

The Games We Play

Game-playing and competition can and should be seen as a healthy part of a life that seeks to glorify God in all things.

Games and a Christian Worldview

Ten seconds are left in the game. The Wolves lead by two points. The Bobcats cross midcourt, knowing they must score or they will miss the playoffs. Smith stumbles! Jones grabs the ball and races toward the Wolves' basket for a lay-up. Smith tackles him like a linebacker! Both of them slide across the floor and run into the wall behind the basket. It looks as if Jones may be injured! Players from both teams are shouting at each other. The referee has thrown Smith out of the game!

Does this sound like something you may have seen during a high school, college, or professional basketball game? Or perhaps you have read about a similar incident. Actually, such an event took place in my experience. (The names have been changed to protect the guilty.) I was playing for my church team in a church league. I was the one who was tackled.

Does such an incident represent a Christian worldview of games? Surely most of us would answer with an emphatic, "No!" Unfortunately, though, too many Christians approach games with attitudes that appear to leave their Christian convictions out of the picture. Too many of us can tell stories involving Christians and games that don't align with a Christian worldview. Many times I was the one who allowed athletic intensity to overcome moral conviction in the midst of competition, and I have seen many friends do the same. Why? What is it about games that can encourage some of our more ungodly characteristics?

On the other hand, can sports bring out some of our more godly

characteristics? Can God be glorified through games? There have been times in my life when the exhilaration and concentration that can accompany games have included thankfulness to God. He gives me joy when I express my thankfulness to Him as I hit or throw a baseball, catch a football, shoot a basketball, volley a tennis ball, or hit a golf ball.

Arthur Holmes has written that “play is all-pervasive. It does not lie just on the fringes of life, as if games were spare parts we don’t really need in the main business of the day.”[\(1\)](#) If true, such a statement indicates the importance of our subject. It is worthy of our attention. Some even believe play is the defining characteristic of humans. “Nietzsche went so far as to reduce all of life and thought to masks in a play, taking nothing seriously except the will to power—in effect, the will to win—that all of life is a biologically driven power play.”[\(2\)](#) A Christian, of course, does not agree with this perspective, but the Christian does live in a world that tends to agree with Nietzsche’s dictum. The “will to power” definitely is translated into “the will to win” for many. Indeed, the phrase is often elaborated to mean “the will to win at all costs.” Vince Lombardi, the coach of the Green Bay Packers during their period of NFL domination, is famous for the statement: “Winning isn’t the main thing, it’s the only thing.” But, can the Christian play, win or lose, and not agree that winning is the only thing? If the answer is, “Yes!,” the believer must realize that he has accepted a challenge to be Christ’s ambassador even on the field of play.

A Brief History of Games

“That was an Olympian effort!” “Those mountains have an Olympic grandeur.” Such expressions indicate some of the ways in which ancient games and their impact are part of our consciousness. Games were part of all ancient cultures. For some, games were more sedentary than for others, but a sense

of play permeates man's history. The Greeks, who first held the Olympic Games and others that were similar, organized these events approximately 3,500 years ago. All of them were dedicated to certain gods and were integrated with religious ceremonies. The competitors were originally amateurs whose only reward was a wreath or garland. Eventually, though, the rigorous training that was required led to their professional status. They received adulation in their cities, as well as substantial prizes and monetary rewards.[\(3\)](#) As we will see, the New Testament contains metaphors relating to these games and competitors.

When the Romans became the dominant world power, they rejected the Greek emphasis on athletic skill because of the public nakedness of the competitors.[\(4\)](#) Such a response is ironic in light of the brutal games that soon came into vogue in the empire. Gladiatorial combat to the death, fights with beasts, even naval battles were staged in the arenas. The circus Maximus in Rome, where important chariot races were held, probably held up to 250,000 people. "By A.D. 354 the games claimed 175 days out of the year."[\(5\)](#) Such popularity is indicative of a significant difference between the Greek and Roman attitudes about games. "The Greeks originally organized their games for the competitors, the Romans for the public. One was primarily competition, the other entertainment."[\(6\)](#) The Roman thirst for barbaric spectacle and entertainment ultimately prompted the outrage of early church leaders. They "denounced the games and similar amusements because of idolatry, immodesty, and brutality. It was, in fact, the opposition of Christianity that brought them to an end."[\(7\)](#) Such a response may prove to be appropriate in our time. But for the moment I propose we simply consider what Scripture contains to guide us in an appraisal of the games played by both Christians and non-Christians.

The Old Testament contains few references to games, even though evidence of them can be found in all areas of the

ancient Near East. “Simple and natural amusements and exercises, and trials of wit and wisdom, were more to the Hebrew taste.”[\(8\)](#) The biblical text does mention children’s games, sports such as running, archery, stone-lifting, high leaping, games of chance and skill, story-telling, dancing, the telling of proverbs, and riddles. In addition, wrestling probably was part of Hebrew life.[\(10\)](#)

It is of special interest to note the joyous prophetic picture of Zechariah 8:5: “And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets” (NASB). “The promise of the kingdom, as Lewis Smedes observes, is of restored playfulness.” Evidently play and games have a place in God’s plan for His people:

Scripture begins with life in a garden and ends with a city at play; so play—art and celebration and fun and games, and a playful spirit—is part of our calling, part of the creation mandate. It is not the play of self-indulgence, nor of shed responsibility, but of gladness and celebration in responsible relationship to God.”[\(11\)](#)

Games and the New Testament

Can you picture the Apostle Paul as a sportswriter? Imagine him sitting in a stadium pressbox observing the athletes compete. Then imagine him writing his observations and opinions of what transpired. The next morning you purchase a newspaper and turn to the sports section. There you find an account of the previous day’s game under Paul’s byline. Does this sound farfetched, out of character, ludicrous? Actually such a scenario is not far removed from Paul’s knowledge of the games of his day. In several portions of his letters, one can find metaphors relating to athletic preparation and competition. The same is true for the writer of Hebrews. These New Testament writers evidently were aware of Greek and Roman games and realized they could be used to teach valuable

lessons to their readers. Their awareness is evidence that they were enmeshed in the surrounding culture, which was filled with indicators of the importance of games and competition in the ancient world.

These games “were so well known in Palestine and throughout the Roman Empire in the time of Christ and the apostles that they cannot be passed over in silence.” [\(13\)](#) Archaeological remains indicate stadiums of various types in many cities including Jerusalem, Jericho, Caesarea, Ephesus, Corinth, Rome, and Tarsus, the city of Paul’s early life. “The early Christians, therefore, whether of Jewish or gentile origin, were able to understand, and the latter at any rate to appreciate, references either to the games in general, or to details of their celebration.” [\(14\)](#) A brief survey of particular New Testament passages will provide us with a foundation for an analysis of games in contemporary life.

Some of the most intriguing athletic metaphors in all of Paul’s writings are found in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. He uses Greek terminology and images that stem directly from the athletic contests of his day, especially the triennial Isthmian Games held in Corinth. These terms and images include running a race to win, receiving a prize, competition, discipline in preparation for competition, concentration, abiding by the rules, and even boxing. Variations on these themes can be found in Galatians 2:2 and 5:7; Philippians 2:16 and 3:14; 2 Timothy 2:5 and 4:7. In Hebrews 12:1 the author of Hebrews echoes Paul’s metaphors by encouraging Christians to “run with endurance the race that is set before us.” In verse 2 he even refers to Jesus as the one who set the pace and has already covered the course.

These passages are worthy of many sermons and extensive commentary. Since that is not possible in this short essay, let’s consider a few insights from these biblical metaphors that are most germane to our subject.

First, there is no blanket condemnation of games. The metaphors carry the positive weight of someone who respected athletic endeavors. Second, there is much to learn about the Christian life when we compare it with games. Games can be seen and experienced in ways that correlate with Christian principles such as discipline, concentration, and perseverance. Third, these passages should not be gleaned in an uncritical manner. Surely Paul rejected many aspects of the games, such as the pagan religious emphases. Fourth, the physical body was not rejected as unimportant. Gnosticism, which was a prominent heresy of New Testament times, taught that the body was unimportant or even sinful. In contrast, these verses take the importance of the body for granted. It is God's creation.

Contemporary Views of Games

The Super Bowl. The Final Four. College Bowl Games. The Olympics. The NBA Finals. The World Series. Little League Baseball. The Masters. The World Cup. The list of such sports-related titles could fill several pages of this essay because our culture is saturated with games. This infatuation takes a great deal of our time, attention, and money. An objective observer, in my opinion, would conclude that humans are obsessed with games. Current predictions and opinions of this infatuation vary from the skeptical to the optimistic. Alvin Toffler, writing in 1970, predicted that, "Leisure-time pursuits will become an increasingly important basis for differences between people, as the society shifts from a work orientation toward greater involvement in leisure. We shall advance into an era of breathtaking fun specialism."[\(15\)](#) Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the great basketball player of the recent past, stated, "Modern sports is getting to be like professional wrestling; something is going awry."[\(16\)](#) According to Robert Higgs, author of *God in the Stadium*, "Professional sports is getting warped, and they carry a somber message to society in our contemporary times."[\(17\)](#) He

continued along this theme by suggesting that “the idea of play and fun and enjoyment of the natural gifts of games is being warped by this incredible drive for money.”[\(18\)](#) In comparing the games with a prize, such as the Super Bowl, Higgs concluded: “The more emphasis you put on the cultural prize, the bigger you make those prizes, the less regard and appreciation of the gift of the game itself, it seems to me.”[\(19\)](#)

Do any of these opinions concur with your estimation of games? Are you one of the skeptics? If so, that probably is a sign that you have at least begun to ask if games are occupying the proper place in your life, your family’s life, and the life of the culture at large. Before we become too cynical, though, let’s consider more optimistic analyses.

In his book, *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch draws a fascinating parallel between sports and our need for traditions and order. He believes that an intelligent sports spectator is one of the keys to a retention of the positive nature of games. He writes: “One of the virtues of contemporary sports lies in their resistance to the erosion of standards and their capacity to appeal to a knowledgeable audience.”[\(20\)](#) Michael Novak, who has written a thought-provoking book entitled *The Joy of Sports*, juxtaposes European and American traditions around the place of sports in America’s history. He believes that the “streets of America, unlike the streets of Europe, do not involve us in stories and anecdotes rich with a thousand years of human struggle. Sports are our chief civilizing agent. Sports are our most universal art form. Sports tutor us in the basic lived experiences of the humanist tradition.”[\(21\)](#) Novak continues his praise with a statement that echoes the Apostle Paul: “Play provides the fundamental metaphors and the paradigmatic experiences for understanding the other elements of life.”[\(22\)](#) Is there a “happy medium” between the skeptical and optimistic views of games? Or should we bring the two views together in order to

find a wise perspective? Perhaps a coupling of the two views provides creative positive tension that enables us to better evaluate the place of games in the Christian life.

Christians in a Competitive World

“I believe that God made me for a purpose. For China. But He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure. To give it up would be to hold Him in contempt. . . . To win is to honor Him.” [\(23\)](#)

These poignant phrases are from *Chariots of Fire*, one of the truly great films. They were spoken by the actor who portrayed Eric Liddell, a great athlete and a great Christian. He is talking with his sister, who is pleading with him to fulfill his commitment to their mission in China. He was to fulfill that commitment, but first he considered it his duty to run in the 1924 Paris Olympics for the glory of God. When I first saw the film I wept with joy and gratitude because of the film’s portrayal of a man who understood and appreciated God’s gift to him. In my estimation the film, and this scene in particular, contains a clear and eloquent statement of a Christian worldview as it applies to games, play, sports, or athletics. With Eric Liddell’s words in mind, we will offer principles that can help us establish a foundation for a Christian’s involvement in games. First, “play is best seen as an attitude, a state of mind rather than as a distinguishable set of activities.” [\(24\)](#) One doesn’t have to be involved in play to play; work can include an attitude of play as well.

Second, “play is not the key to being human, but being human is the key to play.” [\(25\)](#) And being human includes a free spirit that is “celebrative and imaginative because of the possibilities God has for us in this world.” [\(26\)](#)

Third, play should instill “an attitude that carries over into all of life, finding joyful expression in whatever we do,

productive or not.” [\(27\)](#)

Fourth, play should be seen as an act of worship. “It is the religious meaning of life that gives purpose and meaning to both work and play. A responsible relationship to God includes play.” [\(28\)](#)

Some of you may be saying, “OK, I can think on these things in solitude or in group discussion, but what about principles that will help me when I’m actually involved in games? How should I play?” Application on the field is a challenge for many of us. Even Albert Camus, the existentialist writer, said that sports provided him with his “only lessons in ethics.” [\(29\)](#) Thomas Aquinas “expressed three cautions that we would do well to observe nowadays. First, do not take pleasure in indecent or injurious play.” Think of a sold-out football stadium of people screaming their approval as an opponent lies immobile on the field. Such a reaction surely does not align with a Christian attitude toward games. “Second, do not lose your mental or emotional balance and self-control.” This may be one of the most challenging cautions. When we lose self-control during games, we are damaging what we say outside of games about our relationship with Christ. “Third, do not play in ways ill-fitting either the hour or the person.” [\(30\)](#) When we play and how we honor God in the process speak loudly about the place of games in our lives. So when we hear “Play ball!” or “Let the games begin!” or “Take your mark!,” let us remember, whether as participants or spectators, that God can honor our games, but He requires a playful attitude that honors Him.

Notes

1. Arthur Holmes, *Contours of a worldview* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1983), 226.
2. Ibid.
3. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., s.v. “Athletic Games

and Contests.”

4. Ibid.

5. *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia*, s.v. “Games.”

6. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

7. *Wycliffe Bible Encyclopaedia*.

8. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, s.v. “Games.”

9. Ibid.

10. *The New Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Games.”

11. Lewis Smedes, quoted in Holmes, *Contours of a worldview*, 230.

12. Ibid., 231.

13. *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*.

14. Ibid.

15. Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York: Bantam, 1970), 289.

16. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, quoted by Robert Higgs, on *Mars Hill Tapes*: May/June 1996, vol. 21, Ken Myers, ed. (Charlottesville, Va.: Mars Hill Tapes, 1996).

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. Ibid.

20. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: Warner, 1979), 190.

21. Michael Novak, *The Joy of Sports* (New York: Basic Books, 1976), 27.

22. Ibid., 34.

23. David Puttnam, producer, *Chariots of Fire* (Burbank, Calif.: Warner Home Video, 1991).

24. Arthur Holmes, *Contours of a World View*, 224.

25. Ibid., 228.

26. Ibid., 231.

27. Ibid.

28. Ibid., 228.

29. Albert Camus, quoted in Michael Novak, *The Joy of Sports*, 172.

30. Thomas Aquinas, quoted in Arthur Holmes, *Contours of a World View*, 231.

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Ten Lies of Feminism: A Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin examines how this prevalent view of women measures up from a biblical perspective.

