

PLAIN TRUTH®

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CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION®

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Unadorned Clay Pots

By Greg Albrecht

Remember, our Message is not about ourselves, we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the Master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus for you. It started when God said, "Light up the darkness!" and our lives filled up with light as we saw and understood God in the face of Christ, all bright and beautiful.

If you only look at us, you might well miss the brightness. We carry this precious Message around in the unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives. That's to prevent anyone from confusing God's incomparable power with us (2 Corinthians 4:5-7, MSG).

April 11, 2009—A 47-year-old woman named Susan Boyle auditioned on the British television show, "Britain's Got Talent." Up until that date, Susan Boyle was an unknown—

some may have defined her as a "nobody."

When Susan was introduced and walked out on the stage, the audience saw a shy woman with bushy eyebrows and hair looking as if it had not been brushed recently. They saw a woman whose dress and demeanor looked homespun at best, perhaps even homely and frumpy—no one would have described her as being stylishly dressed.

The video of her audition (which has now been watched by upwards of 300 million people and counting on YouTube) shows members of the audience rolling their eyes and openly mocking Susan Boyle's appearance when she first walked out on the stage. They presumed she was someone who obviously did not deserve to perform on that stage for *surely, given what she*

looked like, she had no talent whatsoever.

Simon Cowell, one of the three judges, welcomed her, asked her a little about her background and what she was going to sing. She announced in her Scottish brogue that she would sing, "I Dreamed a Dream" (from one of my favorite books and stage plays, *Les Miserables*).

With everyone in the audience prepared to see her miserably fail, with skepticism as thick as a London fog enveloping the theater, Susan started to sing. It took only a

few seconds for jaws to drop in amazement. No one expected the beauty and stunning quality of her voice. Members of the audience rose to their feet, clapping and cheering. Some were in tears, amazed at the beauty of her voice and perhaps some were ashamed of their hasty preconceptions about her abilities, now proven obviously wrong.

For one, brief shining moment, the old maxim "never judge a book by its cover" received a glorious affirmation in the body and voice of Susan Boyle.

As Susan sang, "I Dreamed a Dream," it was indeed a dream—Susan Boyle was the embodiment of dreaming a dream, and in the process overturning stereotypes and assumptions about what it means to be talented and successful.

Every time I watch that performance—and I just did a few

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minutes ago—I well up in tears. It is unbelievably inspiring.

Somewhere Along the Way...

Somewhere along the way, much of Christendom has forgotten that we, individual Christ-followers, are but unadorned clay pots. We are not much to look at... we are all like Susan Boyle as she walked out onto that stage to audition.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul spoke of the *unadorned clay pots of our ordinary lives*—he had already written of this same theme in his first letter:

Take a good look, friends, at who you were when you got called into this life. I don't see many of "the brightest and the best" among you, not many influential, not many from high-society families. Isn't it obvious that God deliberately chose men and women that the culture overlooks and exploits and abuses, chose these "nobodies" to expose the hollow pretensions of the "somebodies"? That makes it quite clear that none of you can get by with blowing your own horns before God. Everything that we have—right thinking and right living,

a clean slate and a fresh start—comes from God by way of Jesus Christ. That's why we have the saying, "If you're going to blow a horn, blow a trumpet for God" (1 Corinthians 1:26-31, MSG).

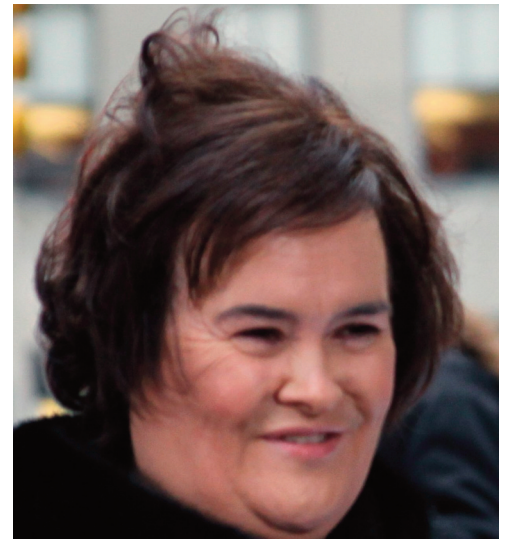
Somewhere along the way, the trumpet blowing about faith has become all about individual churches and denominations, dogmas, doctrines, rituals and ceremonies, rather than God's grace and love. Externals of religion are prized above spiritual treasure.

