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***12 SECRETS TO***

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# learned I knew all

***LIVING A SATISFIED LIFE***

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PAUL MEIER, M.D.  
TODD CLEMENTS, M.D.



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*What I've Learned Since I Knew It All: 12 Secrets to Living a Satisfied Life*

The case examples presented in this book are fictional composites based on the authors' clinical experience with hundreds of clients through the years. Any resemblance between these fictional characters and actual persons is coincidental.

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*What I've Learned Since I Knew It All* is the kind of book I wish every incoming college freshman were required to read. It is a book I hope churches will give to their graduating seniors. While in college, Todd Clements was a leader in student government, in his fraternity, and in our ministry on campus. He and Paul Meier have written something they have lived.

This book is about real life and how to live it in a way that honors the Lord and makes the most of college years. This is a tool that will help both students and those who love them and work with them.

**ARLISS DICKERSON**

BAPTIST CAMPUS MINISTER, ARKANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY

This book is a must-read for everyone who is, has been, or is considering becoming a teenager! These two gifted psychiatrists sharing some of their life experiences makes not only an entertaining read but also a fantastic book on adolescent brain development. Drs. Clements and Meier wonderfully demonstrate how our brain functioning largely determines the type of person we become.

**DANIEL G. AMEN, M.D.**

CHILD, ADOLESCENT, AND ADULT PSYCHIATRIST

NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR OF *CHANGE YOUR BRAIN CHANGE YOUR LIFE*

Practical, helpful, and engaging. Any former or current know-it-all will enjoy and benefit from *What I've Learned Since I Knew It All*. Dr. Todd Clements and Dr. Paul Meier wisely blend story and humor with insight toward a better life.

**LINDA H. OSBORNE**

NATIONAL COLLEGIATE MINISTRY LEADER FOR LIFEWAY CHRISTIAN RESOURCES,  
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION

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*This book is dedicated to my parents,  
Danny and Lou Anne Clements,  
for their enduring love, patience, and wisdom  
in dealing with this know-it-all.*

TODD CLEMENTS, M.D.

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## INTRODUCTION

# Know-It-Alls Don't Know It All

**NOBODY WANTS TO BE** labeled a know-it-all. Still, many people secretly believe they do have superior knowledge and intelligence, leading to the best decisions and wisest actions. They don't foresee any consequences to their actions or fallout from poor choices.

These attitudes, based on wishful thinking instead of reality, can result in near disaster, as in the case of one young man who once thought he had it all together.

He was twenty-one and honestly thought he knew it all—at least everything important to know. That year he had the highest grade point average of nearly five thousand students at his college. He was recently married and had accepted a hefty scholarship for a graduate program at a prestigious university. He used some of that cash to buy a brand-new Mercury Cougar—the latest model.

He was confident in his faith, having memorized hundreds of Bible verses and read his Bible daily since age ten. He was certain he'd have the right answer to any Bible question that could be fired in his direction. Yet a year later, at age twenty-two, this young man felt the urge to rebel. He dug into Bible prophecy and studied other religions—and almost ditched his Christian faith and his wife in the process. Thankfully, he eventually came to the conclusion that if he ditched Jesus, he would be ditching the truth, so he ruled that out as an option.

While in graduate school he attended a weekly “growth group.” This was a new concept in the 1960s: Christians sitting around and confessing their faults to each other. After a few weeks in the group, one of the group members turned to the man who thought he knew it all and said, “I don't mean to offend you, but you are really defensive.”

“I am not!” he retorted quickly.

One by one, five other group members said the same thing to this

young man. He was sure they were mistaken. Still, he felt confused that so many people could be wrong at one time. As he and his wife walked to their Mercury Cougar after the meeting, he turned to her and blurted out, “Can you believe all those people think I am defensive when I am so extremely open?”

“I hate to say it, honey,” she replied, “but I think you are too, in ways that you don’t even realize.”

And that was the first time it dawned on him clearly: *If six people in my group—and my own wife—all think I am defensive in some ways, then it must be theoretically possible that they could be right and I could be (theoretically speaking, of course) wrong.*

Day by day, God opened his eyes to the blind spots he had when it came to many of his personal failings.

He opened up in the group after that, and he grew up. He quit being a twelve-year-old know-it-all when he was twenty-two. By the time he was a psychiatry resident five years later, his professors said he was the most *defenseless* person they had ever met. He was willing and ready to admit anything that was true—even his own sinful thoughts.

When he started a national radio talk show, broadcasting daily to a million people, he was warned he wouldn’t last long because he was too vulnerable. He was often willing to talk about his personal sins and failures in order to help other people be more open. He was occasionally taken off the air by certain stations for being too forthright, but most Christians appeared ready for a bout of honesty. It made people feel good to find out they weren’t the only sinners trying to be good; even authority figures can have similar struggles and admit to being human.

Now, at age sixty, this man is confident in stating that the more he studies, the fewer things he really knows for certain.

The subject of that revealing story is actually one of the two authors of this book. I (Dr. Meier) admit I have made mistakes in my life, and I am thankful that today I’m being used by God as a psychiatrist who writes and speaks to hundreds of thousands of people, helping them

solve problems and restore relationships. I was so thrilled when my wonderful friend Dr. Todd Clements asked if I would coauthor this book about what we've learned since we "knew it all." The title sounds like the story of my life. God isn't finished with me yet. I learn more of his love and grace and become more humble about my own ignorance every day, even at this ripe old age.

In this book you'll read some true stories about me (Dr. Clements) too. I also admit to once having known it all, but truly knowing better today.

While we are both recovering know-it-alls, we want to use our decades of counseling experience to help you reach that state sooner than we did.

Generally, becoming a know-it-all occurs in the teen years. Something strange happens during adolescence, and most teenagers become famous for insisting they are much smarter than their more-experienced, more-educated parents.

Sadly, many adolescents carry their know-it-all attitudes into adulthood, and a few even remain know-it-alls for their entire lives. These people or their family members often end up in psychiatrists' offices like ours—suffering deep emotional trauma due to their know-it-all attitudes.

Usually parents remember their own wayward days as young adults and their rebellious feelings toward their own parents, so they may let their teenagers' arrogant attitudes slide. But when teenage behavior continues into the midtwenties, serious interpersonal problems can erupt:

- > Parents can become annoyed by an adult child who maintains an "I know better than you" attitude.
- > Prospective employers are turned off by recent graduates and newcomers to a field who already deem themselves "experts."
- > Romantic relationships can finally erode when one of the pair maintains a nonstop know-it-all attitude.

The teenage know-it-all faces many disadvantages, mostly due to his or her refusal to heed the warnings of parents who have been there before. Typically we adults remember shrugging off or laughing at our parents' advice, only to later discover how much misery and frustration we could have avoided if we had only listened in the first place.

Mark Twain once wrote, "When I was a boy of fourteen, my father was so ignorant I could hardly stand to have the old man around. But when I got to be twenty-one, I was astonished at how much the old man had learned in seven years."

*Mark Twain* is the pen name of the famous American author and sage Samuel Clemens. Because he was an astute observer of human behavior, his words will be found at the start of each chapter, helping to underscore each chapter's point.

Human nature remains the same today as it was one hundred years ago when Mark Twain made his observations. Young people are not likely to begin listening to their parents anytime soon. Maybe, however, they will listen to two self-proclaimed former know-it-alls who've learned from their mistakes and those of hundreds of counseling patients.

This book consists of twelve truths that we have learned since that time period when we knew it all. These twelve truths have made our lives better in countless ways. They have developed us into more thoughtful, caring, and loving human beings. They have helped us learn to get along with others and no doubt have allowed others to like us and enjoy being around us. They have helped us to become more successful in every life endeavor—largely due to the fact that every facet of life requires skills in dealing with other people.

These twelve truths have actually given us more self-confidence. Many know-it-alls feel insecure on the inside, so they overcompensate on the outside by portraying overconfidence. This is seen in the animal kingdom when some animals inhale to make themselves appear larger

when facing a predator or stand up on their hind legs to look taller. We call it bluffing.