This essay examines the ten lies of feminism that Dr. Toni Grant suggests in her book *Being a Woman*.[\[1\]](#)

At its inception, the feminist movement, accompanied by the sexual revolution, made a series of enticing, exciting promises to women. These promises sounded good, so good that many women deserted their men and their children or rejected

the entire notion of marriage and family, in pursuit of “themselves” and a career. These pursuits, which emphasized self-sufficiency and individualism, were supposed to enhance a woman’s quality of life and improve her options, as well as her relations with men. Now, a decade or so later, women have had to face the fact that, in many ways, feminism and liberation made promises that could not be delivered. {2}

Lie #1: Women Can Have It All

The first lie is that women can have it all. We were fed an illusion that women, being the superior sex, have an inexhaustible supply of physical and emotional energy that enable us to juggle a career, family, friendships and volunteer service. Proponents of feminism declared that not only *can* women do what men do, but we *ought* to do what men do. Since men can’t do what women can do—have babies—this put a double burden on women. It wasn’t enough that women were already exhausted from the never-ending tasks of child-rearing and homemaking; we were told that women needed to be in the work force as well, contributing to the family financially.

Scripture presents a different picture for men and women. The Bible appears to make a distinction between each gender’s primary energies. The commands to women are generally in the realm of our relationships, which is consistent with the way God made women to be primarily relational, being naturally sensitive to others and usually valuing people above things. Scripture never forbids women to be gainfully employed; in fact, the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 is engaged in several part-time business ventures, in real estate and manufacturing. Nonetheless, it is the excellent care of her husband, her children, her home and her community that inspires the praise she is due. Titus 2 instructs older women to mentor younger women, and teach them to care for their husbands and children and homemaking responsibilities. The God-given strengths of a woman were given to bring glory to God through her womanly

differences

Lie #2: Men and Women are Fundamentally the Same

Apart from some minor biological differences, feminism strongly suggested that males and females are fundamentally the same. Culture, it announced, was responsible for turning human blank slates into truck-wielding boys and doll-toting girls. This lie has been very effective at changing the culture. My husband Ray and I offer a seminar at Probe's *Mind Games* conferences called "Guys Are From Mars, Girls Are From Venus," where we go over the major differences between the sexes. Men, for instance, tend to be more goal-oriented and competitive, where women are more relational and cooperative. Men are active; women are verbal. This is intuitively obvious to the adults in our audience, but it is often new news to high school and college students. We find adults nodding with smiles of recognition, some of them nudging each other in the ribs. In the younger members of the audience, though, we see "the lights come on" in their eyes as they are exposed to something that is obvious and they probably already knew was true, but feminism's worldview had been feeding them a lie. They have been so immersed in this cultural myth that they had accepted it without question. One young man came up to me after a session and said he totally disagreed with me, that there are no real differences between males and females. I asked him if he treated his guy friends the same way he treated his girl friends, and he said, "Of course!" I asked, "And this doesn't cause you any problems?" He said no. With a smile, I suggested he come talk to me in ten years after he'd had a chance to experience real life!

The truth is that God created significant differences between males and females. We can see evidence of this in the fact that Scripture gives different commands for husbands and wives, which are rooted in the differing needs and divinely-

appointed roles of men and women.

Lie #3: Desirability is Enhanced by Achievement

The third lie of feminism is that the more a woman achieves, the more attractive and desirable she becomes to men. The importance of achievement to a man's sense of self—an element of masculinity that is, we believe, God-given—was projected onto women. Feminism declared that achieving something, making a mark in the world, was the only measure of success that merited the respect of others. Women who believed this myth found themselves competing with men. Now, competition is appropriate in the business and professional world, but it's disastrous in relationships.

Men do respect and admire accomplished women, just as they do men, but personal relationships operate under a different set of standards. Men most appreciate a woman's unique feminine attributes: love, sensitivity, her abilities to relate. Women have been shocked to discover that their hard-won accomplishments haven't resulted in great relationships with men. Sometimes, being overeducated hampers a woman's ability to relate to men. Men's egos are notoriously fragile, and they are by nature competitive. It's threatening to many men when a woman achieves more, or accomplishes more, or knows more than they do. Feminism didn't warn women of the double standard in relationships: that achievement can and does reap benefits in our careers, but be a stumbling block in our relationships.

The question naturally arises, then, Is it bad for a woman to have a higher degree of education than the man in a relationship? Is it troublesome when a woman is smarter than the man? Should a woman "dumb down" in order to get or keep her man? In the words of the apostle Paul, "May it never be!" A woman living up to the potential of her God-given gifts brings glory to God; it would be an insult to our gracious God

to pretend those gifts aren't there. The answer is for women to understand that many men feel threatened and insecure about this area of potential competition, and maintain an attitude of humility and sensitivity about one's strengths; as Romans exhorts us, "Honor[ing] one another above yourselves" (12:10).

Not surprisingly, God already knew about the disparity between the sexes on the issue of achievement. Throughout the Bible, men are called to trust God as they achieve whatever God has called them to do. It's important for men to experience personal significance by making a mark on the world. But God calls women to trust Him in a different area: in our relationships. A woman's value is usually not in providing history-changing leadership and making great, bold moves, but in loving and supporting those around us, changing the world by touching hearts. Once in a while, a woman does make her mark on a national or global scale: consider the biblical judge Deborah, Golda Meir, Margaret Thatcher, and Indira Gandhi. But women like these are the exception, not the rule. And we don't have to feel guilty for not being "exceptional."

Lie #4: The Myth of One's "Unrealized Potential"

Lie number four says that all of us—but especially women—have tremendous potential that simply *must* be realized. To feminism's way of thinking, just being average isn't acceptable: you must be *great*.

This causes two problems. First, women are deceived into thinking they are one of the elite, the few, the special. Reality, though, is that most women are ordinary, one of the many. All of us are uniquely gifted by God, but few women are given visible, high-profile leadership roles, which tend to be the only ones that feminism deems valuable. We run into trouble when we're operating under a set of beliefs that don't coincide with reality!

Consequently, many women are operating under unrealistically high expectations of themselves. When life doesn't deliver on their hopes, whether they be making class valedictorian, beauty pageant winner, company president, or neurosurgeon, women are set up for major disappointment. Just being a cog in the wheel of your own small world isn't enough.

This brings us to the second problem. A lot of women beat themselves up for not accomplishing greatness. Instead of investing their life's energies in doing well those things they *can* do, they grieve what and who they are *not*. Just being good, or being good at what they do, isn't enough if they're not the *best*.

Romans 12:3 tells us, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought." Rather than worrying about our unrealized potential for some sort of nebulous greatness, we ought to be concerned about being faithful and obedient in the things God has given us to do, trusting Him for the ultimate results. And we ought to not worry about being ordinary as if there were some stigma to it. Scripture says that God is pleased to use ordinary people, because that's how He gets the most glory. (See 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.) There is honor in being an ordinary person in the hand of an extraordinary God.

Lie #5: Sexual Sameness

The fifth lie of feminism is that men and women are the same sexually. This lie comes to us courtesy of the same evil source that brought us the lies of the sexual revolution.

The truth is that women can't separate sex from love as easily as men can. For women, sex needs to be an expression of love and commitment. Without these qualities, sex is demeaning, nothing more than hormones going crazy.

The cost of sex is far greater for women than for men. Sex outside of a committed, loving relationship—I'm talking about

marriage here—often results in unplanned pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and profound heartbreak. Every time a woman gives her body away to a man, she gives a part of her heart as well. Sexual “freedom” has brought new degrees of heartache to millions of women. The lie of sexual equality has produced widespread promiscuity and epidemic disease. No wonder so many women are struggling with self-esteem!

God’s commands concerning sex take into account the fact that men and women are not the same sexually or any other way. He tells us to exercise self-control before marriage, saving all sexual expression for the constraints of a marriage relationship, and then to keep the marriage bed pure once we are married. When we follow these guidelines, we discover that God’s laws provide protection for women: the security of a committed relationship, freedom from sexual health worries, and a stable environment for any children produced in the union. This high standard also protects men by providing a safe channel for their sexual energies. Both chaste single men, and faithful husbands, are kept safe from sexual diseases, unwanted pregnancies with women other than their wives, and the guilt of sexual sin.

Lie #6: The Denial of Maternity

Many women postponed marriage and childbearing to pursue their own personal development and career goals. This perspective denies the reality of a woman’s reproductive system and the limitations of time. Childbearing is easier in a woman’s 20s and 30s than in her 40s. Plus, there is a physical cost; science has borne out the liabilities that older women incur for themselves and their babies. Midlife women are more prone to have problems getting pregnant, staying pregnant, and then experiencing difficult deliveries. The risk of conceiving a child with Down’s Syndrome is considerably higher in older mothers.[{3}](#) Fertility treatment doesn’t work as well for women over 40.[{4}](#)

There is also a spiritual dimension to denying maternity. When women refuse their God-ordained roles and responsibilities, they open themselves to spiritual deception and temptations. 1 Timothy 2:15 is an intriguing verse: "But women will be saved through childbearing." One compelling translation for this verse is, "Women will be *kept safe* through childbearing," where Paul uses the word for *childbearing* as a sort of shorthand for the woman's involvement in the domestic sphere—having her "focus on the family," so to speak.(5) When a married woman's priorities are marriage, family and the home, she is kept safe—protected—from the consequences of delaying motherhood and the temptations that beleaguer a woman trying to fill a man's role. For example, I know one married woman who chose to pursue a full-time career in commercial real estate, to the detriment of her family. She confessed that she found herself constantly battling the temptation to lust on two fronts: sexual lust for the men in her office and her clients, and lust for the recognition and material things that marked success in that field. Another friend chose her career over having any children at all, and discovered that like the men in her field, she could not separate her sense of self from her job, and it ultimately cost her her marriage and her life as she knew it. The problem isn't having a career: the problem is when a woman gets her priorities out of balance.

Lie #7: To Be Feminine Is To Be Weak

In the attempt to blur gender distinctions, feminists declared war on the concept of gender-related characteristics. The qualities that marked feminine women—softness, sweetness, kindness, the ability to relate well—were judged as silly, stupid and weak. Only what characterized men—characteristics like firmness, aggressiveness, competitiveness—were deemed valuable.

But when women try to take on male qualities, the end result

is a distortion that is neither feminine nor masculine. A woman is perceived as shrill, not spirited. What is expected and acceptable aggression in a man is perceived as unwelcome brashness in a woman. When women try to be tough, it is often taken as unpleasantness. Unfortunately, there really is a strong stereotype about “what women should be like” that merits being torn down. A lot of men are threatened by strong women with opinions and agendas of their own, and treat them with undeserved disrespect. But it is not true that traditionally masculine characteristics are the only ones that count.

There really is a double standard operating, because the characteristics that constitute masculinity and femininity are separate and different, and they are not interchangeable. To be feminine is a special kind of strength. It’s a different, appealing kind of power that allows a woman to influence her world in a way quite distinct from the way a man influences the world. It pleased the Lord to create woman to complement man, not to compete with him or be a more rounded copy of him. 1 Corinthians 11:7 says that man is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. Femininity isn’t weakness; it’s the glorious, splendid crown on humanity.

Lie #8: Doing is Better Than Being

In his book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*[\[6\]](#), John Gray pointed out that men get their sense of self from achievement, and women get their sense of self from relationships. Feminism declared that the male orientation of *what you do* was the only one that mattered; *who you are*, and how important you are to the people in your world, didn’t count for as much.

This lie said that active is good, passive is bad. Traditional feminine behaviors of being passive and receptive were denounced as demeaning to women and ineffective in the world. Only being the initiator counted, not being the responder. “To

listen, to be there, to receive the other with an open heart and mind—this has always been one of the most vital roles of woman. Most women do this quite naturally, but many have come to feel uneasy in this role. Instead, they work frantically on assertiveness, aggression, personal expression, and power, madly suppressing their feminine instincts of love and relatedness.”{7}

Women’s roles in the family, the church, and the world are a combination of being a responder and an initiator. As a responder, a wife honors her husband through loving submission, and a woman serves the church through the exercise of her spiritual gifts. As an initiator and leader, a woman teaches her children and uses her abilities in the world, such as the woman of Proverbs 31. God’s plan is for us to live a balanced life—sometimes active, sometimes passive; sometimes the initiator, sometimes the responder; at all times, submitting both who we are and what we do to the Lordship of Christ.

Lie #9: The Myth of Self-Sufficiency

The ninth lie is the myth of self-sufficiency. Remember the famous feminist slogan that appeared on everything from bumper stickers to t-shirts to notepads? “A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.” The message was clear: women don’t need men, who are inferior anyway. The world would be a better place if women ran it: no wars, no greed, no power plays, just glorious cooperation and peace.

The next step after “women don’t need men” was logical: women don’t need anybody. We can take care of ourselves. Helen Reddy’s hit song “I Am Woman” became feminism’s theme song, with the memorable chorus, “If I have to, I can do anything / I am strong / I am invincible / I am woman!”

Of course, if women don’t need anybody except themselves, they certainly don’t need God. Particularly a masculine,

patriarchal God who makes rules they don't like and insists that He alone is God. But the need to worship is deeply ingrained in us, so feminist thought gave rise to goddess worship. The goddess was just a female image to focus on; in actuality, goddess worship is worship of oneself.[\[8\]](#)

The lie of self-sufficiency is the same lie that Satan has been deceiving us with since the Garden of Eden: What do you need God for? We grieve the Lord's heart when we believe this lie. Jeremiah 2:13 says, "My people have committed two sins: they have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water." God made us for Himself; believing the lie of self-sufficiency isn't only futile, it's a slap in God's face.

Lie #10: Women Would Enjoy the Feminization of Men

The tenth lie of feminism is that women would enjoy the feminization of men. Feminists believed that the only way to achieve equality of the sexes was to do away with *role* distinctions. Then they decided that that wasn't enough: society had to do away with *gender* distinctions, or at the very least blur the lines. Women embraced more masculine values, and men were encouraged to embrace more feminine characteristics. That was supposed to fix the problem. It didn't.

As men tried to be "good guys" and accommodate feminists' demands, the culture saw a new type of man emerge: sensitive, nurturing, warmly compassionate, yielding. The only problem was that this "soft man" wasn't what women wanted. Women pushed men to be like women, and when they complied, nobody respected them. Women, it turns out, want to be the soft ones—and we want men to be strong and firm and courageous; we want a manly man. When men start taking on feminine characteristics, they're just wimpy and unmasculine, not

pleasing themselves or the women who demanded the change. There is a good reason that books and movies with strong, masculine heroes continue to appeal to such a large audience. Both men and women respond to men who fulfill God's design for male leadership, protection, and strength.

Underlying the women's liberation movement is an angry, unsubmitive attitude that is fueled by the lies of deception. It's good to know what the lies are, but it's also important to know what God's word says, so we can combat the lies with the power of His truth.

