

521 What Is Happening in Our World Today?

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God's Answers to Life's Questions

Perhaps lately you've felt a little like Rip Van Winkle, who went to sleep for twenty years and woke up to find his world had changed drastically. There was a time when the morals of this country were strong, and people were God-fearing. Today it seems that the moral fiber of our country is coming apart. No subject is too immoral to keep from exploring on television. The preachers of our day have been told to shut up, and most people no longer blush at anything. Our schools can no longer talk about God, parents can no longer discipline kids, and more than 42 million unborn children failed to see life since Roe vs. Wade.

Societies throughout history have shown that they can change very rapidly. Within a generation, a nation can change in its thinking and its morals for the better or for the worse. When Jacob and all his sons went down into Egypt, Joseph was ruling next to Pharaoh and life was good. Exodus 1:7-8 says, "The sons of Israel were fruitful and increased greatly, and multiplied, and became exceedingly mighty, so that the land was filled with them. Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph." He enslaved Israel and made their lives very miserable and bitter with their tasks. Life had changed in such a short time.

Many years later God delivered the Israelites. Moses led the children of Israel back to the Promised land, and Joshua led the armies to conquer the land. Judges 2:7 tells us that "the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who survived Joshua." But after Joshua and those elders died, Judges 2:10 says, "there arose another generation after them who did not know the LORD, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel." The difference here was a generation that did not know the Lord. Could that be what has happened in our day—we don't know the Lord? #

Each generation is just one generation away from apostasy—that is, falling away from the Living God! We must wonder how so many changes have taken place in America within the last 35 years—changes one could hardly have imagined. Right now in America, there are more marriages ending in divorce than death. More than a million abortions each year. More than a million babies born out of wedlock each year. We are seeing some who demand same-sex marriages. Our televisions now are filled with nudity and gross profanity. And Christianity is the most slandered and "persecuted" religion.

By a 3-to-1 margin (64% vs. 22%) American adults said truth is always relative to the person and their situation. Most Americans base their beliefs more on their feelings than on what the Bible says. There is a tremendous amount of moral confusion in our world today.

- 61% of adults view gambling as a morally acceptable behavior.
- 59% say enjoying sexual thoughts or fantasies about someone is all right.
- 60% say living with someone of the opposite sex without being married, sometimes called co-habitation, is morally okay.
- 45% see nothing wrong with having an abortion.
- 42% say having a sexual relationship with someone of the opposite sex to whom you are not married, fornicating, is morally acceptable.
- 38% approve of pornography, looking at pictures of nudity or explicit sexual behavior.
- 36% approve of using profanity; and 35% approve of getting drunk. 30% see nothing wrong with having a sexual relationship with someone of the same sex.

We have watched these radical changes in our moral standards take place over the last century.

Fran Sciacca in his book "Generation at Risk," tells of the four sets of moral standards our country has embraced over the last 150 years. These changes are remarkable and alarming.

First, there was Biblical Morality (1800s-early 1900s). People said, "Certain things are right and wrong, and I know why."

Then from the 1900-1950s, there was Abiblical Morality. That is morality based on things other than the Bible. People said, "Certain things are right and wrong, but I don't know why."

In the 1960s and early 1970s, Immorality became acceptable and was widely practiced. People said, "Certain things are right and wrong, but I don't care."

And since the 1980s, we have had Amorality, no morality at all. People said, "There's no such things as right and wrong!" So...when there is no right and wrong, people pretty much do what they want.

I'm deeply concerned about our children, and whether or not they will know the Lord in coming days. In 1952 only 6% of children grew up without any spiritual training, but today an amazing 37% of children grow up without any spiritual training at all. That is, they are not taken to church by parents and not given spiritual training at home. If we continue in spiritual decline, we may find ourselves in a country that doesn't know God at all. How can we expect God to bless our country, when we aren't listening to Him? God will not continue to bless us if we ignore Him.

"What can we do to keep faith with God and restore our country?" First, perhaps it is time we humbled our hearts in repentance and ask God to forgive our neglect. God told Solomon in 2 Chronicles 7:14, if "My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land." A better world always begins with me, one individual at a time. I need to do all I can to straighten out my own life, to get myself right. I can't others to do things I am not willing to do myself.

Second, we need to get serious about our Bible study. The best way to know God, to know God's will, and to follow His will is to study His Word regularly. I am amazed how easily many people accept what they hear on television as true. People need to check the truth out for themselves. Luke said in Acts 17:11 the Bereans, "Now were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily, to see whether these things were so." Some today let soap operas and talk shows tell them what to believe or what was right or wrong. The Bereans checked the Bible.