Walk by a yard that a poodle considers to be his territory and watch what happens. He starts with low-pitched growling and gets ready to pounce if you dare cross the sidewalk and touch one blade of his grass. He tries to make you think he's a people-eating poodle. But one lunge at the mutt reveals his true character: He backs up three steps and starts growling louder!

Today it's brains, rather than brawn, that dominate human society. People don't overcompensate with a show of force (except in war and psychiatric hospitals) but rather with an air of intelligence. They have an immediate answer for every situation. Mark Twain, too, had an immediate answer for everything, but his was slightly more humble: *"I was gratified to be able to answer promptly, and I did. I said I didn't know."*

It is when we arrive at this point and have the freedom to admit to ourselves and others that we don't know everything that we can finally be our authentic selves with no facades.

## **The Power of Authenticity**

Dropping your facade allows you to connect with others. For the first time, you can actually feel their pain. You can enjoy their successes without jealousy and worry that others are "outdoing" you. You can truly celebrate life.

A know-it-all can only celebrate his own successes, but the authentic person can celebrate everyone's successes. Think how much more celebration this allows. The know-it-all usually pouts when others receive accolades or attention. The know-it-all can only celebrate a win by his football team if he had a good game and scored a touchdown; otherwise, the victory is bitter. An authentic person can revel in the victory, even if he never made it off the sideline the whole game!

Dropping the facade allows each of us to reveal our true identity to others. For the first time, others can actually feel and help comfort us

in our pain. This aspect is difficult to grasp in today's society, especially among young males. We often believe that if others feel our pain or know our weaknesses, they will expose and open our wounds even more. People in emotional and physical pain often mask their loneliness and agony on the outside while secretly struggling within.

Have you ever smiled and calmly answered, "Just fine," when asked how life was treating you, meanwhile feeling on the verge of a nervous breakdown inside? We talk up all our victories and successes while hiding our pain in order to draw people to us, but in reality, shouldn't it be the other way around if we truly want the companionship and respect of others?

How much do you enjoy celebrating when a know-it-all succeeds? You might go to the party, but your celebration is most likely not sincere. Rarely does someone say, "I can't wait to hang out with so-and-so; all she does is talk about herself." Dropping the facade of being a know-it-all allows us to live in closer connection with others, which leads to a happier life.

The unhappiest people in the world are those who are not connected to others emotionally. Those who have no true friends have the highest rate of mental illness and are most likely to commit suicide.

Spend a weekend totally by yourself sometime and you will get a taste of this truth. If you have family at home, rent a motel room Friday night through Sunday. Spend those forty-eight hours without talking to any friends or family. By Monday morning you will be more than ready to go back to work, and you'll be nicer to everyone than you were on Friday.

Humans were made to bond with each other, and knowing-it-all negatively affects that bonding process.

## **Truth from the Source**

The Bible, written two thousand years ago, addresses the subject of human nature, which was the same in ancient times as it is today.

Humanity's surroundings and technology change, but personalities remain the same. The Bible actually does more than merely identify and comment on human behavior. It teaches us how to improve it. The Bible does include lists of right and wrong, but it is much more than that. It shows us how to live as it examines relationships men and women had with each other and with God. We see examples of deplorable behavior, such as Judas Iscariot, who betrayed Jesus, and the Pharisees who excelled in know-it-all, holier-than-thou attitudes.

Righteous behavior is also depicted. We see Joseph run from sexual temptation when Potiphar's wife tries to entice him into bed with her. We then see how God rewards his faithfulness by putting Joseph in a position of leadership. The Bible depicts humans interacting with each other over a several-thousand-year time span. Through this dialogue we find truth.

The Bible supports the twelve truths we have learned. However, we both learned them the hard way.

Rather than taking the Bible at face value, I (Dr. Meier) tried calling the shots myself. When that no longer worked, I found the truth in two ways. With most of my wrong behaviors, I read the Bible and realized my error. With others, I simply tried doing things differently than I had been doing them before. I later found the solutions I discovered by this method were all supported by the Bible as well.

Throughout this book we have used various Bible passages and stories to help illustrate timeless truths. The Bible was written not only to teach us about God and His ways but also to guide us in living our lives during the short time we have been given upon this earth. We believe the Bible is just as relevant to our lives today as it was to the Jews two thousand years ago.

Ask yourself: How much impact does the Bible have in my daily life? Is it more than television or the Internet?

These twelve truths can help you avoid some of life's potholes and pitfalls. In addition to naming and titling each truth, we provide examples

of how you can use these principles in your life. We also share personal events from our lives—and most of them illustrate the less-than-pretty results of ignoring these precepts.

As you read, try to remember some of your own life experiences. Write them down and we will let you know what to do with them at the end of the book.

This is probably the first book ever written where the goal is to come out looking less intelligent than you did before you started.

## CHAPTER 1

# One Person Can Make a Difference

*So Share Your Convictions*

*The longer I live, the clearer I perceive how unmatched,  
how unapproachable a compliment one pays when he says  
of a man “he has the courage to utter his convictions.”*

MARK TWAIN IN A LETTER TO W. D. HOWELLS

FEBRUARY 15, 1887



*An honest man in politics shines more  
there than he would elsewhere.*

MARK TWAIN, *A TRAMP ABROAD*

“I’M SO TICKED OFF about this election!” ranted Melody, a nineteen-year-old college freshman sitting on my (Dr. Clements) office couch. “Everyone I was for—from president to congressman, down to mayor of my town—lost. What’s worse is now I have to listen to my parents and preppy brother, who were staunch supporters of the other party, celebrate.”

As we talked, I learned that Melody chose to support a certain political party because of one issue she felt very strongly about. She repeatedly commented on how this belief she held so dearly was now going to be outlawed, which would wind up hurting thousands of people.

“I’ve worked hard for campaigns I strongly believed in and have lost. It’s tough,” I said, trying to reassure her.

“Well, I really didn’t do any work for the campaign,” Melody sheepishly admitted.

“But you supported those people and voted for them,” I said.

“Well, I actually didn’t even vote this time,” she said.

“Why not?”

“My sorority was building a float that day for the homecoming parade the next weekend. Plus I knew the guys I supported didn’t have a chance of winning anyway. My vote would not have changed the outcome.”

“Did anybody in your sorority vote?” I asked.

“I doubt it.” Melody shrugged her shoulders.

“Did you tell anyone in your sorority how you feel about these political issues?”

“No, we don’t talk about stuff like that,” she said impatiently.

“Did you tell anyone else?” I kept probing.

“No, who’s going to listen to a college freshman?” she shot back.

“I can see now why you are frustrated, Melody. You spent a whole week working hard to let people know you had pride and cared about your school’s football team, which probably didn’t make any difference in the game, but you never shared with anybody key issues in your life that *could* have made a difference.”

The truth is that one vote rarely makes a difference in an election, but one person does. One voice making a complaint rarely changes things, but one person does. How? When one person uses his or her one voice, another voice soon joins in, and then another and another. Those other voices continue adding even more voices, until the message is too loud to ignore.

Christianity was started by one man, Jesus, whose message was carried on by a handful of disciples who had neither wealth nor stature in the world. Today, more than 2.1 billion people follow Christ’s teachings.

### Three Keys to Success

One person can do amazing things, but that person must possess three key elements: determination, work, and time.

- > *Determination.* Whatever you stand for, you will encounter naysayers. In the early 1900s, people told Orville and Wilbur Wright that they were downright stupid for thinking they could make a machine that would fly. Experts said there were no motors powerful enough to sustain a “flying machine,” and even if there were, it would be impossible to steer it correctly. Several other inventors in Great Britain had tried to make flying machines, but sadly, some of them had died when their experimental crafts crashed. Americans laughed at those two brothers from Dayton, Ohio, who worked on their flying machine for three years. The pair continued to believe it could be done, and in 1903 they showed everyone when they successfully flew a plane on the seashore at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina.
- > *Work.* Thomas Edison, a man who was largely deaf and had only three months of formal education, is credited with more inventions than any other American (over 1,300). Edison certainly knew how to work. He created the phonograph machine, the movie camera, the battery, and even an electric vote recorder in 1868. Though he was a genius, his achievements didn’t come easily. In fact, it was Thomas Edison who made the now-famous statement “Genius is one percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration.” Whenever he set his mind to invent something, he spent months reading every piece of literature he could obtain about the subject.

In 1878, even though he was already wealthy and could have retired, Edison became convinced that electric lights would be cheaper for people and more efficient than gas lighting. Although electricity was very crude at the time, he was convinced he could

find a substance from which he could make a “filament” that would transmit electric energy into light.

He tried thousands of different substances over the next several months, but each one failed. The entire time he worked, the *New York Times* and the gas industry lampooned him. But he did not give up or waver, and finally, after months of failure, he created a carbon filament that would glow for hours when electricity was run through it. It was the first light bulb, and it changed the world. What would life be like today if he had given up?

- > *Time*. If you are consistent over time, people will listen. Dr. Robert Atkins came up with an idea over a quarter of a century ago that overweight people could lose pounds by eating low levels of carbohydrates and higher levels of protein and fat in their diet. This idea was the opposite of what the government and the American Medical Association (AMA) were telling people to do to lose weight. The AMA endorsed low fat and low protein diets.

Dr. Atkins could have said, “Who am I to go up against all these other powerful doctors who say my method is crazy?” But he didn’t. He kept preaching and teaching his conviction that this diet was an effective and safe way to lose weight. He had very few listeners for the first several years.

A recent magazine article reported that one out of every seven people in America today follow an Atkins-type diet. Restaurants have even started changing their menus to include low carbohydrate foods. Soft drink and beer companies have created new drinks with fewer carbohydrates. Grocery stores now carry foods labeled “Atkins Approved.” This craze is not only in America but in other countries as well. One man’s ideas have affected the eating habits of millions of people.

We are not trying to say that the Atkins diet is the best way to lose weight, because we both believe in permanent lifestyle changes when it comes to eating correctly. But a modified Atkins

approach, with some healthy carbohydrates from fruits and vegetables, *can* add years to some people's lives by helping them lose weight. Dr. Atkins accomplished a lot and taught a great deal about nutrition by continuing to speak about his conviction.

New ideas are often controversial. The Atkins method certainly falls into that category. There was also controversy when the Wright brothers talked about flying machines, and when Thomas Edison said electric lights would be better than gas lighting. Any matter of consequence in life is going to be accompanied by controversy. If it doesn't, it means no one really cares. Controversy or the lack of instant success should never stop you from proclaiming your convictions.

Do you want to make a difference in this world? We've got good news—you can do it! And you have an even better chance at success if you determine and start working for your convictions while you are young.

## **Stand Up for Your Convictions**

How strongly do you feel about your convictions? Do you feel strongly enough to vote? On Election Day 2004, it rained all day in the state of Ohio. Thousands of concerned citizens, including many Amish Christians, who normally stay out of politics, lined up in the rain to vote. The lines were so long because so many people that year wanted to voice their moral convictions about key issues such as partial-birth abortion, gay marriage, and religious rights. Many had to leave the voting lines and go to work without having voted. But after working an eight- to twelve-hour day, they returned to the voting lines, with it still raining. Some Ohio citizens did not get to vote until two in the morning. We consider these people to be heroes, no matter how they voted. They had the courage and moral character to withstand extreme discomfort in order to vote their convictions.

Are *you* going to vote in future elections? Are *you* going to volunteer your time working for the candidates and ideas you believe in? Do you have the courage to defend the genuine civil liberties of evangelical believers?

There are so many ways for one person to make a difference. By

voting, and persuading others to vote as well, your single vote carries much more weight. Consider the ripple effect of one person's efforts. You might influence six or seven people, who then go on to influence six or seven more people each. Eventually, your single influence might reach hundreds of thousands or even millions of people. A few million fired-up college students could have the power to sway almost every election in their favor.

Remember Melody? She claimed she never shared her convictions because no one would listen to a college student. Well a sixty-year-old might not, but other college students would probably be willing to listen. Start with your peers. There is a misperception in our country that wealthy, influential people have all the say-so, and the rest of us have to go along with their plans. Nothing could be further from the truth.