Notes

1. Toni Grant, *Being a Woman: Fulfilling Your Femininity and Finding Love*. New York: Random House, 1988.
2. Ibid, 3.
3. March of Dimes, "Pregnancy After 35," www.marchofdimes.com/professionals/14332_1155.asp.
4. Jodi Panayotov, "IVF & Older Women – How Successful is IVF After 40?" ezinearticles.com/?IVF-and-Older-Women-How-Successful-is-IVF-After-40?&id=636335.
5. Andreas Kostenberger, "Saved Through Childbearing?" (*CBMW [The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood] News*, Sept. 1997), p. 3.
6. John Gray, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.
7. Grant, 9.
8. Mary Kassian, *The Feminist Gospel* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 1992), p. 159.

Business and Ethics

This essay grapples with some of the problems Christians face trying to operate ethically in today's business world.



This article is also available in [Spanish](#).

Can “business” and “ethics” be used in the same sentence?

A while back, a member of the Probe lecture team was invited to speak on the topic of “Business Ethics” in a class at Colorado State University. When the Probe speaker arrived at the classroom, the professor explained that the reason the class chose to have him speak on this topic was their overwhelming sense of curiosity. They could not comprehend how the words business and ethics could be used in the same title.

Business enterprise has received a very diverse review from the ethicists of this generation. In the “Me First” era of the 80s, there was very little concern for ethics in the world of business, and you would have been hard pressed to find a university that dealt seriously with the need for ethics in its business school curriculum. A case in point concerns John Shad, former chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission. He donated \$35 million dollars to the Harvard Business School to establish an ethics department. Yet two years later, Harvard had only come up with one rather flimsy-sounding course, and they had been unable to find an ethicist to head up the department.[\(1\)](#)

The 90s saw an awakening to the need for ethics because of the many scandals that were beginning to erupt within the world of business and finance, moral failures such as the disgraceful actions that brought down Michael Milken and Ivan Boesky. The problem is that in the 90s, the concern for ethics has not

returned us to any absolute standard of ethics, but rather to a search for relative balance between ethics and the bottom line or personal values. The following statement by a state representative from Tennessee demonstrates this tendency all too well. While explaining why he was for fair trade price controls on milk, but against it for liquors, he said, "I've got 423 dairy farmers in my district, and I've got to rise above principle."

Often, today, the highest ethic is "tolerance." By that, I don't mean the traditional view of tolerance in which one tries to recognize and respect other people's values without necessarily accepting those values as being correct. I'm talking about a whole new meaning to the word tolerance. Today the word is used in a way to imply that all values, beliefs, and claims to truth and life-styles are equal. It becomes extremely difficult to run a business when (1) you have to walk the tightrope of balancing everyone's values and (2) you are expected to treat all these values as equally valid. Our society today has lost its ability to determine what is right from what is wrong. Business enterprise requires a level of trust among the participants. Where is that trust going to come from if we have no common platform upon which to base our ethics and must rely, instead, on the assorted and conflicting individual values of whatever group we're a part of? This essay will grapple with some of the problems we must face as Christians in trying to operate in the business world, while surrounded with people who believe their personal values are not subject to any higher standard than their own reasoning.

Who Makes the Rules?

The fundamental question we need to address is, Who makes the rules, God or man? That is what the issue of ethics is all about. Either there is a source for what is morally right that is beyond ourselves, i.e., God, and that standard is absolute and universal, or we are left to ourselves to figure out what

is right and what is wrong, if we can even agree among ourselves that there is a right and a wrong. If we were, in fact, left to ourselves, how could we say one person's values were any better than another's? In the age of the industrial and scientific revolution, people believed they could reason themselves toward better behavior, but today, having seen the horrors of what the industrial and scientific revolution has brought upon us, many have given up any hope of finding a unified answer for right and wrong. In fact, many now actually fear anyone who thinks that he or she has a handle on any absolute standard by which we might live.

Society has moved from a Christian base, which held that there is a source of ultimate truth, through modernism, which saw truth as relative to circumstances, duty, consequences, situations, etc., to post-modernism, which asserts that there is no truth, only the power to put forth one's values.

King Solomon, who was hailed as the wisest leader ever to govern any nation, said, "Be wise and give serious thought to the way you live." In all endeavors, including our work, we must realize that morality is the single most important guiding principle behind all that we do and say. Our morality molds our ultimate being, who we really are.

Today most professional organizations have a code of ethics. The problem is that their codes are often ignored or not made known. For example, a few years ago Probe was speaking in the engineering department at Southern Methodist University. One of the students, after hearing the lecture on engineering ethics, came up to the speaker afterwards and said, "I have been an engineering student for four years, and this is the first time I ever heard that there was an engineering code of ethics."

There are some companies working hard to communicate to their employees a corporate goal and standard that puts forth biblical values. One company like this is the Servicemaster

Company. Their corporate goals are: (1) Honor God in all we do, (2) Help people to develop, (3) Pursue excellence, and (4) Grow profitably. Notice that the profitability goal, although one of their four key goals, is listed last. Making a profit is a necessary goal, but there are things more important than surviving in this world. In fact, there are a lot of businesses that should shut down, for their only legitimate goal is that they do make a profit. In this regard, the vast pornography business comes to mind, not to mention state lotteries and all the other forms of gambling.

So, as an individual or a business, do our personal or corporate goals demonstrate a commitment to a standard beyond ourselves? Do we have a set of guidelines that helps us to steer a course that is straight and narrow in a world that is adrift—floating all over the ethical map? What we need are some guidelines that will help us to steer that straight and narrow course.

Ethical Guidelines for the Real World

In his book, *Honesty, Morality & Conscience*, published by NavPress, [\(2\)](#) Jerry White gives us five excellent guidelines for conducting our business activities.

First, there is the guideline of a **just weight** as found in Deuteronomy 25:13-15. The principle of a just weight is to give a full amount in exchange for a fair payment. Another way to look at it is to give full quality for what is paid for and according to what is advertised. We must accept responsibility for both the quality and the amount of our product or service. As a business owner, do I fairly represent my product or service? As an employee, do I give a full day's work for a full day's pay? Remember, as it says in Colossians 3:23, we are working for the Lord and not for men.

Second, the Lord demands our **total honesty**. Ephesians 4:25 calls upon us to speak the truth. Jerry White reminds us that,

“Although we will frequently fail, our intent must be total honesty with our employer, our co-worker, our employees, and our customers.” (3) This is a difficult principle to adhere to. James 3:2 says this is where we often fail, but if we can control our tongue we will be able to control the rest of our body as well. The Living Bible best sums it up in Romans 12:17 which says, “Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honest clear through.” We must ask ourselves, are we totally honest in reporting our use of time, money, and accomplishments?

The third principle is **being a servant**. Someone has said Christians like to be *called* servants, but don't appreciate being *treated* like servants. To serve God sounds glorious, but to serve others is another matter. As usual, Jesus Christ is our example. Matthew 20:28 says that Christ did not come to be served, but to serve others, in fact, to give up his life for others. The value of a business is its service. How well it serves the needs of its customers will determine its success. The business, in turn, is made up of people who must do the serving. The value of the employees is in how well they serve the customer's needs. This is putting the needs of others before our own and then trusting God to meet our needs in the process.

The fourth guideline is **personal responsibility**. We must take full responsibility for our own actions and decisions. We should not try to excuse our actions based on pressure within our business or organization to do what we know is not right. We all fail at times to do what we know we should do. We must then accept the responsibility for what we have said or done and not try to pass that responsibility on to someone else or try to blame it on some set of circumstances. Romans 12:2 warns us about the danger of allowing the world to shape us into its mold.

Finally, there is the issue of **reasonable profits**. This principle is quite a bit harder to get a handle on, but it is

still vital to have guidelines to follow. What is a reasonable profit? This is something each person has to deal with on his own. Luke 6:31 is a great help on this. It says that we should treat others the same way we would want to be treated. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and ask yourself how you would want to be treated in a particular situation. To the business person this is the price of our service or product above our cost. To the employee it is the amount of our wages for our service to the organization. Luke 3:14 says to be content with our wages, but the Bible also reminds the employer in 1 Timothy 5:18 that the laborer is worthy of his wages.

It is all too easy to rationalize our way around many of these principles, but God will hold us accountable in the end. Ultimately it is God whom we serve and to whom we must give account.

The Cost of Living Ethically

The media is awash with reports of faulty business ethics: frauds, manipulations, thefts, industrial espionage, corruption, kickbacks, conspiracy, thefts, tax evasion, embezzling, and unfair competition proliferate. Either a lot more unethical acts are taking place today or those behaviors that have always existed are being exploited more in contemporary society. A Gallup report concluded that "you can't trust Americans as much as you used to." The *Wall Street Journal* reported that church-going persons appear only slightly more likely to walk the straight and narrow than their less-pious compatriots.

Why is it so hard to walk the straight and narrow in our business dealings? We are continually under the stress of performance on the job and in the competitive work environment. Often our very livelihood is threatened under pressure of the job. Usually we know what we should do, but we count the cost of doing the right thing and then back down due

to pressure from people or circumstances. If we feel that we must do whatever is necessary to keep our jobs, we may end up serving the wrong master.

Steven Covey, in his book *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, [\(4\)](#) addresses the issue of the need to become principle-centered individuals. Are we living principle-centered lives? This means that there are some principles that are more important than the success or even the continuance of our business. Are there some ethical standards for which we are prepared to die if necessary? Those who let their business die rather than set aside their ethical standards can return to do business again someday, since they were able to maintain their integrity and their reputation. Those who cave in to the pressures to keep the business alive may be caught and end up losing their reputation and thus deprive themselves of a platform from which to rebuild their lives and businesses.

Ten Global Principles for Success

We are going to close this essay on business ethics with *Ten Global Principles for Business and Professional Success* from the booklet *Mega Values* by Colonel Nimrod McNair. [\(5\)](#) These principles are modeled after the Ten Commandments.

The first principle is, "Show proper respect for authority." This is the invisible superstructure of productive enterprise. God clearly commands us to respect those in authority over us. God uses this command to bring order out of chaos. Authority is a necessary prerequisite to order.

The second rule is, "Have a singleness of purpose." Divided purposes dilute effectiveness when interests conflict. We cannot serve two masters effectively. We must evaluate our time, talent, and resources and make sure we are using these God-given elements in a way that ultimately brings Him the glory.

Precept number three is, "Use effective communication in word and deed." Complete communications and predictable follow-through are the basic expressions of personal integrity. It means doing what you say you'll do, even if it is uncomfortable or inconvenient. This commandment is honored when promises are kept and accurate recounting of transactions is given.

A fourth truth is, "Provide proper rest, recreation, and reflection." This ensures a quality of life that will be reflected in creativity, productivity, and motivation. Rest is a necessity for effectiveness. Recreation guards the mind against mental and emotional fatigue. Reflection promotes self-monitoring, allows for mid-course corrections, and ensures single-mindedness. The fifth tenet is, "Show respect for the older and more experienced." Our parents, teachers, coaches, employers, pastors, and other elders in our lives have an investment in us. It is to our benefit to honor that investment and to draw fully from the wisdom and expertise of those more experienced than ourselves.

The sixth axiom is, "Show respect for human life, dignity, and rights." This encompasses product quality and service, the work environment, health and safety, personnel policies and responsibilities, and competitive practices. It is simply the Golden Rule—treating others as you would want to be treated.

The seventh principle is, "Maintain a stability of sexes and the family." Wisdom and good business practice dictate equal regard for men and women as persons irrespective of gender or marital status. Respect for the family structure as the crucial foundation of our cultural system must be reflected in our decisions regarding the conflicts between business demands and the value of the family and personal life.

Precept number eight is, "Demonstrate the proper allocation of resources." Two fundamental responsibilities and privileges of business are optimal use of material resources and wise

leadership of people. We must treat all our business assets, whether they be people, funds, or materials, as a gift from the Lord.

The ninth truth is, "Demonstrate honesty and integrity." Integrity is the cornerstone of any good relationship. Without demonstrating the willingness to give and the worthiness to receive trust, no business can survive or prosper. A reputation for honesty is a comprehensive statement of both a person's character and how he or she treats others. It is a fundamental mindset against stealing, lying, or deceiving.

The tenth and final business commandment is, "Maintain the right of ownership of property." Those who are disciplined, creative, prudent, and industrious are entitled to the fruits of their labor. We must not covet that which belongs to another.

Business ethics is more than a list of do's and don'ts, but these principles can help us get off to a good start.

Notes

1. Chuck Colson, Jubilee (October 1989).
2. Jerry White, Honesty, Morality & Conscience (Colorado Springs, Colo.: NavPress, 1978).
3. Ibid.
4. Stephen R. Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).
5. Colonel Nimrod McNair, *Mega Values: 10 Global Principles for Business and Professional Success Written in Stone* (Executive Leadership Foundation, Inc., 2179 Northlake Pkwy. Suite 119, Tucker, GA 30084-9885).

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Where Have All Our Heroes Gone?

We all want to look up to someone, somebody who models a lifestyle we admire. These people need not be perfect—we know that perfect people only exist in the comic books—but they should be individuals who have risen above the circumstances of life to accomplish something significant. And, we want our heroes to be above self promotion and climbing on the backs of others. But this is where the problem lies. In today's world of widespread self-centeredness, it is very difficult to find those heroes from whom we can gain a right perspective of the world about us.

Did I say that only comic book heroes are perfect? Even the comic characters are more flawed than we may want to admit. The comic books of today hardly resemble the comic books of the past. Today's comics are often full of violence, sexual themes, and grotesque imagery.

So where do we go to find heroes? What about our parents? Some of us were fortunate enough to have parents that we could look up to as role models in our lives. But, lamentably, many have grown up in homes that are not at all conducive to establishing healthy role models.

Author Steve Farrar, speaking at Probe's annual banquet this spring, related that when he was a student in grade school he didn't even know what the word "divorce" meant. None of his relatives were divorced, and the only way he came to find out what the word divorce meant was when one of his classmates used the word in referring to his parents. To Farrar's knowledge, no one else in that school had divorced parents. What kid entering grade school today doesn't know what the word divorce means? Divorce is epidemic in today's society, and it is rather difficult to see your parents as your heroes

when their breakup has caused you so much pain and confusion.

Well, there are always heroes from the world of sports. But have you kept up on "America's Team," the Dallas Cowboys? From a tobacco-chewing quarterback to drug-thug linemen, America's favorite team has become the brunt of numerous jokes based on the team members' legal and ethical problems. We could also pick on some prominent basketball and baseball players, as well as other sports figures, but I think the point is made that finding upstanding heroes, even in the realm of sports, has become difficult.

In all fairness, one must admit that there are some great athletes out there with solid, moral lives and radiant testimonies.

But what about movie stars? The movie industry can make a hero out of anyone. Since the movie makers have absolute control of the medium and can make their world of fantasy seem so real, heroes are "created" right before our eyes, but they are heroes of fantasy, constructs of the imagination. What this world needs is real heroes, not some fantasy that doesn't exist except in our minds and on the silver screen. Movies are wonderful teaching tools, however, and great lessons can be learned and our minds and hearts can be stimulated by the events and people portrayed. Sooner or later, though, if we seek to emulate the personalities of the silver screen, we will fall flat on our faces or be disillusioned when we see or hear of the actors' true lifestyles.

