

## Counter-Culturally Resisting

While hurriedly packing for my trip to preach in South Carolina this past week, I followed my normal rhythm. I pulled out the checklist of what to throw into my roller bag. Toothpaste, toothbrush, socks, suits, suspenders, shaver, etc. I usually keep a half ear open to news while I'm packing. Former President Bill Clinton was being interviewed. It appeared that the main subject of the interview was his wife and her political aspirations. Then a question came to him that slowed me down until I stopped packing to listen to his answer. The question was involving aids prevention and sexual total abstinence. He's what I picked up that was rather alarming. He, like many others, did not speak out directly against abstinence but he did refer to the person who pushed for abstinence alone for the prevention method as "a loser." Then the former president proceeded to say we must consider the culture.

The obvious deduction by our former president is to consider the culture of a nation, then make the necessary decisions. It is like the man who moistens his finger and lifts it to the wind to check out the direction it is blowing to determine the direction he will take. I like what I learned when I went sailing with Al Havey. The Chairman determined first his direction and then he tacked his sails where they needed to be to get him there. He did not go the direction the wind was blowing unless the wind was blowing in his predetermined plan.

Dr. Peter Jones in his remarkable book, *Spirit Wars, Pagan Revival in Christian America* wrote, "On November 3, 1992 the people of the United States voted into the most powerful position on earth a president who had smoked pot, dodged the draft, and espoused the sexual morals of the hippie revolution. The anti-establishment, flower power children of the Sixties entered the halls of political power in the nineties. Politics will never be the same again. Hippies, now with short hair and three piece suits, squat in the White House – legally. In the nineties, the world witnessed 'The Second Coming of the 60's,' and President Clinton, he who had breathed that (60's) era's heady atmosphere, and inhaled deeply,' became, in his capacity as social head of the nation, a metaphor for our times."

In his riveting book, *Slouching Towards Gomorrah*, Judge Robert H. Bork quotes James Q. Wilson, "These unpleasant actions are chiefly the behavior of young people who in all cultures in every epoch test the limits of acceptable behavior. Testing limits is a way of asserting selfhood. Maintaining limits is a way of asserting community."

At this critical moment in American history and even more importantly in Church history, our young people, like every culture before them, "test limits." The sadness at this time is that many of our leaders who should be serving as responsible mentors for the up and coming generation have loosed the moral moorings and have not only allowed, but promoted a drifting that only God through personal and national revival can stop. We need to remember as Christians we are not to be driven by the culture; we are to stand cross-culture. I like the wording of Theodore Roosevelt who on August 6, 1912 said, "Now to you men, who, in your turn, have come together to spend and be spent in the endless crusade against wrong, to you who face the future resolute and confident, to you who strive in a spirit of brotherhood for the betterment of our Nation, to you who gird yourselves for this great new fight in the never-ending warfare for the good of humankind, I say in closing: We stand at Armageddon, and we battle for the Lord." May the Lord help us to take that "Bull-Moose" spirit and stand for the right against the wrong whoever comes or does not come with us. May the Lord help us to abandon expediency and tenaciously stand strong among the weak-kneed sisters who won't stand. How then can we, in a well-balanced Christian spirit, stand counter to a culture that would lift us from the gravity pull of Gomorrah?

### **1. Be Christ-centered, not necessarily relevant.**

The desire to be culturally relevant in the church has almost become idolatrous. If we can

maintain a clean Christian witness and be up—to-date is fine, but when we go to the extent of adapting so much of the world into our church programs, even to our outreach that there is no clear difference, we have sinned. The Lordship of Christ in our life mandates that some clear lines must be drawn. The Bible says, “Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen...” (Jeremiah 10:2). Jesus said, “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46). If relevancy fits, okay; if not, choose Jesus! “Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” (I John 2:15).

## **2. Develop an intolerance to sin.**

In our world that desires political correctness, it is time for us to stand against the tide. The only intolerance the world seems to embrace is intolerance to Christians who embrace absolutes. Let us be strengthened to keep standing up for holiness and against the un-holy. Let us most fearlessly stand against our own temptations and wrongdoings. Josh Billings said, “All it takes for tyranny to rule is for good men to do nothing.”

I love the humorous yet true story of a man who was hovering between life and death. He was running a store when a thief broke in and shot him. The ambulance sped him to the emergency room and the medical team began at once to attend to the man with a bullet deep in his chest. While he remained conscious, they asked him a couple of pertinent questions, one being, “Sir, are you allergic to anything?” He answered, “Yes, bullets!” Well, the attending physician and nurses broke out into laughter and continued with their successful attempts in saving this man’s life. My friends, we need to look at sin as dangerous as a bullet, a cobra, or a crocodile. When Cain was about to kill his brother in a fit of envy and pride, God said to him, “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...” (Genesis 4:7). Let us not be as others who have closed the door to holiness and opened the door only to be ravaged and torn to immoral shreds by the debauchery of sin. Let us rebuke it and not entertain it!

## **3. Do not allow your heart to be stolen by popular people who are not Christian in conduct.**

The Bible tells us, “...so Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel” (II Samuel 15:6). Absalom was a persuasive young man. But he used his talents and gifts to turn the hearts of men away from God and God-ordained authority. We should never be surprised when evil clokes itself in appealing garments for the Word tells us, “And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light” (II Corinthians 11:14). Now more than ever we need to follow the admonition of Proverbs 4:23, “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”

- Pastor Pope -

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