## Live by Your Convictions

### ► Paul Meier

*I used to attend church in a town with several restaurants in which church members dined regularly. Some of these restaurants advertised in a small independent newspaper, a publication that featured a few news stories but mainly served to promote the city's "gentlemen's (strip) clubs" and to hook gay men and lesbian women up with dates. The paper was free, so its only source of revenue was its advertisers.*

*A young couple felt convicted that by dining at the restaurants that advertised, they were indirectly supporting the paper. The young husband and wife visited with the restaurant managers and were largely shunned when they voiced their concern. They spoke with the pastor about the matter, and he agreed with their conviction.*

*He allowed the couple to address the congregation on Sunday morning and tell the church members they had decided not to dine in any of the restaurants that continued supporting this newspaper. The husband said, "It will be hard because we both love the food and atmosphere in several of these places, but our convictions are more important, and we are determined to follow them before pleasure." They passed around a sign-up sheet welcoming others to join their cause, but asked only those who were determined to follow through with the boycott to sign up.*

*Several hundred people signed the list. The couple then went back to the restaurant managers—and even some owners this time—and asked if they wanted to see the list. Most of the managers said no and were even ruder this time. As church members told their friends and family about the situation, the boycott grew bigger and bigger. Soon the issue ignited a firestorm. Restaurant employees admitted that within a week business had gone from crowds waiting for a table to rooms nearly empty of customers.*

*The gay and lesbian community took the boycott issue to the press and tried to portray the church members as people who were spreading hate against their lifestyle. The young couple who started the boycott were very eloquent when interviewed, explaining how they had politely shared their convictions with the restaurant managers, who in turn were rude and condescending to them.*

*The wife said, "Hey, we just decided there are many other great restaurants in this city with wonderful food in which we can spend our money. It just so happens that several thousand of our friends decided to do the same as well."*

*Needless to say, within a month the restaurants dropped the ads and decided not to distribute the paper at their businesses. Because of the media coverage garnered by the homosexual community, many other advertisers pulled out as well. The newspaper soon went out of production. One couple had sparked thousands to live out their convictions and changed a whole city.*

*It would be nice to say that all was happy ever after, but that's not the whole story. This young couple faced harassment from people sympathetic to the now-defunct paper. Sadly, this is the way society often works. Rather than spending their time and energy looking for new businesses or individuals to support the newspaper, which would have produced much more successful results, the owners wanted a scapegoat on which to blame the paper's failure. The young couple bravely stood firm while enduring harassment. Once the opposition realized they were having little or no effect on the couple, they gave up.*

*This young couple is now well respected in their community. Community leaders want the husband to run for political office, which he probably will do in the next few years. People know that when he believes in something, he will stand up for it. He is already a proven leader. Although the opposition had threatened to destroy his reputation and his business, his business has actually quadrupled since the boycott.*

*Thankfully he had a clean reputation, because these groups dug deep for dirt on him but couldn't find anything. He had married his college sweetheart, didn't run around on her, and never had any trouble with the law. Opponents even combed the strip club's records going back several years to see if he*

*had ever been to one of them. They tried every means possible to make him look like a hypocrite.*

We cannot emphasize this point enough. If you want to make a difference in life—if you want people to listen to, understand, and adopt your convictions, you must live by them and be willing to start making a difference.

As the couple in the story above found, living by your convictions also means keeping your record clean. A woman we know spent several years teaching school and found her convictions at odds with the sexual education classes. The curriculum was taught by her state's so-called experts. She spoke with the state education board several times about adding sexual abstinence as a valid option for avoiding unwanted teen pregnancy, AIDS, and a host of other sexually transmitted diseases. The “experts” said this was a silly option and a waste of time because students could not and would not take it seriously. Instead they were aiming at safe sex methods and condoning free birth control and condom machines in school.

This woman stopped teaching, but with a continued large heart for adolescents she began meeting with a few students from her former school (off school grounds and not during school hours). These high school students started an abstinence group in which each member committed to sexual abstinence until he or she was married. The group started small but steadily grew. Soon the woman was asked to form new groups at other nearby high schools, which she did, on her own time and at her own expense, apart from school hours.