Paul urged us in 2 Timothy 2:15, "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." We need to know how to study the Bible and to understand it properly. We must make distinctions between the Old Testament and the New Testament. We must know who said what to whom, getting the context. I fear that many people will be ashamed before God, because they have misunderstood or misused the Bible. Some read what they like and ignore everything else. The Bible can be understood and interpreted properly!

Third, we must know who our real enemy is. It is Satan, the devil. Peter warned, "Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in your faith" (1 Pet. 5:8-9). The devil has always been a liar, and he uses lies to deceive and trip people up. He knows that if he tells a lie long and loud enough, people will foolishly believe it. Jesus told some unbelieving Jews in John 8:44-45, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do

the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him.

Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me.” Here are some lies Satan tells:

●God doesn't really exist. God doesn't care about you. The Bible is full of myths and legends. The Bible spoke to people in ancient times but doesn't speak to us today. There are no absolutes. What true for you is true for you, and what's true for me is true for me.

●Sin is so bad. God won't send anyone to hell. There is no hell. Everybody's going to the same place after we die. Only the worst people will be lost in the end. And there are many more.

I am surprised at how many people do not realize that we are in a major spiritual war. Paul said in Ephesians 6:10-13, “Finally, be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.”

The battle we are fighting is a serious one. It is not merely for our lives; it is for our souls and perhaps the souls of our loved ones. It is a personal battle, and no one can fight it for you. If you do not realize that the devil is fighting you, you will most certainly lose. He is strong and knows your weaknesses. Furthermore, he has a strategy to win. The devil has been fighting God's people for many centuries, and he does not fight fair. If you are not prepared to fight him or if you do not take him seriously, you will most certainly lose. He takes victory over you seriously and will do all that he can do to win!

Paul explains in Eph. 6:14-18, “Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; in addition to all, taking up the shield of faith with which you will be able to extinguish all the flaming missiles of the evil one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints.” God has not left us helpless, unprotected. We can overcome.

One last thing. In fighting the devil, we must give it our all to stand firm. If we think we can win by a weak or half-hearted faith, we are only fooling ourselves. We must be people of strong conviction and willing to give it everything we've got! James reminds us, “Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (James 4:7-8). It is reassuring to know that with God on our side, not even the devil can overcome us.

Fourth, pass your faith on to your children. Teach them about the Lord and His will for our lives. From the time they arrive tell them of Jesus.

Paul told fathers in Ephesians 6:4, “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.” It is a parent's responsibility, especially fathers, to train their children spiritually. Don't be like the father who waited until his children were grown before he got serious about his faith. It's too late then. Start training your children from the time they are born to put their faith in God and to respect His commandments. Teach them the love and the authority of God. Show them what it means to live the Christian life by providing an example before them everyday. Say no to sin in your own life. Say yes to faith.

Perhaps the reason we lack moral authority with our young people today is that we haven't lived according to the teaching of God ourselves. You can't teach others to do what you are unwilling to do. If our children are ever to know God, parents will first have to know God and follow His will. We need men like Joshua who said, “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). A better America begins with each of us humbling ourselves before God, denying ourselves and taking up our crosses daily.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859) "was a French politician and political philosopher (who) became known for his book, *Democracy in America* (1835-40). He wrote it after a visit to the United States in 1831. He said, “America is great because it is good. When it ceases being good, it will no longer be great.” He is right you know. The solution to our problems won't be found in more education, better psychology, or new pharmaceuticals. What is ailing America is spiritual, and the only antidote to this terrible disease is a return to God. We need a return to the Word of God and to the blood of Jesus.

I don't know where you are in your relationship with the Lord. If you haven't been to church in years, come back to the Lord. Study your Bible, pray fervently everyday. Don't be fooled into thinking that God's grace will excuse you from repenting. God's grace teaches a whole new life, filled with love and righteousness. You may need to obey the gospel. Believe with all your heart that Jesus is the Christ, repent of your sins, confess the name of Jesus before men, and be baptized (immersed) into Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. God will forgive you and bless the change you've made in your life.

Today we're offering a pamphlet free of charge, entitled, “Ten Things God Wants in Your Life.” It tells of all the wonderful things God wants for you. With all the blessings of God, it is no wonder that we should draw near to Him always. Where are you in your life? Do you have a close, loving, peaceful relationship with God? Do you have peace of mind and heart inside? God hasn't left you; it may be that you have left God. The greatest need of our time is to know God and to draw close to Him again by listening and obeying His Word. Won't you do that?

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