We need heroes that last, who walk on the earth, and yet have that something within them that carries them beyond the frustrations and failures of everyday life. Next, we will begin to look at some heroes who inspire our better nature and motivate us to stay focused and faithful.

Heroes Worthy of Admiration

Please allow me to share with you the story of one athlete who is a hero worthy of admiration. His name is Josh Davis.

Josh, a student at the University of Texas at Austin, won three gold medals in the swimming relays at the Atlanta summer Olympics. I guess that qualifies him as a hero to every aspiring swimmer who wants to shoot for the gold, but for the rest of us it is not the gold medals that makes him a hero, but what he has done with them.

But let me back up and tell you about the transformation that took place in Josh's life leading up to the Olympics. This change in perspective enabled him to handle the pressure of the Olympics and the race for the gold in a way that makes him a model for a world so in need of true heroes.

As a young athlete back in high school, Josh excelled in his sport and was recruited by college swim teams. He chose the University of Texas where he continued to excel and became a BMOC—Big Man On Campus. His athletic gifts became his god. But he became aware of a nagging emptiness in his heart even with all the attention, affection, and acceptance he was receiving. At first he tried the world's way to fill the void by filling his life with women and alcohol, but found that was not the answer.

Josh finally overcame the emptiness in his life when he gave his life to Jesus Christ. No longer did he need to strive for love and acceptance through his performance, but found all that in the God who created him and loved him and accepted him unconditionally. [\[1\]](#)

Excited in his new-found faith, Josh began to witness to others on campus about his relationship with Jesus Christ. But his zeal exceeded his knowledge, and many challenges were thrown in his face about the validity of his Christian faith.

But instead of hiding his Christianity and bringing it out only in the presence of other Christians as so many do, Josh sought out the help of the Probe Study Center on the UT campus. There through the help of the center staff and the materials they were able to provide him, Josh was able to start a journey of knowledge and understanding to strengthen his faith. Whenever he came across a charge he couldn't answer, he would return to the Probe Center to find answers. His boldness in witnessing increased, and today he is an athlete with a message to the world, and he is excited about the position God has placed him in to reach out with the truth of God's word. Josh is invited to schools, clubs, and other organizations to tell about his experiences as a gold medal Olympian. He uses his gold medal status to bridge the gap to a greater reward, that of how we can all experience a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

This spring, Josh shared at the Probe annual banquet of the invaluable help the Probe Center was in his quest to become the kind of athlete God could use to implant in others a seed of the truth of the gospel message. It's not the gold medals that made Josh a real hero, it is how he has chosen to use them. He has chosen the courageous route by using his gold medals for the glory of God and the salvation of others.

“In Search of New Heroes”

Some time ago the *Dallas Morning News* ran some articles on the search for heroes. One of the articles wasn't too encouraging. It told of teachers who no longer ask their students who their heroes are because many of the students have such a hard time coming up with someone they look up to or admire. Too often today, when you ask a kid who his heroes are, all he can think of is someone who has made it to the top with fancy cars and lots of money. The kids have no real picture of how these “heroes” made it to the top; all they know is that this individual has what they hope to have someday. What a sad

basis for the definition of a hero.

In his book, *Heroes of My Time*, the late Harrison Salisbury says, "We do not live in the age of heroes. This is not the era of Jefferson, Lincoln, or Commodore Perry. Nor even of Charles Lindbergh. The politicians of our day seldom remind us of Franklin D. or Eleanor Roosevelt. Athletes signing five-and-ten-million-dollar contracts do not resonate as did Babe Ruth."

Today, the media often tries to tell us who our heroes are and that means celebrities, athletes, and stars of the silver screen. These are not the heroes we need. Rabbi Jeffrey Leynor has said it so well when he stated, "The world doesn't run on Magic Johnson; it runs on all us little heroes." [\[2\]](#)

Fortunately, a more encouraging article was featured on the same page as the previous article. Titled "In Search of New Heroes," the article spoke of everyday heroes, ordinary people who became heroes by their unselfish acts of heroism, like Lucy Narvaiz who volunteers her skills to help Hispanics and American Indians learn to read and write, or Eleanor Poe who runs a clinic in the poorest section of El Paso. These people are not the showy, dramatic type of heroes, but they exhibit the quiet, often unnoticed kind of heroism of people who have the courage to do what needs to be done.

The an article is about the television series, "Unsung Heroes," and the heroes featured on the program were quiet, unassuming people who can't imagine why anyone would call them heroes. But these individuals have uncommon courage, and Janet Carroll, the producer, wanted the viewers to see that. David Walther, Janet's program director said, "When you sit down and look at it and see people doing these things, it makes you feel good. It makes you want to emulate or at least be a better person than what you are already." I couldn't have said it better myself. What a contrast to the normal fare we get from the media in shows like "Hard Copy," "Inside Edition,"

and “Hollywood Access”!

As we hear about these unsung heroes’ quiet resolve, it makes us stronger and more determined to do the right thing. We see their strength and the peace they have within themselves, and we begin to see the world in a better light.[\[3\]](#)

Home Grown Heroes

Now I want to continue our discussion of heroes by looking at an excellent book called *Home Grown Heroes: How to Raise Courageous Kids*, by Tim Kimmel.[\[4\]](#)

In the foreword to this book, Brigadier General Joe Foss (retired), a recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor, says, “America needs a new generation of heroes . . . people who are ruled by a conscience that doesn’t take the Ten Commandments lightly who have a fundamental reverence for their Creator, and a respect for the people and things He has created.”

That’s what this book is about, being that kind of person, the unsung heroes of life who have uncommon courage. Specifically, it deals with the process of learning to add courage to our faith. Many people have faith, or at least they say that they do, but it does not seem to reveal itself in the outworking of their lives. The problem is the absence of courage and “courage is the muscle that faith uses to hold its ground.” So many people today do not seem to have the ability to courageously live out their faith. Now we are not talking about those instantaneous heroes who make the headlines because they happened to be at the right place at the right time people you typically read about in the newspapers or see on TV. I’m talking about those unsung heroes who daily make conscious decisions to respond courageously to life’s dilemmas. Webster’s Dictionary defines courage as: “mental or moral strength to venture, persevere, and withstand danger, fear, or difficulty.” Courage is putting our faith in action,

adding sweat to our convictions, doing what is hard to do because we know it needs to be done.

Kimmel writes about the fact that God has placed a seed of courage in everyone. It's part of being made in His image. We need to water, cultivate, and pray over that seed so that it may grow within us. And remember, even if you've blown it many times, it is never too late to do what is right. Sometimes it is the courage to confront a person or situation that you know is not right. Often it is the courage to forgive when you want revenge. It may be the courage to turn off the TV when you know you shouldn't be watching it or to maintain your focus until you accomplish a specific goal.

What about building courage into the lives of those we love and feel responsible for? Courage is the core word in the word encouragement. Therefore when we encourage others we are helping to build courage into their lives. The more someone is encouraged when they try to do the right thing, the more courage will grow within them.

Kimmel reminds us that the lion's share of courageous living takes place in the daily grind, behind the lines, in the lonely places, among our allies, in our own hearts. Courage is the natural result of internal disciplines. Courageous living comes from daily, deliberate acts of resolve. Courage assumes there is a battle to be waged and won. To live a courageous lifestyle is a choice.

The preceding comments have been attempts to whet your appetite about this book. Now I'll state it plainly: for a wonderful book that lays out steps to courageous living, please read *Home Grown Heroes* by Tim Kimmel. You'll be glad you did!

Spiritual Heroes

Now I would like us to take a look at our spiritual heroes.

Let's start with the live ones.

It has been intriguing as we have observed the rise and fall of so many of our spiritual leaders. In Texas we have had our share with the likes of Rev. Robert Tilton and Rev. Walter Railey. Over in Louisiana it was Rev. Jimmy Swaggart. Probably the biggest headlines in the national news have been about Jim and Tammy Bakker of PTL fame, once popular televangelists. He went to prison for fraud and conspiracy. She was treated for drug dependency. But the story doesn't end there. While Jim spent his time in prison reflecting on his failures and sin before God, Tammy divorced him and sought to separate herself from the situation. She appears to have learned nothing from the experience and still tries to keep herself in the public spotlight by getting on TV shows and running her own ministry. Meanwhile Jim, after much reflection, comes out with a book of his confessions. He was humbled and seeks a fresh start on a new and different foundation. Now I don't know how being out of prison will stir up the old nature in Jim Bakker and how he will stand the test of time, but it does remind me of another man of national prominence who rose up out of the ashes of prison time to become a spiritual leader among us.

Chuck Colson was not a spiritual leader before his fall, but was known as Nixon's hatchet man. Then there was Watergate, his fall from power, his time in prison, his conversion to Christianity and his courageous road back in obedience to God. Chuck Colson is one of our heroes today, not because he lived a life without moral or ethical failure, but because he chose to accept God's grace and had the courage to admit his sin before God and man and build within himself, with the help of many others, the personal discipline needed to become a pilgrim for God in the journey of life.

Jim Bakker seems to have chosen the right path back. Only time will tell, but God may restore him to a place of spiritual leadership. Are you prepared to deal with that? If not, how do you deal with King David? He was an adulterer and a murderer

who repented of his sin and God restored him. Yes, there were dire consequences for his sin that did not go away, and there will be dire consequences for Jim Bakker that will never go away. There are probably some past sins in your life that have resulted in some consequences that don't go away. But are we willing to chose the courageous path that can lead us to be the heroes God wants us to be. We may only be heroes for our children, but is there anyone else for whom we would rather be a hero?

Heroes are made, not born. We have such a great spiritual lineage to learn from. Chapter 11 of the book of Hebrews tells us about spiritual heroes, men and women who put their confidence in God, like Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rahab, Gideon, Samson, Samuel, David, and Daniel. They were all far from perfect models, but they had the courage to not give up. God offers to each of us a journey of hope. May God bless your journey.

Notes

1. *Path To Victory: A Sports New Testament With The Testimonies Of Athletes Who Are Winning In Life*, New International Version (Colorado Springs, Colo.: International Bible Society, 1993).

2. Leslie Barker, "Wanted: Heroes; Warning: The job ain't what it used to be." *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 12 September 1993, Section F.

3. Leslie Barker, "In Search of New Heroes: With credit cards and a dream, one woman creates a legacy for her daughter." *Dallas Morning News*, Sunday, 12 September 1993, Section F.

4. Tim Kimmel, *Home Grown Heroes: How to Raise Courageous Kids* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1992).

When the Good Guys Don't Win

Pop! Pow! Gunfire crackled from the house next door. My neighbor John, high on marijuana, was shooting at his friend who crouched in fear behind a corner of the building. No one was injured and the arrival of police calmed John down.

That's strange, I thought to myself another sunny morning as I left my home to jog. *Why would my car windshield be covered with ice crystals? It's July.* As I drew nearer, I realized the "ice crystals" were broken glass, courtesy of some Fourth-of-July vandals.

Fear, confusion, anger, helplessness. Life can seem out of control when we are violated. Each nighttime creak could be an intruder. Were the walls thick enough to stop bullets should John's cannabis exploits resume? What did I do to deserve this?

An alleged rape victim feels cheated when the DA refuses to prosecute the accused perpetrators. A medical exam showed rape trauma; two reliable eyewitnesses saw her pushed partially clad down some stairs and heard her screams for help. "It seems to me that I am the one on trial," she complains in frustration. A rape is the only crime where the victims are treated with disrespect."[\[1\]](#) An African-American mother says she's paranoid that her well-behaved teenage son will be falsely suspected of being a criminal because of his race. Fear and fury drive her to nag him before he goes to the store: "Keep your hands out of your pockets. Don't reach under your shirt. If there's an itch, just live with it. In winter, keep your jacket open."[\[2\]](#)

Terrorist Massacre

Members of a multi-racial Cape Town, South Africa, church were enjoying a beautiful duet when the front door burst open. Terrorists sprayed the congregation with automatic rifle fire and tossed in two grenades, leaving 11 dead and 53 wounded. Lorenzo Smith pulled his wife, Myrtle, to the floor and lay on top of her to protect her. The second grenade exploded 6 feet away, sending a piece of shrapnel into her left side near her heart but missing him entirely. She died en route to a hospital.

“You’re no longer working here,” the personnel chief informs the career employee. The stellar worker had ruffled feathers by challenging ethical and financial misconduct of several company officers. Instead of applauding his integrity, the company showed him the door. Whistle blowing can be lonely.

Palestinians find their homes bulldozed. Israeli shoppers are massacred by suicide bombers in a crowded marketplace. Rwandans are maimed and slaughtered in tribal violence.

Bad things sometimes (often?) happen to good or seemingly innocent people. What should be done? How can the victims cope?

First, recognize where the problem stems from.

Why Suffering?

“Why is there suffering in the world?” ranked first in a national survey to determine the top 40 questions of life.^{3} Many human efforts to alleviate suffering and achieve happiness have borne some fruit, but each also contains examples of failure. Consider a few:

Psychology. Many psychologists offer hope based purely on human resources. Still, sometimes even the best and brightest give up in despair. Legendary psychoanalyst Bruno Bettelheim,

who used his own survival of Nazi horrors to help heal others, eventually took his own life. Upon learning of his suicide, one colleague remarked, "It was as if the [psychological] profession itself had failed."[\[4\]](#)

Marxism. Pointing at class antagonism as the culprit, Marxism aimed to create a "New Man" in a harmonious society devoid of such antagonism. Instead, it created an elite "Rich Man" as party chiefs lived in luxury while the masses remained disillusioned. "Workers of the World, We Apologize," read the Moscow demonstrators' banner as the Soviet Union crumbled.[\[5\]](#) Today's Cubans eat lots of bananas and ride bicycles. North Koreans starve.

Capitalism. Is this political theory the answer? The market economy has raised standards of living, yet even nations like the United States boil with crime, racism, sexual discrimination and homelessness

Could we be missing the root of the problem? Could much human suffering be rooted in something deeper than flawed political systems or philosophical constructs? Could there be something wrong with the human heart?

Heart Disease?

History is replete with confirming evidence A United Nations conference on the role of the university in the search for world peace ended early because "the delegates began quarreling too vociferously."[\[6\]](#) Various attempts to establish utopian societies with uniform equality have crumbled due to internal strife.

"Everybody thinks of changing humanity," noted Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, "but nobody thinks of changing himself."[\[7\]](#) Simon Bolivar, the great liberator of Latin America, admitted in his later years, "I was all my life a slave to my passions. The essence of liberty is precisely that

one can liberate oneself “[{8}](#)”

“We have met the enemy,” announced the comic strip character Pogo, “and he is us.”

If, then, we live in a flawed world with people determined to live out their own inner sicknesses, what can we do? How do we cope with the resulting, unjust suffering? “Seek justice” was a North Carolina woman’s strategy as she recently sued her husband’s lover for destroying her marriage, winning a million-dollar settlement. Sometimes the right cause prevails in court. Often, though, both sides end up bitter and poorer.

Are there any other solutions? Anything that works?

