

#21 Northside Natter

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Today I'm taking a look at **Defiance**.

We have no new cases of the virus. When people do the right thing, it seems everything goes well. Interesting, isn't it? Most new virus cases in Melbourne came from people doing the wrong thing.

Defiance is not new to human behaviour. Every parent has seen defiance at least once in their child's development. Imagine how God felt having to deal with an entire nation of defiant Israelites. They had moved so far away from the restrictions he put in place for their well-being that many of their offspring had no experience, or knowledge, of God. Israel worshipped over eight thousand seven hundred pagan gods, yet refused to turn back to the only one that exists.

The dictionary defines defiance as follows: *it is an intentionally contemptuous behaviour, or attitude, with a readiness to contend, or boldly resist, an opposing force or authority.*

I'm surprised the defiant aren't sizzled on the spot by a bolt of lightning. Yet God holds back punishment until the Day of Judgement when the books are opened and our actions will speak for themselves. Why? Because everyone is given the opportunity to repent before that terrible and awesome day arrives. This is how the Lord dealt with Israel and why, in his abundant patience, he mercifully guided them to a better way.

Today, we are no different to Israel, even though more than 2,000 years have expired. In 2015, thirty-one percent of Earth's population claimed to be practicing Christians. When we remove the Catholics from that number, we're left with about fifteen percent who were non-Catholic Christians – a good portion of these would be other mainline churches. Because these figures were obtained over five years ago, and a lot has happened in that time, I will not be surprised to find that the number of practicing Christians is greatly reduced.

Why? I believe there are simply too many choices and too many loud voices calling to the people, saying; *"Come and taste of this tree. See? The fruit is sweet."* Just as the Israelites would have experienced in their time, there are too many varying opinions and too many alternative views of what works best. The noise they all make can't be filtered easily and our younger generations are so confused by it that they either become angry, hard-hearted, or simply opt to do what seems right in their own eyes. Isn't that why God warned the Israelites to forsake the gods and beliefs of those nations around them – so no confusion existed?

My old hometown makes a good sample-slice of the world with its hippies, environmentalists, Buddhists, God-fearing mainliners, atheists, witchcraft, spiritualists and a few small Christian groups. Let's look at them.

Hippies - In Australia, a group of young anti-establishment city-folk moved to the country, wanting to unplug from the frantic pace of the world and live simply. Getting back to nature meant no power, no phones, no pressure. Since establishing themselves, they have created a somewhat whimsical hippy culture undercut by free love and cannabis. Hippies are known

for their environmental initiatives. They are earth-loving yet defiant; refusing to register the births of any of their children to protect them from 'the establishment'. It sounds so utopian, so perfect, so free and unrestricted. Yet underneath it is a cesspool of drug addiction, organised crime, promiscuity, adultery and godlessness. But you don't see that until it's too late.

Environmentalists worship creation rather than the creator. They spill into green politics and you will find a lot of activists there. They use public demonstrations to influence young minds to seek changes in public policy and alter individual behaviour on matters that *they* determine are in humanities best interest. They demand human rights while God is tossed aside and bibles burned but all manner of ungodly things are touted as rightful. No-one denies them the right to participate in anything they want to, yet Christianity receives abuse from them. They are the epitome of defiance and perhaps that in itself is enough to attract younger minds who want to change the world.

Buddhism permeates a part of the population that is looking for peace and an end to inner suffering. The basic tenets of Buddhist teachings are: nothing is fixed or permanent; actions have consequences; change is possible. They believe this can be achieved through meditation which will transform one's experience – allowing them to become fully responsible for their own lives. They do not believe in a creator but instead look to self-enlightenment to be at peace with reality. They live, they die, they are reborn. If they can do all that by themselves, why have a god? They are their god.

Mainline churches are the same all over. They believe in God but one of their own design. They take from the bible the things they will accept and leave behind the things they won't. They are like the Pharisees in every way. Defiant to the end. Yet they promise salvation to people telling them that the church will save them. There is no commitment required, other than weekly offerings. This is an ideal place of pseudo-salvation to those who don't want to feel obligated.

Witchcraft still exists and spellcasting covens are alive and well in my old hometown. There are even university professors who openly claim to be warlocks and women who dance around white painted rocks during special phases of the moon. Some are shadow witches while others consider themselves to be white witches casting spells for the good of mankind. They make it all sound wonderfully magical in order to influence the minds of the naïve. They too are defiant, mixing the Divine (whoever that is to them) with witchcraft. Who wouldn't want to cast spells to make all their problems go away and fix the world? If only it worked.

Atheists refuse to believe in a higher power at all. Even if God were to stand before them, they would not accept his existence. They are blindly defiant. This philosophy appeals to many minds. It means they're off the hook because God doesn't exist. They look at their churchy neighbours thinking how pathetic and easily led they are. They shake their heads at this misguided naivety. They must feel quite smug and superior at times, until their lives take a deep dive. What then? Nothing.

Spiritualists in town are the confused who prefer to take a middle road. They believe in a 'universal power' that can heal the body and govern their lives. Apparently, universal power resides within them and this power can be called upon. They fall shy of calling this power, God. They don't want to define the power that closely. They won't even call the power he,

she or it. This power is just out there in the universe. This too is defiance and a subversion of the truth. But somehow it sounds ethereal, mystical, spiritual and heavenly. Quite appealing to those who don't like the word God.

Christians in town are those who do the best they can with the knowledge and wisdom they have. They are getting it mostly right because they have good teachers who understand God's word. Christians are practical people who follow bible principles. There is something about them that attracts. There is a happiness, a light, that they exude. A healthier lifestyle, a cleaner life – in every way. There is no defiance, only reliance. They have experienced other lifestyles, but interestingly, this is the one they chose to keep. God's own children will recognise them as something of substance.

Of course, there are hundreds, if not thousands, more alternatives in the world all vying for your life. But if you were a worldly twenty-year-old in my old hometown, how would you know you were making the best decision? Every group has some kind of appeal to the uninitiated.

Maybe you can understand how easily the Israelites were turned away from God all those centuries ago. I know when I was a Catholic, I was aware of right and wrong, yet I was confused about how right and how wrong things were. It seemed anything and everything was acceptable so long as it didn't hurt anyone. Could adultery hurt someone? It's only love isn't it? Could stealing from people hurt them? If I bashed them, that would hurt them, but surely taking their cash doesn't hurt. Does free love and cannabis hurt anyone? Surely not!

Godlessness creeps in so discreetly that it's insidious. It seems quite harmless yet it has brought about the destruction of hundreds of empires.

Galatians 6:7-9 *Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap*

Being defiant, I think, is the final straw to humankind's downfall. When we no longer hold respect for our elders, authorities, governments, or our God, we slide swiftly down the greased pole to our doom. Surely the Lord's return must be close.