

# Still Growing



*Twenty years ago Kirk Cameron, star of the television series Growing Pains, was a teen idol who at the height of his popularity left atheism and committed his life to Christ. Many of Hollywood's elite considered his conversion and subsequent outspokenness about his faith career suicide. But Cameron was unfazed. Instead, he dove into his faith, marriage and fatherhood. A few years later he started teaching people how to share their faith boldly. His is a road less traveled. Recently, Cameron spoke with Managing Editor Kirk Noonan.*

**tpe:** How did you come to know Christ as Savior?

**CAMERON:** I started in the entertainment industry when I was 9. At 14, I started playing Mike Seaver on *Growing Pains*. When I was 17 years old I went to church, not because I was interested in God but because I was chasing a really cute girl who was on *Growing Pains*. At the time, I was an atheist and I was uncomfortable going to church. But I heard the gospel message for the first time, and it got me thinking and asking questions about God and eternity.

**tpe:** So, going to church put you onto the road of a conversion experience?

**CAMERON:** Not at first. I began to dabble in New Age philosophy because it appealed to my ego as an atheist. I believed I was god and could determine

my own destiny. But after a while I began to doubt that was true because I had a hard time even making a pot of rice that didn't clump. If I couldn't do that, how could I make my own universe?

So, I started praying and asking God to reveal himself to me. I began to read the Bible, and God revealed himself to me through Scripture. Soon after, I turned from sin and put my faith in Jesus Christ. It was then that God began to change me into a new person.

**tpe:** What kind of changes did you notice?

**CAMERON:** I began to love the things of God because of what He did for me on the Cross. I realized I was a sinner, guilty before God and on my way to hell. But because Jesus shed His blood to pay the price for my sins, He rescued me from my sins and granted me eternal life. Since then, I've developed a concern for the lost.

**tpe:** *The Way of the Master* is a television series you do with Ray Comfort. How did that come about?

**CAMERON:** I was promoting the *Left Behind* movies when someone gave me an audiotape Ray had done called *Hell's Best-Kept Secret*. I was intrigued by the title, so I listened to it. It was earthshaking and challenged my understanding of how to share the gospel.

I invited Ray to lunch and was immediately convinced his message needed to be heard by

everyone. We started producing *The Way of the Master*, which teaches people the biblical way to share the gospel with a sinner so that he or she thirsts for righteousness, values the Cross and comes to God in humility and faith.

**tpe:** I've seen some of the clips from the program where you and Comfort ask people what they think will happen after they die. It seems like things can get pretty confrontational at times.

**CAMERON:** Sharing your faith can be confrontational. But there is no way to talk about repentance without talking about sin and the Cross. It makes no sense to share your faith if you sidestep talking about the wrath and judgment of God. But when you look at what's at stake for sinners if they don't come to Christ, it's worse than dying.

**tpe:** On your program you teach viewers to engage complete strangers with open-ended questions about eternity that you say will allow conversations regarding faith to ensue. But that seems to contradict a popular teaching point in Christian circles that says authentic relationships need to be established before trying to lead someone to the Lord. How do you respond to that?

**CAMERON:** Relationship evangelism buys people time so

they don't have to share their faith. Every day on this planet 150,000 people die. A majority of those people die without knowing Christ. If I really care about people, I will ask them what they think will happen when they die. I won't avoid their greatest fear — which the Bible says is the fear of death — and I will share with them how they can make peace with God.

**tpe:** Is it easy for you to share your faith with complete strangers?

**CAMERON:** The people closest to us are usually the hardest to witness to.

**tpe:** Why is that?

**CAMERON:** If you offend a family member you might negatively affect that relationship for a lot of years and make countless Thanksgiving dinners uncomfortable. But if you say something that makes a complete stranger uncomfortable you probably aren't going to see that person again. So you have nothing to lose. Believe it or not, most strangers will open up quicker to another stranger regarding their faith than to a family member because they also have nothing to lose.

**tpe:** You seem very confident that your way of evangelism works best.

**CAMERON:** Our confidence in how we share the gospel rests in the fact that we are doing it the way Jesus did it. He used the Ten Commandments to bring the knowledge of sin to sinners. He spoke to people's consciences



Cameron wrestles at home with four of his kids.

and told them why they needed a Savior.

**tpe:** You believe that many evangelism efforts fail to truly convert people. Why is that?

**CAMERON:** If you look at the statistics on modern evangelistic results, you'll find the current fall-away rate is somewhere between 80 and 90 percent. For every 100 decisions, 80 or 90 of those people will fall away. That's frightening, but it fits with what Scripture says will happen in the last days.

