what Smith describes is a belief “held by a large percentage of Americans.”

This kind of pablum is the logical outcome of reducing the entirety of the Christian faith to “Jesus and me.” This Jesus does not challenge the way we see the world, much less how we live in it because He wants us to be happy; so He sanctions our desires.

Of course, as I’ve argued in my most recent book, *The Faith*, this Jesus bears little, if any, resemblance to the Jesus of the Scriptures and historic Christianity.

That’s why we have launched the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. It’s an antidote to the reductionist pablum that, as Smith tell us, has taken root “within the structures of at least some Christian organizations and institutions.”

When you visit ColsonCenter.org, you will find all kinds of resources, research, sermons, articles, curricula—all designed to help you dig deeper into the totality of the Christian faith, and to prepare you to live out that faith in the culture.

Like Bill Hybels, I believe that we have got to go beyond evangelization that is content to have people just show up at next Sunday’s service. No, we must seek to make true disciples. The Great Commission isn’t about making converts, it’s about making *disciples*.

If you care about doing that, visit ColsonCenter.org <<http://www.colsoncenter.org/wfp-home>>, and tune in to BreakPoint, as I’ll tell you more about this amazing new website.

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