- **Choose to look out for others.** In a commencement address at Duke University, ABC News commentator Ted Koppel said: “Maimonedes and Jesus summed it up in almost identical words: ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself,’ ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’”[{9}](#) After Hurricane Andrew devastated parts of Miami, I returned to my hometown to help rebuild. I was amazed to discover that thousands of volunteers from around North America had come at their own expense to help the poor reconstruct their homes. Most were with Christian mission organizations, motivated as Good Samaritans by their love of God and love of people.
- **Lessen the pain by sharing it.** During a particularly trying episode in my own life, my best friend deserted me, some trusted co-workers betrayed me, and my health and finances suffered. Close friends and my faith helped me emerge wounded but growing. Building friendships takes time and effort. Initiating communication, offering to help another move or to carpool, listening to hurts, offering a compliment or word of encouragement . . . all can help build strong bonds. Giving often motivates others to respond in

kind. "Bearing one another's burdens" can make them lighter for both of you when you each need it.

- **Eliminate bitter roots.** Asking and/or granting forgiveness can help heal hearts. As Alabama governor, George Wallace preached "Segregation now! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!" Two decades in a wheelchair gave him time to reflect on life, suffering and God. He eventually confessed his wrongs and asked forgiveness of his former racial and political enemies. South African Lorenzo Smith, who lost his wife to the grenade in church, turned and forgave his wife's murderers. "Bearing a grudge can corrode your soul," affirmed one wounded warrior. "If you nurse bitterness and refuse to forgive, it can keep you in bondage to your enemies. If you let it go and forgive regardless of your opponent's response you're free."

When the good guys don't win, you can curse the darkness. Or you can recognize the root problem and light a candle. May yours shine brightly.

Notes

1. "Was it rape? Woman in G.T. case speaks out," *The Sun* (San Bernardino, CA), August 28, 1997, A12.
2. Deborah Mathis, "Stereotypes can leave Black mothers paranoid for sons," *The Sun* (San Bernardino, CA), August 27, 1997, A9.
3. "What are the Top 40 Questions of Life?" advertisement by Thomas Nelson Publishers in *USA Today*, ca. late 1980s or 1990.
4. Celeste Fremon, "Love and Death," *Los Angeles Times Magazine*, January 27, 1991, pp. 17-21, 35.
5. *Newsweek*. November 20, 1989, p. 11.

6. *Miami News*. September 4, 1969.

7. *World Christian/U* February 1989, p. U8.

8. Selden Rodman, "The Conqueror's Descent," *National Review*. October 15, 1990, p. 88.

9. Ted Koppel, "The Vannatizing of America," *DUKE Magazine*, July/August 1987, p 36 (with biblical references from Matthew 19:19 and Luke 6:31).

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Computers and the Information Revolution

The Impact of the Information Revolution

What has been the impact of the information revolution, and how should Christians respond? Those are the questions we will consider in this essay. Let's begin by considering how fast our world shifted to a computer-based society. At the end of World War 2, the first electronic digital computer ENIAC weighed thirty tons, had 18,000 vacuum tubes, and occupied a space as large as a boxcar. Less than forty years later, many hand-held calculators had comparable computing power for a few dollars. Today most people have a computer on their desk with more computing power than engineers could imagine just a few years ago.

The impact of computers on our society was probably best seen when in 1982 *Time* magazine picked the computer as its "Man of the Year," actually listing it as "Machine of the Year." It is

hard to imagine a picture of the Spirit of St. Louis or an Apollo lander on the magazine cover under a banner "Machine of the Year." This perhaps shows how influential the computer has become in our society.

The computer has become helpful in managing knowledge at a time when the amount of information is expanding exponentially. The information stored in the world's libraries and computers doubles every eight years. In a sense the computer age and the information age seem to go hand in hand.

The rapid development and deployment of computing power however has also raised some significant social and moral questions. People in this society need to think clearly about these issues, but often ignore them or become confused.

One key issue is computer crime. In a sense, computer fraud is merely a new field with old problems. Computer crimes are often nothing more than fraud, larceny, and embezzlement carried out by more sophisticated means. The crimes usually involve changing address, records, or files. In short, they are old-fashioned crimes using high technology.

Another concern arises from the centralization of information. Governmental agencies, banks, and businesses use computers to collect information on its citizens and customers. For example, it is estimated that the federal government has on average about fifteen files on each American. Nothing is inherently wrong with collecting information if the information can be kept confidential and is not used for immoral actions. Unfortunately this is often difficult to guarantee.

In an information-based society, the centralization of information can be as dangerous as the centralization of power. Given sinful man in a fallen world, we should be concerned about the collection and manipulation of vast amounts of personal information.

In the past, centralized information processing was used for persecution. When Adolf Hitler's Gestapo began rounding up millions of Jews, information about their religious affiliation was stored in shoe boxes. U.S. Census Bureau punch cards were used to round up Japanese Americans living on the West Coast at the beginning of World War II. Modern technology makes this task much easier.

Moreover, the problem is not limited to governmental agencies. Many banking systems, for example, utilize electronic funds-transfer systems. Plans to link these systems together into a national system could also provide a means of tracking the actions of citizens. A centralized banking network could fulfill nearly every information need a malevolent dictator might have. This is not to say that such a thing will happen, but it shows the challenges facing each of us due to the information revolution.

The Social Challenges of Computers

One of the biggest challenges raised by the widespread use of computers is privacy and the confidentiality of computer records. Computer records can be abused like any other system. Reputations built up over a lifetime can be ruined by computer errors and often there is little recourse for the victim. Congress passed the 1974 Privacy Act which allows citizens to find out what records federal bureaucracies have on them and to correct any errors. But more legislation is needed than this particular act and Congress needs to consider legislation that applies to the information revolution.

The proliferation of computers has presented another set of social and moral concerns. In the recent past most of that information was centralized and required the expertise of the "high priests of FORTRAN" to utilize it. Now most people have access to information because of increasing numbers of personal computers and increased access to information through the Internet. This access to information will have many

interesting sociological ramifications, and it is also creating a set of troubling ethical questions. The proliferation of computers that can tie into other computers provides more opportunities for computerized crime.

The news media frequently carry reports about computer "hackers" who have been able to gain access to confidential computer systems and obtain or interfere with the data banks. Although these were supposed to be secure systems, enterprising computer hackers broke in anyway. In many cases this merely involved curious teenagers. Nevertheless, computer hacking has become a developing area of crime. Criminals might use computer access to forge documents, change records, and draft checks. They can even use computers for blackmail by holding files for ransom and threatening to destroy them if their demands are not met. Unless better methods of security are found, professional criminals will begin to crack computer security codes and gain quick access into sensitive files.

As with most technological breakthroughs, engineers have outrun lawmakers. Computer deployment has created a number of legal questions. First, there is the problem of establishing penalties of computer crime. Typically, intellectual property has a different status in our criminal justice system. Legal scholars should evaluate the notion that ideas and information need not be protected in the same way as property. Legislators need to enact computer information protection laws that will deter criminals, or even curious computer hackers, from breaking into confidential records.

A second legal problem arises from the question of jurisdiction. Telecommunications allows information to be shared across state and even national borders. Few federal statutes govern this area and less than half the states have laws dealing with information abuse.

Enforcement will also be a problem for several reasons. One reason is the previously stated problem of jurisdiction.

Another is that police departments rarely train their personnel in computer abuse and fraud. A third reason is lack of personnel. Computers are nearly as ubiquitous as telephones or photocopiers.

Computer fraud also raises questions about the role of insurance companies. How do companies insure an electronic asset? What value does computer information have? These questions also need to be addressed in the future.

Computers are a wonderful tool, but like any technology poses new challenges in the social and political arenas. I believe that Christians should be the forefront of these new technologies providing wise direction and moral guidelines. We need Christians in the fields of computer technology and electrical engineering who can wisely guide us into the 21st century.

Principles for Computer Ethics

I would like to propose some principles for computer ethics. The first principle is that **one should never do with computers what he or she would consider immoral without them.** An act does not gain morality because a computer has made it easier to achieve. If it is unethical for someone to rummage through your desk, then it is equally unethical for that person to search your computer files. If it is illegal to violate copyright law and photocopy a book, then it is equally wrong to copy a disk of computer software.

A second principle is to **treat information as something that has value.** People who use computers to obtain unauthorized information often do not realize they are doing something wrong. Since information is not a tangible object and can be shared, it does not seem to them like stealing since it does not deprive someone of something. Yet in an information-based society, information is a valuable asset. Stealing information should carry similar legal penalties as stealing tangible

objects.

A third principle is to remember that **computers are merely tools to be used, not technology to be worshiped**. God's mandate is to use technology wisely within His creation. Many commentators express concern that within an information society, people may be tempted to replace ethics with statistics.

Massive banks of computer data already exert a powerful influence on public policy. Christians must resist society's tendency to undermine the moral basis of right and wrong with facts and figures. Unfortunately, growing evidence indicates that the computer revolution has been a contributing factor in the change from a moral foundation to a statistical one. The adoption of consensus ethics ("51 percent make it right") and the overuse of cost-benefit analysis (a modernized form of utilitarianism) give evidence of this shift.

Fourth, **computers should not replace human intelligence**. In *The Society of Mind* Marvin Minsky, professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says that "the mind, the soul, the self, are not a singly ghostly entity but a society of agents, deeply integrated, yet each one rather mindless on its own." He dreams of being able ultimately to reduce mind (and therefore human nature) to natural mechanism. Obviously this is not an empirical statement, but a metaphysical one that attempts to reduce everything (including mind) to matter.

The implications, however, are profound. Besides lowering humans to the material process, it begins to elevate machines to the human level. One article asked the question, Would an Intelligent Computer Have a "Right to Life?" Granting computer rights might be something society might consider since many are already willing to grant certain rights to animals.

In a sense the question is whether an intelligent computer

would have a soul and therefore access to fundamental human rights. As bizarre as the question may sound, it was no doubt inevitable. When seventeenth-century philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm von Leibniz first described a thinking machine, he was careful to point out that this machine would not have a soul, fearful perhaps of reaction from the church. But this will be our challenge in the future: how to manage new computing power that will most likely outstrip human intelligence.

The Bible teaches that humans are more than bits and bytes, more than blood and bones. Created in the image of God, human beings have spiritual dimensions. They are more than complex computers. Computers should be used for what they do best: analyze discrete data with objective criteria. Computers are a wonderful tool, but they should not replace human intelligence and intuition.

Biblical Principles Concerning Technology

I would like to present a set of biblical principles concerning technology in general and computer technology in particular.

In essence, technology is the systematic modification of the environment for human ends. Often it is a process or activity that extends or enhances a human function. A microscope, for example, extends man's visual perception. A tractor extends one's physical ability. A computer extends a person's ability to calculate. Technology also includes devices that make physical processes more efficient. The many chemical processes we use to make products fit this description of technology.

The biblical mandate for developing and using technology is stated in Genesis 1:28. God gave mankind dominion over the land, and we are obliged to use and manage these resources wisely in serving the Lord. God's ideal was not to have a world composed exclusively of primitive areas. Before the Fall (Gen. 2:15) Adam was to cultivate and keep the Garden of Eden.

After the Fall the same command pertains to the application of technology to this fallen world, a world that “groans” in travail (Rom. 8:22). Technology can benefit mankind in exercising proper dominion, and thus remove some of the effects of the Fall (such as curing disease, breeding livestock, or growing better crops).

Technology is neither good or evil. The worldview behind the particular technology determines its value. In the Old Testament, technology was used both for good (e.g., the building of the ark, Gen. 6) and for evil (e.g., the building of the Tower of Babel, Gen. 11). Therefore the focus should not be so much on the technology itself as on the philosophical motivation behind its use. There are a number of important principles that should be considered.

First, **technology should be seen as a tool, not as an end in itself.** There is nothing sacred about technology. Unfortunately Western culture tends to rely on it more than is appropriate. If a computer, for example, proves a particular point, people have a greater tendency to believe it than if the answer was a well-reasoned conclusion given by a person. If a machine can do the job, employers are prone to mechanize, even if human labor does a better or more creative job. Often our society unconsciously places machines over man. Humans become servants to machines rather than the other way around.

There is a tendency to look to science and engineering to solve problems that really may be due to human sinfulness (wars, prejudice, greed), the fallenness of the world (death, disease), or God’s curse on Adam (finite resources). In Western culture especially, we tend to believe that technology will save us from our problems and thus we use technology as a substitute for God. Christians must not fall into this trap, but instead must exhibit their ultimate dependence on God. Christians must also differentiate between problems that demand a technological solution and ones that can be remedied by a social or spiritual one.

As Christians we should see the value of technology but not be seduced into believing that more and better technology will solve social and moral problems. Computers and the Internet will tell us more about *how* people live, but they won't tell us *how to* live. Televisions, VCRs, and computers may enrich our lives, but they won't provide the direction we need in our lives. The answer is not more computers and more technology. The ultimate answer to our problems is a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

A second principle is that **technology should be applied in different ways, according to specific instructions.** For example, there are distinctions between man and animal that, because we are created in God's image (Gen. 1:26-27), call for different applications of medical science. Using artificial insemination to improve the genetic fitness of livestock does not justify using it on human beings. Christians should resist the idea that just because we can do something we should do it. Technological ability does not grant moral permission.

Many commentators, most notably E. F. Schumacher, have focused on the notion of appropriate technology. In Third World countries, for example, sophisticated energy-intensive and capital-intensive forms of agriculture may be inappropriate for the culture as it presently exists. Industrial advance often brings social disruption and increasing havoc to a society. Developing countries must use caution in choosing the appropriate steps to industrialize, lest they be greatly harmed in the process.

I believe we should resist the temptation to solve every problem with computers. Our society today seems bent to putting computers in every classroom and in every place of work. As helpful as computers may be, I believe we need to question this seemingly mindless attempt to fill our world with computers. They are a wonderful tool, but that is all they are. We must be careful not to substitute computers for basics like phonics, mathematics, logic, and wise business

practices.

Third, **ethics rather than technology must determine the direction of our society.** Jacques Ellul has expressed the concern that technology moves society instead of vice versa. Our society today seems all too motivated by a technological imperative in our culture. The technological ability to do something is not the same as a moral imperative to do it. Technology should not determine ethics.

Though scientists may possess the technological ability to be gods, they nevertheless lack the capacity to act like gods. Too often, man has tried to use technology to become God. He uses it to work out his own physical salvation, to enhance his own evolution, or even to attempt to create life. Christians who take seriously human fallenness will humbly admit that we often do not know enough about God's creation to use technology wisely. The reality of human sinfulness means that society should be careful to prevent the use of technology for greed and exploitation.

Technology's fruits can be both sweet and bitter. C.S. Lewis writes in *The Abolition of Man*, "From this point of view, what we call Man's power over Nature turns out to be power exercised by some men over men with Nature as its instrument. . . . There neither is nor can be any simple increase of power on Man's side. Each new power won by man is a power over man as well. Each advance leaves him weaker as well as stronger. In every victory, besides being the general who triumphs, he is also the prisoner who follows the triumphal car."