A few years later, a group of citizens persuaded the state legislature to sponsor a bill including abstinence as an alternative in sex education classes in the public schools. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) fought hard against this bill, and the matter was finally brought to a hearing before a state legislative subcommittee.

The day of the hearing found a room packed with area high school students who belonged to some of the abstinence groups started by the

former teacher. Several ACLU lawyers also came to argue before the committee. The former teacher was allowed to speak first. She simply said, "I want to introduce you to some high school students who have made important decisions about their lives."

One by one, dozens of students walked to the podium and described how they had pledged sexual abstinence until marriage. The students were articulate, and every person in the room could hear the determination in their voices. When the last student finished, an ACLU lawyer began to describe how ludicrous it was to expect high school students to take abstinence seriously.

But it was clear that the kids had made his argument irrelevant before he ever spoke a word. They did all of this by simply having the courage to stand up and speak from their convictions.

Abstinence was incorporated into the school curriculum because one woman was convinced the "experts" were wrong and possessed the determination and work ethic to prove it. And abstinence is now taught in many nations of the world with great success.

Many adolescents never consider that their conduct today affects their future. But if you think what you do today won't have any bearing on your life thirty years down the road, you are wrong.

When you stand up for something you believe in, you may find people sifting through your history with a fine-tooth comb to expose any blemish. Written or computer records exist for almost any transaction today, so background checks are easy. Half of the places we go now are recorded by camera. Phone records can be gathered in an instant.

Look at the research political groups perform on rival candidates during an election year. They can produce a picture of a candidate attending an obscure meeting more than thirty years ago. In the future, it is possible someone will be able to tell you every Internet site you have looked at or phone call you have made. Romans 12:17 reminds us: "Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody."

► **Todd Clements**

*My father used to take me deer hunting annually. I looked forward to that November weekend for the whole year. I usually got to miss school on Friday and hunt during the weekend. The deer camp was two hours from my house and located on an island in the Mississippi River. Being there was like going back in time; we had no running water and no electricity except what we got from a small generator. There were about twenty people that stayed in our camp, ranging from old men to kids my age.*

*I hunted by myself when I was in the seventh grade. Even though we were on an island with several roads running through it, there was still the possibility of getting lost, especially after dark.*

*One of the old-timers in the camp used to tell us kids each year that if we ever got lost, we should find a nearby tree stump, stand up on it, and pull down our pants. Some kid who was new to the camp would inevitably give a puzzled look and ask, "Why?"*

*The old-timer would answer very seriously, "Because somebody will see you."*

*We all knew he was joking, even though he tried to act serious about this advice.*

Even though the old-timer was kidding, you can understand his point. If you're doing something you know you shouldn't, watch out, because somebody will notice. This is especially true when you're doing something wrong. It may be easy to think no one notices because nobody confronts you about it, but often people do notice and tell other people instead.

Whether or not others notice, God sees everything we do. How

would our behavior change if we never forgot about that fact? Romans 14:12 says: “So then, each of us will give an account of himself to God.” This shouldn’t scare you but rather encourage you to live as God wants you to. No one in the history of the world has ever been perfect except for Jesus. God doesn’t expect you to be perfect—if He did, there would have been no need for Jesus to come to earth and die on the cross. Intelligent people realize that everyone makes mistakes. The Bible tells us that we all fail in many ways. However, if you don’t live out the convictions you profess, you can actually do more harm for your cause than good.

What if one of the students from the abstinence group had had sex with his girlfriend in spite of promising he would abstain until marriage? What impact would it have had if the ACLU lawyer had then had the girlfriend testify to the subcommittee? It would have confirmed his argument that high school students can’t take abstinence seriously. That might have been enough to keep abstinence from being taught in schools.

People who profess to believe one way while living another are called hypocrites. When Jesus was on the earth, the people he had the most problems with and spoke most harshly to were the arrogant, hypocritical religious leaders. You can be a “religious,” legalistic, controlling, and arrogant hypocrite too if you want to be. This is a free country, after all. But when you get old and look back on your life, what do you want to see?