Somewhere along the way, Jesus, our friend, our servant and our risen Lord who produces humility within those in whom he lives, has been replaced by religious pride prancing through the world on a high horse of smug arrogance and conceit.

Somewhere along the way, the judgment and condemnation of big business religion has overwhelmed the modesty and humility of Jesus.

Our signature, introductory quote cited verses 5-7 in the fourth chapter of 2 Corinthians. Leading up to these verses, Paul explained the context about how and why the gospel of Jesus Christ—the Message —becomes obscure:

If our Message is obscure to anyone, it's not because we're holding back in any way. No, it's because these other people are looking or going the wrong way and refuse to give it serious attention. All they have eyes for is the fashionable god of darkness. They think he can give them what they want, and that they won't have to bother believing a Truth they can't see. They're stone-blind to the dayspring brightness of the Message that shines with Christ, who give us the best picture of God we'll ever get (2 Corinthians 4:3-4, MSG, my emphasis).



Susan Boyle, 2009

Somewhere along the way, people started looking for the love, mercy and grace of God in all the wrong places. Entranced and mesmerized by churches who compete with each other as to their longevity, their faithfulness and their accomplishments, forgetting that Jesus is the uncreated Son of God, who exists in eternity past, present and future, is perfect, holy and righteous and has accomplished all that humanity can never do. **Jesus is the best picture of God anyone will ever get!**

Somewhere along the way, many churches have become fragmented cocoons of dogmas, and holy huddles who revere doctrines and condemn any and all who disagree.

What do you suppose might happen if Jesus, somewhat like Susan Boyle, walked out on a religious stage today? If the incarnate Jesus, the humble carpenter from Nazareth, walked out onto a religious stage today, prepared to teach and proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of God, the first reaction of the judges and the audience would be to presume him inadequate because he would not be wearing a religious costume. Jesus would be, and sadly is in some religious settings, rejected because **all they have eyes for is the fashionable god of darkness.**

When Jesus knocks on the doors of many churches, they fail to listen to him and do not welcome him (see Revelation 3:20). Perhaps

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religion does not recognize Jesus because he lacks prestigious religious refinements. Perhaps when he is introduced before he speaks, upon being asked about his resume and credentials, when he reveals he has no advanced degrees in theology, the audience greet him with sneers and contemptuous, condescending smirks.

Unadorned Clay Pots Leak!

There's an old story about a group of monks who lived in a monastery, in a desolate and unpopulated area of the world. One of the monks was reported—a sin he committed had been discovered. According to the monastery rules, all the monks had to gather as one, with the sinful fellow monk in front of them, so that they could determine the penalty their brother must pay for his sin.

When they had all assembled, they discovered that one of their number was not present. Father John was not there—so two of the monks went to look for him and tell him that he must take part in the judgment.

When Father John finally and reluctantly trudged into the assembly room he was carrying a leaking jug filled with water. When his fellow monks saw the leaking jug they asked John, "Why are you bringing this jug into our judgment, leaking water all over the floor?"

John said to all of his fellow monks, "St. Paul told us that each of us are but an imperfect jar of clay, but by God's grace he has given us a treasure in our flawed bodies. My sins run out from me like the water from this leaking jug. And today I am, as a flawed jar of clay, called to this assembly and asked to participate in judging a little water that has leaked out of the jar of clay of my brother?" ☐

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What do you suppose might happen if Jesus... walked out on a religious stage today?