Christians must bring strong biblical critique to each technological advance and analyze its impact. Computers are a wonderful tool, but Christians should constantly evaluate their impact as we live through the information revolution.

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Generation X – How They Fit in the Christian Community

Generation X! Are you familiar with this phrase? It is highly probable that you have heard or read the phrase at least once. What does it bring to your mind? Does it provoke fear, confusion, despair, misunderstandings, or is it just another in a long line of such expressions used to label youth? Generation X has quickly entered our vocabulary as an easily recognizable moniker for the children of another definable generation: the “baby boomers.” Thus this generation of teenagers also has come to be known as the “baby busters.” “Xers” and “busters” normally don’t elicit positive thoughts about our youth. Is this a legitimate response? Or are we maligning a significant portion of our population with such terms?

In 1991 a Canadian named Douglas Coupland published a novel entitled *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*. Coupland’s book “is the first major work to take twentysomethings seriously, even if the book is humorous and fictional.”^[1] Thus he is the originator of the phrase that presently describes a particular generation. But he is just one of many who have given thought to youth culture, both present and past.

A Brief History of American Youth

It seems that youth have always received the attention of adults. Teenagers, as they have come to be called, have been analyzed, diagnosed, and reprimanded because older generations just don’t know what to make of them. “Juvenile delinquents,” “the beat generation,” “hippies,” “yuppies” and numerous other

titles have been used to describe certain generational distinctives. "The contemporary youth crisis is only the latest variation on centuries-old problems."[\[2\]](#) For example, in the 1730s in New England youth activities such as "night 'walking' and 'company-keeping,' also known as 'revels,' helped produce some of the highest premarital pregnancy rates in American history."[\[3\]](#) And during the early nineteenth century, student riots became a tradition on many campuses such as Brown, North Carolina, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, and Columbia. These riots included "boycotting classes, barricading college buildings, breaking windows, trashing the commons and/or chapel, setting fires around or to college buildings, beating faculty members, and whipping the president or trustees."[\[4\]](#) Such behavior—almost two hundred years ago—probably reminds us of what took place on many campuses during the Vietnam War years.

By the beginning of the twentieth century, youth became the focus of the burgeoning social sciences. "An intellectual enterprise struggled to redefine what 'youth' was or ought to be. That concept was labeled 'adolescence' and has prevailed ever since."[\[5\]](#) It is especially interesting to note that these early social scientists didn't discover adolescence, they invented it. "Adolescence was essentially a conception of behavior imposed on youth, rather than an empirical assessment of the way in which young people behaved."[\[6\]](#) This is important when we understand that the world view premises of the social scientists "came from Darwinian recapitulation theory: the individual life-course replicated the evolutionary progress of the entire race. Adolescence was a distinct 'stage' through which each person passed on the way from childhood (the 'primitive' stage) to adulthood (the 'civilized' stage). Adolescence therefore was transitional but essential, its traits dangerous but its labor vital for attaining maturity. Squelching it was just as bad as giving it free rein."[\[7\]](#) The fruit of such concepts can be seen in the "lifestyles" that are now so ingrained in our cultural fabric.

The Web of Adolescence

What do the “lifestyles” of adults have to do with adolescents? “Since ‘lifestyle’ has come to define not just doing but their very being, adults have now become dependent on the very psychological experts who wove the web of adolescence in the first place. The classic youth tasks of ‘growth,’ ‘finding oneself,’ and preparing for one’s life-work have become the American life-work, even into the golden years’ of retirement.”^{8} Thus the concerns we have for our youth are concerns we have for ourselves. The “web of adolescence” touches all of us. As George Barna has stated, “taking the time to have a positive impact [on our youth] is more than just ‘worth the effort’; it is a vital responsibility of every adult and a contribution to the future of our own existence.”^{9} The importance of this cannot be overemphasized as we contemplate the sometimes-puzzling segment of our population called “Generation X.”

Who Are These People?

What is a “Generation Xer” or a “baby buster”? What is the “doofus generation” or “the nowhere generation”? These phrases, and many others, may be used to characterize the present generation of youth. Not very encouraging phrases, are they? More frequently than not, adults always have evaluated youth in pessimistic terms. Even the ancient Greeks were frustrated with their youth.

Today the descriptions are especially derogatory. “Words used to describe them have included: whiny, cynical, angry, perplexed, tuned out, timid, searching, vegged out—the latest lost generation.”^{10} Are these terms accurate, or do they reek of hyperbole? As is true with most generalizations of people, there is a measure of truth to them. But we make a grave mistake if we allow them to preclude us from a more complete consideration of this generation. As George Barna has

written: "You cannot conduct serious research among teenagers these days without concluding that, contrary to popular assumptions, there is substance to these young people."[{11}](#) Having served among and with youth of this generation for many years, I emphatically concur with Mr. Barna. Generation Xers consist of "41 million Americans born between 1965 and 1976 plus the 3 million more in that age group who have immigrated here."[{12}](#) Most of them are children of the "baby boomers," who comprise over 77 million of the population. This dramatic decrease in the number of births has left them with the "baby buster" label. Their parents have left a legacy that has produced a "birth dearth" and its accompanying social consequences. There are at least six contributors to this population decline.

First, the U.S. became the site for the world's highest divorce rate. Second, birth control became increasingly prominent with the introduction of the pill. Women began to experience more freedom in planning their lives. Third, a college education was more accessible for more people, especially for women who began to take more influential positions in the work force. Fourth, social change, including women's liberation, encouraged more women to consider careers other than being homemakers. Fifth, abortion reached a rate of over 1.5 million per year. Sixth, the economy led many women to work because they had to, or because they were the sole breadwinner.[{13}](#)

So we can see that this generation has entered a culture enmeshed in dramatic changes, especially regarding the family. These changes have produced certain characteristics, some positive, others negative, that are generally descriptive of contemporary youth.

How Do You Describe a "Buster"?

How do you describe someone who is labeled as a "baby buster"? We may be tempted to answer this question in a despairing

tone, especially if we haven't taken time to see a clear picture of a "buster." Consider the following characteristics:

First, they are serious about life. For example, the quality of life issues they have inherited have challenged them to give consideration to critical decisions both for the present and future. Second, they are stressed out. School, family, peer pressure, sexuality, techno-stress, finances, crime, and even political correctness contribute to their stressful lives. Third, they are self-reliant. One indicator of this concerns religious faith; the baby buster believes he alone can make sense of it. Fourth, they are skeptical, which is often a defense against disappointment. Fifth, they are highly spiritual. This doesn't mean they are focusing on Christianity, but it does mean there is a realization that it is important to take spiritual understanding of some kind into daily life. Sixth, they are survivors. This is not apparent to adults who usually share a different worldview concerning progress and motivation. This generation is not "driven" as much as their predecessors. They are realistic, not idealistic.[{14}](#)

Do these characteristics match your perceptions? If not, it may be because this generation has received little public attention. And what attention it has received has leaned in a negative direction because of inaccurate observation. The baby busters' parents, the baby boomers, have been the focus of businesses, education, churches, and other institutions simply because of their massive numbers and their market potential. It's time to rectify this if we have the wisdom to see the impact busters will have in the not-too-distant future.

What About the Church and Busters?

Let's survey a few other attributes of Generation X as we attempt to bring this group into sharper focus. These attributes should be especially important to those of us in the Christian community who desire to understand and relate to

our youth.

Because of “the loneliness and alienation of splintered family attachments” this generation’s strongest desires are acceptance and belonging.^{15} Our churches need to become *accepting* places first and *expecting* places second. That is, our youth need to sense that they are not first *expected* to conform or perform. Rather, they are to sense that the church is a place where they can first find *acceptance*. My years of ministry among youth have led me to the conclusion that one of the consistent shortcomings of our churches is the proverbial “generation gap” that stubbornly *expects* youth to dress a certain way, talk a certain way, socialize in a certain way, etc., without *accepting* them in Christ’s way.

Another important attribute of this generation is how they learn. “They determine truth in a different way: not rationally, but relationally.”^{16} Closely aligned with this is the observation that “interaction is their primary way of learning.”^{17} In order for the church to respond, it may be necessary to do a great deal of “retooling” on the way we teach.

Lastly, busters are seeking purpose and meaning in life. Of course this search culminates in a relationship with the risen Jesus. It should be obvious that ultimately this is the most important contribution the church can offer. If we fail to respond to this, the greatest need of this generation or any other, surely we should repent and seek the Lord’s guidance.

Listening to Busters

Let’s eavesdrop on a conversation taking place on a college campus between a Generation X student and a pastor:

Pastor: We have a special gathering of college students at our church each Sunday. It would be great to see you there.

Student: No, thanks. I’ve been to things like that before.

What's offered is too superficial. Besides, I don't trust institutions like churches.

Pastor: Well, I think you'll find this to be different.

Student: Who's in charge?

Pastor: Usually it's me and a group of others from the church.

Student: No students?

Pastor: Well, uh, no, not at the moment.

Student: How can you have a gathering for students and yet the students have nothing to do with what happens?

Pastor: That's a good question. I haven't really thought much about it.

Student: By the way, is there a good ethnic and cultural mix in the group?

Pastor: It's not as good as it could be.

Student: Why is that?

Pastor: I haven't really thought about that, either.

Student: Cliques. I've noticed that a lot of groups like yours are very "cliquish." Is that true at your church?

Pastor: We're trying to rid ourselves of that. But do you spend time with friends?

Student: Of course! But I don't put on a "show of acceptance."

Pastor: I appreciate that! We certainly don't want to do that! We sincerely want to share the truth with anyone.

Student: Truth? I don't think you can be so bold as to say there is any such thing.

Pastor: That's a good point. I can't claim truth, but Jesus can.

Student: I'm sure that's comforting for you, but it's too narrow for anyone to claim such a thing. We all choose our own paths.

Pastor: Jesus didn't have such a broad perspective.

Student: That may be, but he could have been wrong, you know. Look, I'm late for class. Maybe we can talk another time, as long as you'll listen and not preach to me.

Pastor: That sounds good. I'm here often. I'll look for you. Have a great day!

This fictitious encounter serves to illustrate how baby busters challenge us to find ways of communicating that transcend what may have been the norm just a few years ago.

New Rules

George Barna has gleaned a set of "rules" that define and direct youth of the mid- and late-90s:

Rule #1: Personal relationships count. Institutions don't.

Rule #2: The process is more important than the product.

Rule #3: Aggressively pursue diversity among people.

Rule #4: Enjoying people and life opportunities is more important than productivity, profitability, or achievement.

Rule #5: Change is good.

Rule #6: The development of character is more crucial than achievement.

Rule #7: You can't always count on your family to be there for you, but it is your best hope for emotional support.

Rule #8: Each individual must assume responsibility for his or her own world.

Rule #9: Whenever necessary, gain control and use it wisely.

Rule #10: Don't waste time searching for absolutes. There are none.

Rule #11: One person can make a difference in the world but not much.

Rule #12: Life is hard and then we die; but because it's the only life we've got, we may as well endure it, enhance it, and enjoy it as best we can.

Rule #13: Spiritual truth may take many forms.

Rule #14: Express your rage.

Rule #15: Technology is our natural ally.[{18}](#)

Now let's consider how parents and other adults might best respond to these rules.

What Do They Hear From Us?

Try to put yourself into the mind and body of a contemporary teenager for a moment. Imagine that you've been asked to share the kinds of things you hear most often from your parents or adult leaders. Your list may sound something like this:

- "Do as I say, not as I do."
- "I'm the adult. I'm right."
- "Because I said so, that's why."
- "You want to be *what*?"
- "This room's a pig sty."
- "Can't you do anything right?"
- "Where did you find him?"
- "You did *what*?"
- "Do you mind if we talk about something else?"

- “I’m kind of busy right now. Could you come back later?”

These statements sound rather overwhelming when taken together, don’t they? And yet too many of our youth hear similar phrases too frequently. As we conclude our series pertaining to the youth of Generation X, let’s focus on how we might better communicate and minister to them. In his book *Ten Mistakes Parents Make With Teenagers*, Jay Kesler has shared wise advice we should take to heart and consistently apply to our lives among youth.[\[19\]](#)

Advice to Parents and Other Adults

- Be a consistent model. We can’t just preach to them and expect them to follow our advice if we don’t live what we say. Consistency is crucial in the eyes of a buster.
- Admit when you are wrong. Just because you are the adult and the one with authority doesn’t mean you can use your position as a “cop out” for mistakes. Youth will understand sincere repentance and will be encouraged to respond in kind.
- Give honest answers to honest questions. Youth like to ask questions. We need to see this as a positive sign and respond honestly.
- Let teenagers develop a personal identity. Too often youth bare the brunt of their parents’ expectations. In particular, parents will sometimes make the mistake of living through their children. Encourage them in their own legitimate endeavors.
- Major on the majors and minor on the minors. In my experience, adults will concentrate on things like appearance to the detriment of character. Our youth need to know that we know what is truly important.
- Communicate approval and acceptance. As we stated earlier in this essay, this generation is under too much stress. Let’s make encouragement our goal, not discouragement.
- When possible, approve their friends. This one can be especially difficult for many of us. Be sure to take time to

go beyond the surface and really know their friends.

- Give teens the right to fail. We can't protect them all their lives. Remind them that they can learn from mistakes.
- Discuss the uncomfortable. If they don't sense they can talk with you, they will seek someone else who may not share your convictions.
- Spend time with your teens. Do the kinds of things they like to do. Give them your concentration. They'll never forget it.

This generation of youth, and all those to come, need parents and adults who demonstrate these qualities. When youth receive this kind of attention, our churches will benefit, our schools will benefit, our families will benefit, and our country will benefit. And, most importantly, I believe the Lord will be pleased.

Notes

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3. Ibid., 19.
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6. Joseph F. Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America, 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 243. Quoted in Schultze, *Dancing in the Dark*, 35.
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14. Barna, 18-21.
15. Jan Johnson, "Getting the Gospel to the Baby Busters," *Moody Monthly* (May 1995): 50.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid., 51.
18. Barna, 108-15.
19. Jay Kesler, *Ten Mistakes Parents Make With Teenagers (And How to Avoid Them)* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988).

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Teen Drug Abuse

A Nine Inch Nails album *The Downward Spiral* features a song "My Self Destruct" with the lyrics: "I am the needle in your vein and I control you, I am the high you can't sustain and I control you." Another song, "Hurt," explores drugs as a means of escape with lyrics like, "The needle tears a hole, the old familiar sting, try to kill it all away."

Five Dodge City, Kansas teenagers, high on marijuana, killed a stranger for no obvious reason. Three West Palm Beach, Florida teenagers mixed beer, rum, marijuana and cocaine. They then kidnapped and set ablaze a tourist from Brooklyn.

Nearly everywhere we look, the consequences of drug abuse can be seen. Violent street gangs, family violence, train crashes, the spread of AIDS, and babies born with cocaine dependency all testify to the pervasive influence of drugs in our world.

The statistics are staggering. The average age of first alcohol use is 12 and the average age of first drug use is 13.

