



# Don't Be Fooled

December 12, 2018

Christmas is two weeks away. We all have different traditions at Christmas time. My father use to read the Christmas Story from the Bible to me and my mother every Christmas morning before we could open presents. As a child I didn't like this tradition too much. However, I have continued this tradition with my children. My mother passed away in 2014. I miss her every day, but especially around Christmas.

When I was a little boy I could only afford to buy my mom chocolate covered cherries for Christmas. As I got older I would get her the same gift, but I would add money to it. I believe she looked forward to the candy more than the money. Although Christmas was special to my mother for many reasons the holiday she looked forward to the most was April Fool's Day. She was a prankster.

Some of the things were so outrageous you would question her sanity if I told you about them, but it was all in fun. No one likes to be fooled in real life though. It's no fun when everyone is laughing at you. It's no fun when you're taken advantage of. No one wants to be the butt of the joke. Do you remember the show Candid Camera? Television producer Allen Font created a hidden camera reality show over fifty years ago and shot over a thousand episodes.

The show would take ordinary people and play practical jokes on them while filming with concealed cameras. After they fooled you they would point to the camera and say "Smile you're on Candid Camera." If you're under the age of forty you may not be familiar with Candid Camera.

You may be more familiar with the show Punk'd. MTV teamed with Ashton Kutcher to produce a Candid Camera type show initially for ordinary people. This concept failed so they switched their focus to celebrities. The very first show featured super star entertainer Justin Timberlake.

Timberlake was led to believe that government agents were seizing his home and valuables because of unpaid income taxes. If you haven't seen this episode you have to check it out on YouTube. It's hilarious. Several government agents entered his home and started taking things out of his house and putting them on a large moving van.

Justin Timberlake started to panic, he called his mother for help and his anguish eventually lead to tears. One of the government agents ask him to take off his shirt and his pants because those items were being seized as well. As he sat on the front porch sulking in his perceived reality, actor Ashton Kutcher comes out and says "Gotcha, you've been punk'd." Justin then acts as if he wasn't affected by the prank at all, when all viewers could easily tell he was emotionally disturbed by the temporary reality of losing it all.

When I was a Youth Pastor I would tell the young people at our church that Satan was playing a prank on them. I would let them know that what seems to be their reality is really a joke. I would paint a word picture of the big, bad, slick devil sitting in a television production van laughing at us all because we don't realize the impact of our current decisions. Society does this to all of us.

If we want a healthy life later, we must make healthy decisions now. If we want money later, we must save money now. If we want our children to have better lives than we have, we must model good behavior now. I believe society is playing a prank on us all. What we do today will determine our tomorrow. I often tell my children that smart people think about the future. Don't fall for the okie dokie. If we live a carefree, undisciplined life now we will pay for it later.