

A Party for a Prostitute

A few years ago, Tony Campolo – Christian sociologist, pastor and author – traveled to Honolulu, Hawaii, for a speaking engagement.

He flew all the way from Pennsylvania to Hawaii and had an awful case of jet lag. Therefore, at 3 a.m., he was wide awake.

Campolo found a doughnut shop near his hotel. As he sat there, sipping coffee and glancing at a newspaper, the door to the diner swung open, and in marched eight or nine provocative and boisterous prostitutes. Their talk was loud and crude.

Campolo was just about to make his getaway when he overheard one of the women say, “Tomorrow’s my birthday. I’m gonna be 39.”

One of her friends responded in a sarcastic tone, “So what do you want from me – a birthday party?”

“No,” she said. “I’ve never had a birthday party in my life. Too late to start now.”

Suddenly, Campolo had an idea. As soon as the women had left, he said to Harry, the owner of the diner, “Do these women come in here every night?”

“Yep,” he said, “about this same time. Hope they weren’t bothering you.”

“No,” Campolo said, “but I have an idea. The one sitting next to me is going to have a birthday tomorrow. I’ll pay the bill if we can have a little birthday party for her.”

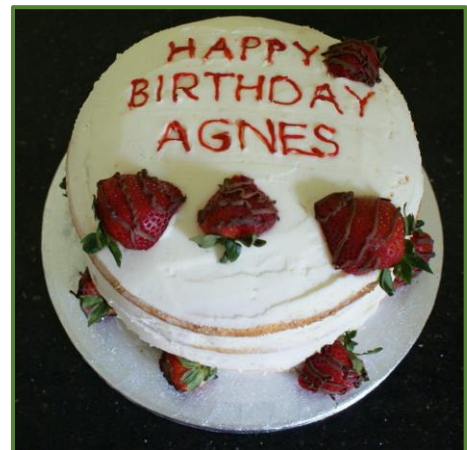
A smile spread across Harry’s face. “That’s a good idea. Her name is Agnes.” He called his wife out of the kitchen area and told her about it. They agreed to bake the cake.

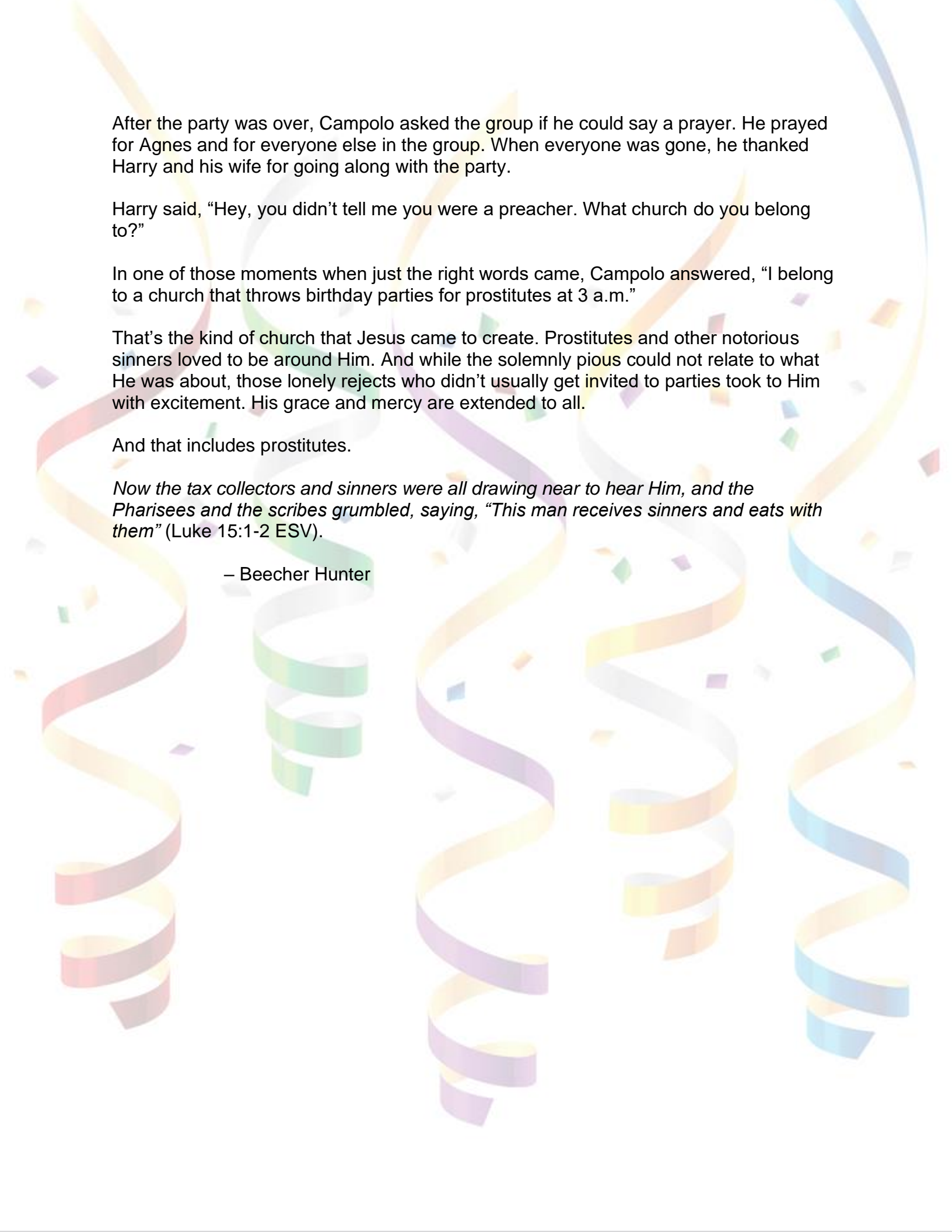
The next morning by 3 a.m., Campolo had decorated the diner with crepe paper and had made a big sign reading, *Happy Birthday, Agnes*.

Word had gotten around somehow, because by 3 a.m. every prostitute in Honolulu was in the place. Wall to wall prostitutes and Tony Campolo.

Agnes was flabbergasted, stunned, shaken. Her eyes moistened. Then after she blew out the candles, she completely lost it and openly cried.

(more)



The background of the page is decorated with several colorful, wavy streamers in shades of yellow, orange, red, green, purple, and blue. Small, multi-colored confetti pieces are scattered throughout the scene, creating a festive and celebratory atmosphere.

After the party was over, Campolo asked the group if he could say a prayer. He prayed for Agnes and for everyone else in the group. When everyone was gone, he thanked Harry and his wife for going along with the party.

Harry said, “Hey, you didn’t tell me you were a preacher. What church do you belong to?”

In one of those moments when just the right words came, Campolo answered, “I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3 a.m.”

That’s the kind of church that Jesus came to create. Prostitutes and other notorious sinners loved to be around Him. And while the solemnly pious could not relate to what He was about, those lonely rejects who didn’t usually get invited to parties took to Him with excitement. His grace and mercy are extended to all.

And that includes prostitutes.

Now the tax collectors and sinners were all drawing near to hear Him, and the Pharisees and the scribes grumbled, saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:1-2 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter