



Public Media
Issues & Voices that Matter

Commentary
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There's an ad appearing on one of our city's electronic billboards—it provocatively asks: *How has Christianity failed you?*

When I see it, I want to shout—sure, Christians fail and churches fail. I am a realist. For the past 20 years I have been a pastor and there are lots of times when I've let people down. Now I am a seminary president. I know full well that religion can be twisted, and that Christians don't always live up to Jesus' teachings.

But the heart of Christianity boasts not in the righteousness of Christ's followers but in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

His good influence on my family now goes back three generations. It started with my grandmother who was a suicidal teenager. After attempting to take her life, someone shared hope with her and told her about God's love in Christ. My grandfather was a jaded soldier returning from war. When he came under the influence of Jesus, his life dramatically changed as well. He was delivered from substance abuse, and committed himself to love my grandmother and sacrifice for his children. And they both gave to my dad what they themselves never had—a legacy of love and a foundation for a full life.

Jesus' good influence extends to me today. It is his gospel of grace that provides freedom, forgiveness and joy. His Word helps me make sense of this world—that it was created by a good God, spoiled because of human rebellion. Yet God so loved this world that he sent his son as its savior.....that there's is hope for the future in Him.

Jesus' influence has helped me love my wife and sacrifice for my family. He helps me to look beyond myself and consider the needs of others.

You know, it's amazing when one considers the positive influence of Jesus through history. He has brought the gift of dignity to the least, the last and the lost. His influence has inspired a vast humanitarian impulse. His followers have brought the gifts of language and literacy and the gifts of healing and health care to people around the globe. His influence has even transformed the fields of art, music, science, and leadership.

Scripture says of Jesus—in him is LIFE. That "*from his fullness we have received one blessing after another.*"

So, failed me? Hardly. Immensely transformed my life and the lives of countless others? Yes, that's more like it. And, perhaps that's why I have taken this new position as president of Reformed Theological Seminary in Oviedo. It's because spreading the influence of Jesus still really matters.

This is Don Sweeting.