

A hell house is probably one of the most sick and twisted things that religious organizations use to trick a child into following the tenets of Christ—and they're gaining in popularity. How it is that the churches that choose to run these Hell Houses are not under arrest for child abuse, or child torture, is beyond me. Let's back up a bit to the 1970's.

It was during this time period that the evangelical church began to surge in power (on the wave that they are coming down from now). That's when the idea of 'saving' people by creating overtly graphic--and largely false-- 'haunted-houses' began.

Mirrored in the image of traditional haunted houses, Hell and Judgment Houses are designed to 'scare' people into loving Christ by graphically depicting those things which God does not like. Glenn Beck, a conservative radio and talk show host on Fox News, spoke about Hell Houses in 2006. He said, "You know what I feel like? I feel like one of those 'Yes, but' Muslims that I always talk about when it comes to terrorism. Yes, I disagree with what they've done, but I understand what they're doing. It's the same thing here." Glenn goes on to chastise the pastor he was speaking to, but chastising and being fervently against are not the same. To endorse—either overtly or covertly—this type of psychological torture is sick. If I were a Christian, I would be outraged.

What's worse is that many of the scenes in Hell House are purposefully skewed and have not been critically evaluated. For example, one Hell House scene depicted a young girl that went to a Rave. Raves are large teen parties that can include drugs, alcohol and almost always has loud rock music. The girl from the scene is drugged, raped, and shown in her room, contemplating suicide. Are Raves bad, well that depends on who you ask.

Most teens will say no, most adults will say yes. Sure, there are drugs (which we don't want our children using), and sex happens-we'd rather they waited. But, there are plenty of young people who can balance the thrill of attending a rave (or any party for that matter), without actually participating in anything that compromises their personal values. This is the same for all activities that involve large groups of young people.

But churches that sponsor Hell Houses seem to think teaching the worse case-scenario, instead of, say, teaching young people how to deal with possible moral dilemmas, will be a deterrent to young people going to Raves.

Whether we want them to or not, teens will go to parties. We could we spend our time trying to make them fear more than two teenagers in a given space, or, we could try to teach young people how to be responsible if they happen to be with a group of kids that end up at a party. Which sounds like a better idea?

The answer of course is education. Remember, you cannot stop a teenager from doing what they want to do: you'll just create a horrible power struggle that will end ugly. What you can do, what we can all do, is make young people aware of what happens at gatherings that will undoubtedly include sex, drugs, and other unhealthy behavior. We can teach teenagers to protect themselves. That's parenting at the teen level, not control. Guiding is about knowledge, facts and love.

There's no excuse to justify the mental torture of children because they don't listen to God's rules. Hell Houses depict graphic abortions—where fetuses are essentially ripped out by crazed abortion doctors--violent, fatal sexual experiences, where women

are choked while a man ejaculates in her, and depictions of a live Jesus—covered in blood, telling you of gods love, and so many more atrocities that I needn't continue.

But the scariest part, the most troubling aspect of it all, comes at the end of the Hell House tour. You are put in a room with two doors, the exit, and a mystery door. A pastor stands in front of the children and tells them that if they didn't like what they saw, there is a person behind the door that can help them avoid hell. They are not told, however, that there are people who live wonderful lives without Christ. They are not given a balanced perspective.

They are not told that Hell, Heaven, and God are all subjects that are regularly debated on an academic level—no. they are told that these things are facts and that they risk their mortal soul by not walking through the door; pathetic.

The reason that authorities, and people like Mr. Beck, have not cracked down on the psychological torture of children: G-O-D. Each short skit at a Hell House is equal to a mini snuff movie. Sane, critically-thinking people would be enraged if children were allowed to watch such unnecessary violence. But since we are not allowed to address the absurd rituals in any religion, it goes without question that most officials will do the PC thing here, and look the other way.

This sounds like something out of the dark ages. Remember: religion ruled the dark ages," so the quote goes.

Any psychologist will tell you that it is NEVER in a child's best interest to torture them, physically or psychologically. So will anyone who values humanity. It is in a child's best

interest to be nurtured in those things which will help them be productive members of society. How will seeing a 'lesbian' commit suicide at a Hell House help them in the long run? Are we raising Pavlov's dogs? When someone says gay! you say sinner; when someone says abortion✍ you say against god's laws. How will Hell Houses help children think critically about ideas presented to them in school, at work and in society at large?

Ok, rant over.

Tomorrow, we'll discuss part 2: The brave Christians that fight against Hell Houses and why America needs them to yell a bit louder!