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 93 percent of all teenagers have some experience with alcohol by the end of their senior year of high school and 6 percent drink daily. Almost two-thirds of all American young people try illicit drugs before they finish high school. One out of sixteen seniors smokes marijuana daily and 20 percent have done so for at least a month sometime in their lives. A recent poll found that adolescents listed drugs as the most important problem facing people their age, followed by crime and violence in school and social pressures.

Drugs have changed the social landscape of America. Street gangs spring up nearly overnight looking for the enormous profits drugs can bring. Organized crime is also involved in setting up franchises that would make McDonald's envious. But these are not hamburgers. In the world of drugs, homicidally vicious gangs compete for market share with murderous results. Many gang members outgun the police with their weapons of choice: semi-automatic pistols, AK-47s, and Uzis. Drug dealers have also gone high tech using cellular phones and computers to keep track of deals, while their teenage runners wear phone beepers in school.

The Parents' Resource Institute for Drug Education (PRIDE) reports that children who abuse illicit drugs are significantly more likely to carry a gun to school, take part in gang activities, think of suicide, threaten harm to others, and get in trouble with the police than children who abstain.

One survey released by the University of Colorado shows that the problem of drug use is not just outside the church. The study involved nearly 14,000 junior high and high school youth and compared churched young people with unchurched young people and found very little difference. For example, 88 percent of the unchurched young people reported drinking beer as compared to 80 percent of churched young people. When asked how many had tried marijuana, 47 percent of the unchurched young people had done so compared to 38 percent of the

churched youth. For amphetamines and barbiturates, 28 percent of the unchurched had tried them while 22 percent of the church young people had tried them. And for cocaine use, the percentage was 14 percent for unchurched youths and 11 percent for churched youths.

Fighting drugs often seems futile. When drug dealers are arrested, they are often released prematurely because court dockets are overloaded. Plea bargaining and paroles are standard fare as the revolving doors of justice spin faster. As the casualties mount in this war against drugs, some commentators have begun to suggest that the best solution is to legalize drugs. But you don't win a war by surrendering. If drugs were legalized, addiction would increase, health costs would increase, and government would once again capitulate to societal pressures and shirk its responsibility to establish moral law.

But if legalization is not the answer, then something must be done about the abuse of drugs like alcohol, cocaine, marijuana, heroin, and PCP. Just the medical cost of drug abuse was estimated by the National Center for Health Statistics to be nearly \$60 billion, and the medical bill for alcohol was nearly \$100 billion.

How to Fight the Drug Battle

Society must fight America's drug epidemic on five major fronts. The first battlefield is at the border. Federal agents must patrol the 8426 miles of deeply indented Florida coastline and a 2067 mile border with Mexico. This is a formidable task, but vast distances are not the only problem.

The smugglers they are up against have almost unlimited funds and some of the best equipment available. Fortunately, the federal interdiction forces (namely Customs, DEA, and INS) are improving their capability. Customs forces have been given an increase in officers and all are getting more sophisticated

equipment.

The second battlefield is law enforcement at home. Police must crack down with more arrests, more convictions, longer sentences, and more seizures of drug dealers' assets. Unfortunately, law enforcement successes pale when compared to the volume of drug traffic. Even the most effective crackdowns seem to do little more than move drugs from one location to another.

An effective weapon on this battlefield is a 1984 law that makes it easier to seize the assets of drug dealers before conviction. In some cities, police have even confiscated the cars of suburbanites who drive into the city to buy crack.

But attempts to deter drug dealing have been limited by flaws in the criminal justice system. A lack of jail cells prevents significant prosecution of drug dealers. And even if this problem were alleviated, the shortage of judges would still result in the quick release of drug pushers.

A third battlefield is drug testing. Many government and business organizations are implementing testing on a routine basis in order to reduce the demand for drugs.

The theory is simple. Drug testing is a greater deterrent to drug use than the remote possibility of going to jail. People who know they will have to pass a urine test in order to get a job are going to be much less likely to dabble in drugs. In 1980, 27 percent of some 20,000 military personnel admitted to using drugs in the previous 30 days. Five years later when drug testing was implemented, the proportion dropped to 9 percent.

But drug testing is not without its opponents. Civil libertarians feel this deterrent is not worth the loss of personal privacy. Some unions believe that random testing in the workplace would violate the Fourth Amendment's prohibition against unreasonable searches. A fourth battleground is drug

treatment. Those who are addicted to drugs need help. But the major question is, Who should provide the treatment and who should foot the bill? Private hospital programs are now a \$4 billion-a-year business with a daily cost of as much as \$500 per bed per day. This is clearly out of the reach of many addicts who do not have employers or insurance companies who can pick up the costs.

A fifth battleground is education. Teaching children the dangers of drugs can be an important step in helping them to learn to say no to drugs. The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that 72 percent of the nation's elementary and secondary-school children are being given some kind of drug education.

Should We Legalize Drugs?

Those weary of the war on drugs have suggested that we should decriminalize drugs. Former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders suggested we study the impact of legalizing drugs. For years, an alliance of liberals and libertarians have promoted the idea that legalizing drugs would reduce drug costs and drug crimes in this country. But would it? Let's look at some of the arguments for drug legalization.

1. Legalization will take the profit out of the drug business.

As surprising as it may sound, relatively few drug dealers actually earn huge sums of money. Most in the crack business are low-level runners who make very little money. Many crack dealers smoke more crack than they sell. Drug cartels are the ones making the big profits.

Would legalizing drugs really affect large drug dealers or drug cartels in any appreciable way? Drug cartels would still control price and supply even if drugs were legalized in this country. If government set the price for legalized drugs, criminals could undercut the price and supply whatever the

government did not supply.

Addicts would not be significantly affected by legalization. Does anyone seriously believe that their behavior would change just because they are now using legal drugs instead of illegal drugs? They would still use theft and prostitution to support their habits.

Proponents also argue that legalizing drugs would reduce the cost of drugs and thus reduce the supply of drugs flowing to this country. Recent history suggests that just the opposite will take place. When cocaine first hit the United States, it was expensive and difficult to obtain. But when more was dumped into this country and readily available in less expensive vials of crack, drug addiction rose and drug-related crimes rose.

2. Drug legalization will reduce drug use.

Proponents argue that legalizing drugs will make them less appealing they will no longer be "forbidden fruit." However, logic and social statistics suggest that decriminalizing drugs will actually increase drug use.

Those arguing for the legalization of drugs often point to Prohibition as a failed social experiment. But was it? When Prohibition was in effect, alcohol consumption declined by 30 to 50 percent and death from cirrhosis of the liver fell dramatically. One study found that suicides and drug-related arrests also declined by 50 percent. After the repeal of the 18th amendment in 1933, alcoholism rose. So did alcohol-related crimes and accidents. If anything, Prohibition proves the point. Decriminalization increases drug use.

Comparing alcohol and drugs actually strengthens the argument against legalization since many drugs are even more addictive than alcohol. Consider, for example, the difference between

alcohol and cocaine. Alcohol has an addiction rate of approximately 10 percent, while cocaine has an addiction rate as high as 75 percent.

Many drugs are actually “gateway drugs” to other drugs. A 1992 article in The Journal of Primary Prevention found that marijuana is essentially a “necessary” condition for the occurrence of cocaine use. Other research shows that involvement with illicit drugs is a developmental phenomenon, age correlates with use, and cigarette and alcohol use precedes marijuana use.

Dr. Robert DuPont, former head of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, argues that the potential market for legal drugs can be compared to the number of Americans who now use alcohol (140 million persons). If his analysis is correct, then approximately 50 million Americans would eventually use cocaine if it were a legal drug.

But the real question is not, Which is worse: alcohol or drugs? The question is whether we can accept both legalized alcohol and legalized drugs. Legalized alcohol currently leads to 100,000 deaths/year and costs us \$99 billion/year. We don't need to legalize drugs too.

3. Legalizing drugs will reduce social costs.

“We are losing the war on drugs,” say drug legalization proponents, “so let's cut the costs of drug enforcement by decriminalizing drugs.”

Currently the U.S. spends \$11 billion/year to combat drug-related crime. If drugs were made legal, some crime-fighting costs might drop but many social costs would certainly increase: other forms of crime (to support habits), drug-related accidents, and welfare costs.

Statistics from states that have decriminalized marijuana demonstrate this concern. In California, within the first six

months of decriminalization, arrests for driving under the influence of drugs rose 46 percent for adults and 71.4 percent for juveniles. The use of marijuana doubled in Alaska and Oregon when it was decriminalized in those states.

Crime would certainly increase. Justice Department figures show that approximately one-third of inmates used drugs prior to committing their crimes.

And juvenile crime would no doubt increase as well. A 1990 study published in the Journal of Drug Issues found a strong association between the severity of the crime and the type of substance used the more intoxicating the substance, the more serious the incident.

Meanwhile, worker productivity would decrease and student productivity would decrease.

The Drug Enforcement Administration estimates that drug decriminalization will cost society more than alcohol and tobacco combined, perhaps \$140-210 billion a year in lost productivity and job-related accidents.

Government services would no doubt have to be expanded to pay for additional drug education and treatment for those addicted to legal drugs. And child protective services would no doubt have to expand to deal with child abuse. Patrick Murphy, a court-appointed lawyer for 31,000 abused and neglected children in Chicago, says that more than 80 percent of the cases of physical and sexual abuse of children now involve drugs. Legalizing drugs will not reduce these crimes; it would make the problem worse.

And is it accurate to say we are losing the war on drugs? Drug use in this country was on the decline in the 1980s due to a strong anti-drug campaign. Casual cocaine use, for example, dropped from 12 million in 1985 to 6 million in 1991. You don't win a war by surrender. Legalizing drugs in this country would constitute surrender in the drug war at a time when we

have substantial evidence we can win this battle on a number of fronts.

4. Government should not dictate moral policy on drugs.

Libertarians who promote drug legalization value personal freedom. They believe that government should not dictate morals and fear that our civil liberties may be threatened by a tougher policy against drugs.

The true threat to our freedoms comes from the drug cartels in foreign countries, drug lords in this country, and drug dealers in our streets. Legalizing drugs would send the wrong message to society. Those involved in drug use eventually see that drugs ultimately lead to prison or death, so they begin to seek help.

Obviously some people are going to use drugs whether they are legal or illegal. Keeping drugs illegal maintains criminal sanctions that persuade most people their life is best lived without drugs. Legalization, on the other hand, removes the incentive to stay away from drugs and increases drug use.

William Bennett has said, "I didn't have to become drug czar to be opposed to legalized marijuana. As Secretary of Education I realized that, given the state of American education, the last thing we needed was a policy that made widely available a substance that impairs memory, concentration, and attention span. Why in God's name foster the use of a drug that makes you stupid?"

Biblical Perspective

Some people may believe that the Bible has little to say about drugs, but this is not so. First, the Bible has a great deal to say about the most common and most abused drug: alcohol. Ephesians 5:18 admonishes Christians not to be drunk with wine. In many places in Scripture drunkenness is called a sin (Deut. 21:20-21, Amos 6:1, 1 Cor.6:9-10, Gal. 5:19-20). The

Bible also warns of the dangers of drinking alcohol in Proverbs 20:1, Isaiah 5:11, Habakkuk 2:15-16. If the Bible warns of the danger of alcohol, then by implication it is also warning of the dangers of taking other kinds of drugs.

Second, drugs were an integral part of many ancient near East societies. For example, the pagan cultures surrounding the nation of Israel used drugs as part of their religious ceremonies. Both the Old Testament and New Testament condemn sorcery and witchcraft. The word translated "sorcery" comes from the Greek word from which we get the English words "pharmacy" and "pharmaceutical." In ancient time, drugs were prepared by a witch or shaman.

Drugs were used to enter into the spiritual world by inducing an altered state of consciousness that allowed demons to take over the mind of the user. In that day, drug use was tied to sorcery. In our day, many use drugs merely for so-called "recreational" purposes, but we cannot discount the occult connection.

Galatians 5:19-21 says: "The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery, idolatry and witchcraft [which includes the use of drugs]; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God." The word witchcraft here is also translated "sorcery" and refers to the use of drugs. The Apostle Paul calls witchcraft that was associated with drug use a sin. The non-medical use of drugs is considered one of the acts of a sinful nature. Using drugs, whether to "get a high" or to tap into the occult, is one of the acts of a sinful nature where users demonstrate their depraved and carnal nature.

The psychic effects of drugs should not be discounted. A questionnaire designed by Charles Tate and sent to users of

marijuana documented some disturbing findings. In his article in *Psychology Today* he noted that one fourth of the marijuana users who responded to his questionnaire reported that they were taken over and controlled by an evil person or power during their drug induced experience. And over half of those questioned said they have experienced religious or “spiritual” sensations in which they meet spiritual beings.

Many proponents of the drug culture have linked drug use to spiritual values. During the 1960s, Timothy Leary and Alan Watts referred to the “religious” and “mystical” experience gained through the use of LSD (along with other drugs) as a prime reason for taking drugs.

No doubt drugs are dangerous, not only to our body but to our spirit. As Christians, we must warn our children and our society of the dangers of drugs.

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Feminist Myths

As someone who works in the media, I am well aware that certain myths get started and have a life of their own. A number of these myths are promoted and disseminated by feminists and can be found in the book *Who Stole Feminism?* The author, Christina Hoff Sommers, though a feminist, has been concerned for some time about the prominence of these myths and does a masterful job tracing down the origin of each and setting the record straight. If you want more information on any of these, I would recommend you obtain her well-documented book.

Myth of the Extent of Anorexia Nervosa

In her book *Revolution from Within*, Gloria Steinem informed her readers that "in this country alone...about 150,000 females die of anorexia each year." To put this dramatic statistic in perspective, this is more than three times the annual number of fatalities from car accidents for the total population. The only problem with the statistic is that it is absolutely false.

Lest you think that this was a mere typographical error, consider the following. The statistic also appears in the feminist best-seller *The Beauty Myth* by Naomi Wolf. "How," she asks, "would America react to the mass self-immolation by hunger of its favorite sons?" While admitting that "nothing justifies comparison with the Holocaust," she nevertheless makes just such a comparison. "When confronted with a vast number of emaciated bodies starved not by nature but by men, one must notice a certain resemblance."

What was the source of this statistic? Ms. Wolf got her figures from *Fasting Girls: The Emergence of Anorexia Nervosa as a Modern Disease* by Joan Brumberg, a historian and former director of women's studies at Cornell University. It turns out that she misquoted the American Anorexia and Bulimia Association which had stated that there are 150,000 to 200,000 sufferers (not fatalities) of anorexia nervosa. The actual figure is many orders of magnitude lower. According to the National Center for Health Statistics, there were 70 deaths from anorexia in 1990. Even 70 deaths is tragic, but 70 deaths out of population of over 100 million women can hardly be considered a holocaust.

Apparently Naomi Wolf plans to revise her figures in an updated version of *The Beauty Myth*, but the figure is now widely accepted as true. Ann Landers repeated it in her 1992 column by stating that "every year, 150,000 American women die from complications associated with anorexia and bulimia." The

false statistic has also made it into college textbooks. A women's studies text, aptly titled *The Knowledge Explosion*, contains the erroneous figure in its preface.