One word of caution: When you begin speaking about your convictions, many times other people who don’t share those convictions will accuse you of judging them. If they know you are a Christian they will often throw Matthew 7:1-2 at you:

**Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way  
you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure  
you use, it will be measured to you.**

But if you read further in that chapter to verse 5, you’ll realize that Jesus is talking about hypocrites here. If you speak of a conviction that

you are living by, you are not judging others. You are simply saying, “Here’s what I believe, and this is how I live.” You are not telling others what to do. When the abstinence group testified, they never said other methods of “safe sex” should not be taught; they simply asked that their method be given a voice as well. It was actually the ACLU lawyers who were judging, saying that abstinence did not deserve to be mentioned to high school students as a way to prevent unwanted pregnancies and diseases.

### **The Bottom Line**

We all get one life on this earth. And with determination, work, and time, one person can make a very big difference. Are you determined to use your life to make a difference, no matter what the cost? You can do it! Begin by deciding what your convictions are. Then, with God’s help, live out those convictions and speak out to others about them.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

### **PAUL MEIER, M.D.**

Dr. Paul Meier is a nationally recognized psychiatrist and founder of the Meier Clinics, a national chain of counseling and day-program facilities that employ 140 psychiatrists, psychologists, and therapists.

Dr. Meier has authored and coauthored more than seventy books, including *Love Is a Choice*, *Happiness Is a Choice*, *Winning Is a Choice*, *Unbreakable Bonds*, and *Blue Genes*. He has hosted a live national talk radio program for twenty years and is a frequent guest on numerous radio and television programs, including *The Oprah Winfrey Show* and Joyce Meyer's *Enjoying Everyday Life*. In addition, he has been interviewed on Radio Free Europe and has appeared in a French television documentary discussing Christian psychiatry.

Acknowledged as a pioneer in the integration of psychological and spiritual dimensions with physical aspects, Dr. Meier has taught at many universities and seminaries throughout the world. A well-known national and international speaker, he lectures on insight-oriented therapy and other related topics. Dr. Meier has been a guest speaker for the past three years at Awakening, an annual weekend retreat for business and political leaders to exchange ideas, examine trends, and learn from leading authorities and policy makers in a variety of fields.

Dr. Meier also served as a member of the Dallas Mayor and Dallas County Judge's Health Alliance.

Dr. Meier received his master's degree in cardiovascular physiology from Michigan State University and a medical degree from the University of Arkansas College of Medicine in Little Rock. He completed his psychiatry residency at Duke University Medical Center. In 1984, he obtained another degree from Dallas Theological Seminary.

In addition to his busy speaking and writing schedule, Dr. Meier treats patients at the Meier Clinics Day Program in Richardson, Texas.

### **TODD M. CLEMENTS, M.D.**

Dr. Clements served as a youth pastor and motivational speaker during college. Upon graduation, he pursued a master's degree in divinity from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, in preparation for a career

in the ministry. The Lord had different plans, however, leading him to pursue a career in medicine.

Dr. Clements obtained his medical degree from the University of Arkansas. He served as president of his class all four years of medical school. He then completed his residency training in psychiatry at the University of Oklahoma–Tulsa, where he served as chief resident of the program.

Dr. Clements began his career in psychiatry with the Paul Meier Clinics in Dallas, Texas. While there, he founded “Breakaway,” an intensive counseling program designed specifically for teenagers. Dr. Clements also coauthored the book *Blue Genes* with Dr. Meier.

Today Dr. Clements is a board certified adolescent and adult psychiatrist with the Amen Clinics. He specializes in SPECT Brain Imaging, a nuclear medicine study that is on the cutting edge of psychiatry. Dr. Clements and his colleagues at the Amen Clinics are using SPECT imaging with their patients in order to better diagnose and treat mental health issues.

Dr. Clements is a columnist for *Maximum Fitness* magazine and a sought-after speaker. He lives in Newport Beach, California, with Lynda, his wife of ten years.

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## NOTES

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