**tpe:** Why do you think the fall-away rate is so high?

**CAMERON:** We're not preaching a biblical gospel. People are not being convicted of their sins, they're not being born again, and they are simply following a man-made formula that supposedly promises to improve their lives.

A biblical gospel pricks the conscience and either humbles a man and brings him to the Cross in repentance or it will anger him, offend his pride and send him away even angrier than before he heard the gospel. That's the kind of preaching John Wesley did. He brought people to a crossroads that forced them to make a decision between loving God or loving their sin. As Christians, we need to bring people to that point

while they still have time to make a decision.

**tpe:** Do you ever get accused of lacking grace?

**CAMERON:** Only from people who don't understand what grace is. Grace is what God did for sinners on the Cross — it's undeserved kindness. If we really love and care about people, we're not going to run up to them and tell them they are going to hell. But we can and should ask them where they think they're going to go when they die.

If people have a wrong understanding of heaven and God and don't have a relationship with Jesus, I want to love them enough and be compassionate enough to tell them how they can be right with God. In doing so, I must also talk about the hard parts of the gospel such as sin and God's judgment.

If people don't understand sin, how can they repent? If they don't know they are headed for hell, it's going to mean nothing to them to hear about a Savior. In other words, if people don't think they need to be saved from hell, what good does it do for them to have a Savior who died on a cross for them?

**tpe:** Let's shift gears. Why did you write *Still Growing*, your autobiography?

**CAMERON:** I have six kids, and if you know anything about kids they can make you age quickly. I figured I should write the book now before I lose all my faculties.

**tpe:** How old are you?

**CAMERON:** I'm 37.

**tpe:** Some people would say 37 is young. There has to be another reason you wrote an autobiography.

**CAMERON:** I wrote the book because I thought it would be fun to take fans of *Growing Pains* back to the 1980s so they could see what it was like to be a teen idol during the time when everyone was wearing parachute pants, Reebok sneakers, acid-washed jeans and fluorescent shirts. I want readers to know what it felt like to get 10,000 pieces of fan mail each week, be stalked by pedophiles and have to fire my manager mom when I was 17 years old. The book also gave me a chance to address some of the controversial things that have been said about me regarding my faith and relationships with cast members on *Growing Pains*.

**tpe:** After *Growing Pains*, where did your career take you?

**CAMERON:** My career has never been more exciting than it is right now. When I was on *Growing Pains* I didn't even want to be an actor. I was 14 years old doing something my mom thought was a good idea. By the time I was 18, I had become a Christian, met and married Chelsea, and God had begun taking me on a journey I never could have imagined being so exciting.

**tpe:** Today you seem to pick projects that will be meaningful to you.

**CAMERON:** After *Growing Pains* and another series called *Kirk*, I started doing the *Left Behind* movies. Those allowed me to incorporate my faith and craft into the same projects. While entertaining people, I was able to teach them things about the Lord. I was able to do that again most recently when I did the movie *Fireproof* [to be released Sept. 26], which was made by the guys who made *Facing the Giants*.

**tpe:** Tell me about *Fireproof*.

**CAMERON:** The story is about a firefighter who is on the brink of a divorce, gets right with God and tries to win his wife's heart back. But the movie is really about men taking the lead in restoring their marriages.

**tpe:** I've read that you won't kiss any other woman than your wife, but in the screening of *Fireproof* it appears that you kiss your onscreen wife. What's the deal?

**CAMERON:** My lips are reserved for Chelsea. We did some movie magic on that scene. The woman I was kissing in that scene was Chelsea. She had on the same dress as my on-screen wife, and she was wearing a wig. It was a wonderful opportunity to make a movie, give it a romantic ending, and still honor the real-life covenant relationship between husband and wife.

**tpe:** What has having six children taught you?

**CAMERON:** They have made me rethink my priorities. At the

end of my life I'm not going to say I wish I spent more time working. I will thank God for every special moment I have had with my wife and kids.

**tpe:** If you could spend a few minutes with each of our readers, what would you tell them?

**CAMERON:** We are all part of the ultimate statistic of death. Ten out of 10 people will die. So everyone needs to consider, what are they living their life for now and where will they spend eternity? If there is a one-in-a-million chance that Jesus Christ has brought life and immortality through the gospel, everyone owes it to their own good senses to at least check it out. **tpe**

E-mail your comments to [tpe@ag.org](mailto:tpe@ag.org).

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