Myth of Amount of Domestic Violence

On November 1992, Deborah Louis, president of the National Women's Studies Association, sent a message to the Women's Studies Electronic Bulletin Board. It read, "According to [the] last March of Dimes report, domestic violence (vs. pregnant women) is now responsible for more birth defects than all other causes combined." On February 23, 1993, Patricia Ireland, president of the National Organization for Women, said on the Charlie Rose program that "battery of pregnant women is the number one cause of birth defects in this country."

Certainly unsettling data. But again, the biggest problem is that the statistic is absolutely false. The March of Dimes never published the study and did not know of any research that corroborated the statement.

Nevertheless, journalists willingly recited the erroneous statistic. The *Boston Globe* reported that "domestic violence is the leading cause of birth defects, more than all other medical causes combined, according to a March of Dimes study." The *Dallas Morning News* reported that "the March of Dimes has concluded that the battering of women during pregnancy causes more birth defects than all the diseases put together for which children are usually immunized."

When *Time* magazine published essentially the same article, the rumor started spinning out of control. Concerned citizens and legislators called the March of Dimes for the study. Eventually the error was traced to Sarah Buel, a founder of the domestic violence advocacy project at Harvard Law School. She misunderstood a statement made by a nurse who noted that a March of Dimes study showed that more women are screened for

birth defects than they are for domestic battery. The nurse never said anything about battery causing birth defects.

Although we could merely chalk this error up to a misunderstanding, it is disturbing that so many newspapers and magazines reported it uncritically. Battery causing birth defects? More than genetic disorders like spina bifida, Downs syndrome, Tay-Sachs, sickle-cell anemia? More than alcohol, crack, or AIDS? Where was the press in checking the facts? Why are feminist myths so easily repeated in the press?

Myth of Increased Domestic Battery on Super Bowl Sunday

In January 1993 newspaper and television networks reported an alarming statistic. They stated that the incidence of domestic violence tended to rise by 40 percent on Super Bowl Sunday. NBC, which was broadcasting the game, made a special plea for men to stay calm. Feminists called for emergency preparations in anticipation of the expected increase in violence.

Feminists also used the occasion to link maleness and violence against women. Nancy Isaac, a Harvard School of Public Health research associate specializing in domestic violence, told the Boston Globe: "It's a day for men to revel in their maleness and unfortunately, for a lot of men that includes being violent toward women if they want to be."

Nearly every journalist accepted the 40 percent figure—except for Ken Ringle at the *Washington Post*. He checked the facts and was able to expose the myth, but not before millions of Americans were indoctrinated with the feminist myth of male aggression during Super Bowl Sunday.

Myth Concerning Percent of Women Raped

The Justice Department says that 8 percent of all American women will be victims of rape or attempted rape in their

lifetime. Feminist legal scholar Catherine MacKinnon, however, claims that rape happens to almost half of all women at least once in their lives.

Who is right? Obviously, the difference between these two statistics stems from a number of factors ranging from under-reporting to very different definitions of rape. The Justice Department figure is obviously low since it is based on the number of cases reported to the police, and rape is the most under-reported of crimes.

The feminist figures are artificially high because they use very broad definitions of rape and let the questioner rather than the victim decide whether there was a rape or not. The two most frequently cited studies are the 1985 *Ms.* magazine study and the 1992 National Women's Study. The *Ms.* magazine study of 3,000 college students gave a statistic of about 1 in 4 for women who have been raped or victim of an attempted rape. However, the study used very broad definitions of rape which sometimes included kissing, fondling, and other activities that few people would call rape. In fact, only 27 percent of those women counted as having been raped actually labeled themselves as rape victims. Also, 42 percent of those counted as rape victims went on to have sex with their "attackers" on a later occasion.

The National Women's Study released a figure of 1 in 8 women who have been raped. Again the surveyors used extremely broad, expanded definitions of rape that allowed the surveyor to decide if a woman had been raped or not.

The statistics for "date rape" and rape on campus have also been exaggerated. Camille Paglia warns that "date rape has swelled into a catastrophic cosmic event, like an asteroid threatening the earth in a fifties science-fiction film." Contrast this with the date-rape hype on most college campuses that includes rallies, marches, and date-rape counseling groups.

Peter Hellman, writing for New York magazine on the subject of rape on campus, was surprised to find that campus police logs at Columbia University showed no evidence of rape on campus. Only two rapes were reported to the Columbia campus police, and in both cases, the charges were dropped for lack of evidence. Hellman checked figures for other campuses and found fewer than .5 rapes per campus. He also found that public monies were being spent disproportionately on campus rape programs while community rape programs were scrambling for dollars.

The high rape numbers serve gender feminists by promoting the belief that American culture is sexist and misogynist. They also help liberal politicians by providing justification for additional funding for social services. Senator Joseph Biden introduced the Violence Against Women Act to "raise the consciousness of the American public." He argues that violence against women is much like racial violence and calls for civil as well as criminal remedies.

Myth Concerning Female Self-esteem

In 1991, newspapers around the country proclaimed that the self-esteem of teenage girls was falling. The *New York Times* announced, "Little girls lose their self-esteem on way to adolescence, study finds."

The study was commissioned by the American Association of University Women (AAUW) to measure self-esteem of girls and boys between the ages of nine and fifteen. Their poll seemed to show that between the ages of eleven and sixteen, girls experience a dramatic drop in self-esteem, which in turn significantly affects their ability to learn and to achieve. The report made headlines around the country and led to hundreds of conferences and community action projects.

Here is how the AAUW summarized the results of the survey in their brochure: In a crucial measure of self-esteem, 60

percent of elementary school girls and 69 percent of elementary school boys say they are “happy the way I am.” But, by high school, girls’ self-esteem falls 31 points to only 29 percent, while boys’ self-esteem falls only 23 points to 46 percent.

Girls are less likely than boys to say they are “pretty good at a lot of things.” Less than a third of girls express this confidence, compared to almost half the boys. A 10-point gender gap in confidence in their abilities increases to 19 points in high school.

It turns out that the report didn’t even define the term self-esteem, or even promote an informal discussion of what the authors meant by it. Other researchers suspect that the apparent gap in self-esteem may merely reflect a gap in expressiveness. Girls and women are more aware of their feelings and more articulate in expressing them, and so they are more candid about their negative emotions in self-reports than males are.

When asked if they are “good at a lot of things,” boys more often answered, “all the time,” whereas girls, being more reflective, gave more nuanced answers (“some of the time” or “usually”). Although the surveyors decided that the girls’ response showed poor self-esteem, it may merely reflect a “maturity gap” between boys and girls. Boys, lacking maturity, reflectiveness, and humility, are more likely to answer the question as “always true.”

Myth of Discrimination Against Females in School

An American Association of University Women (AAUW) report argued that schools and teachers were biased against girls in the classroom. *The Wellesley Report*, published in 1992, argued that there was a gender bias in education. The *Boston Globe* proclaimed that “from the very first days in school, American

girls face a drum-fire of gender bias, ranging from sexual harassment to discrimination in the curriculum to lack of attention from teachers, according to a survey released today in Washington." The release of this study was again followed by great media attention and the convening of conferences. It also provided the intellectual ammunition for the "Gender Equity in Education" bill introduced in 1993 by Patricia Schroeder, Susan Molinari, and others. It would have established a permanent and well-funded gender equity bureaucracy.

Are women really being damaged by our school system? Today 55 percent of college students are female, and women receive 52 percent of the bachelor's degrees. Yes, girls seem somewhat behind in math and science, but those math and science test differentials are small compared with the large differentials favoring girls in reading and writing.

The study also assumed that teachers' verbal interactions with students indicated how much they valued them. The surveyors therefore deduced that teachers valued boys more than girls. However, teachers often give more attention to boys because they are more immature and require the teacher to keep them in line. Most girls, being more mature, don't want the attention or verbal discipline and need less negative attention to get their work done.

Myth of Huge Gender Wage Gap

A major rallying cry during the debates on comparable worth was that women make 59 cents for every dollar men do. The figure is now 71 cents. But if you factor in age, length of time in the workplace, and type of job, the wage gap is much smaller for younger women. Those with children tend to make slightly less than those without children, but it's closer to 90 cents.

Feminists argue that the pay gap is a vivid illustration of

discrimination. Economists argue that it's due to shorter work weeks and less workplace experience. It is no doubt also due to the kind of jobs women choose. Women generally prefer clean, safe places with predictable hours and less stress. The more dangerous, dirty, and high-pressure jobs generally appeal to men. This is reflected in salary differences.

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Violence in Society

Kerby Anderson helps us take a biblical perspective on a very scary and touchy issue: violence in America. Applying a Christian worldview, he shines the spotlight on areas of today's culture that should concern us all.

It's a scary world today!

Growing up used to be less traumatic just a few decades ago. Children back then worried about such things as a flat tire on their Schwinn and hoped that their teacher wouldn't give too much homework.

How life has changed. A 1994 poll found more than half the children questioned said they were afraid of violent crime against them or a family member. Are these kids just paranoid, or is there a real problem?

Well, it turns out this is not some irrational fear based upon a false perception of danger. Life has indeed become more violent and more dangerous for children. Consider the following statistics: One in six youths between the ages of 10 and 17 has seen or knows someone who has been shot. The

estimated number of child abuse victims increased 40 percent between 1985 and 1991. Children under 18 were 244 percent more likely to be killed by guns in 1993 than they were in 1986. Violent crime has increased by more than 560 percent since 1960.

The innocence of childhood has been replaced by the very real threat of violence. Kids in school try to avoid fights in the hall, walk home in fear, and sometimes sleep in bathtubs in order to protect themselves from stray bullets fired during drive-by shootings.

Even families living in so-called "safe" neighborhoods are concerned. They may feel safe today, but there is always a reminder that violence can intrude at any moment. Polly Klaas and her family no doubt felt safe in Petaluma, California. But on October 1, 1993, she was abducted from her suburban home during a sleepover with two friends. If she can be abducted and murdered, so can nearly any other child.

A child's exposure to violence is pervasive. Children see violence in their schools, their neighborhoods, and their homes. The daily news is rife with reports of child molestations and abductions. War in foreign lands along with daily reports of murder, rape, and robberies also heighten a child's perception of potential violence.

Television in the home is the greatest source of visual violence for children. The average child watches 8,000 televised murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school. That number more than doubles by the time he or she reaches age 18.

And the latest scourge is MTV. Teenagers listen to more than 10,000 hours of rock music, and this impact is intensified as they spend countless hours in front of MTV watching violent and sensual images that go far beyond the images shown on commercial television.

It's a scary world, and children are exposed to more violence than any generation in recent memory. An article in *Newsweek* magazine concluded: "It gets dark early in the Midwest this time of year. Long before many parents are home from work, the shadows creep up the walls and gather in the corners, while on the carpet a little figure sprawls in the glow emanating from an anchorman's tan. There's been a murder in the Loop, a fire in a nightclub, an indictment of another priest. Red and white lights swirl in urgent pinwheels as the ambulances howl down the dark streets. And one more crime that never gets reported, because there's no one to arrest. Who killed childhood? We all did."

"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he."

Violence has always been a part of the human condition because of our sin nature (Rom. 3:23). But modern families are exposed to even more violence than previous generations because of the media. Any night of the week, the average viewer can see levels of violence approaching and even exceeding the Roman Gladiator games.

Does this have an effect? Certainly it does. The Bible teaches that "as a man thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). What we view and what we think about affects our actions.

Defenders of television programs say that isn't true. They contend that televised imagery doesn't make people violent nor does it make people callous to suffering. But if televised imagery doesn't affect human behavior, then the TV networks should refund billions of advertising dollars to TV sponsors.

In essence, TV executives are talking out of both sides of their mouths. On the one hand, they try to convince advertisers that a 30-second commercial can influence consumer behavior. On the other hand, they deny that a one-hour program wrapped around the commercials can influence social behavior.

So, how violent is the media? And what impact does media have on members of our family? First, we will look at violence in the movies, and then we'll take up the issue of violence on television.

Ezra Pound once said that artists are "the antennae of the race." If that is so, then we are a very sick society judging by the latest fare of violence in the movies. The body count is staggering: 32 people are killed in "RoboCop," while 81 are killed in the sequel; 264 are killed in "Die Hard 2," and the film "Silence of the Lambs" deals with a psychopath who murders women and skins them.

Who would have imagined just a few years ago that the top grossing films would be replete with blood, gore, and violence? No wonder some film critics now say that the most violent place on earth is the Hollywood set.

Violence has always been a part of movie-making, but until recently, really violent movies were only seen by the fringe of mass culture. Violence now has gone mainstream. Bloody films are being watched by more than just punk rockers. Family station wagons and vans pull up to movie theaters showing R-rated slasher films. And middle America watches these same programs a few months later on cable TV or on video. Many of the movies seen at home wouldn't have been shown in theaters 10-20 years ago.

Movie violence these days is louder, bloodier, and more anatomically precise than ever before. When a bad guy was shot in a black-and-white Western, the most we saw was a puff of smoke and a few drops of fake blood. Now the sights, sounds, and special effects often jar us more than the real thing. Slow motion, pyrotechnics, and a penchant for leaving nothing to the imagination all conspire to make movies and TV shows more gruesome than ever.

Children especially confront an increasingly violent world

with few limits. As concerned parents and citizens we must do what we can to reduce the level of violence in our society through the wise use of discernment and public policy. We need to set limits both in our homes and in the community.

Does Media Violence Really Influence Human Behavior?

Children's greatest exposure to violence comes from television. TV shows, movies edited for television, and video games expose young children to a level of violence unimaginable just a few years ago. The average child watches 8,000 televised murders and 100,000 acts of violence before finishing elementary school. That number more than doubles by the time he or she reaches age 18.

The violent content of TV includes more than just the 22 minute programs sent down by the networks. At a very young age, children are seeing a level of violence and mayhem that in the past may have only been witnessed by a few police officers and military personnel. TV brings hitting, kicking, stabbings, shootings, and dismemberment right into homes on a daily basis.

The impact on behavior is predictable. Two prominent Surgeon General reports in the last two decades link violence on television and aggressive behavior in children and teenagers. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health issued a 94-page report entitled, "Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties." They found "overwhelming" scientific evidence that "excessive" violence on television spills over into the playground and the streets. In one five-year study of 732 children, "several kinds of aggression— conflicts with parents, fighting and delinquency—were all positively correlated with the total amount of television viewing."

Long-term studies are even more disturbing. University of

Illinois psychologist Leonard Eron studied children at age eight and then again at eighteen. He found that television habits established at the age of eight influenced aggressive behavior through childhood and adolescent years. The more violent the programs preferred by boys in the third grade, the more aggressive their behavior, both at that time and ten years later. He therefore concluded that "the effect of television violence on aggression is cumulative."

Twenty years later Eron and Rowell Huesmann found the pattern continued. He and his researchers found that children who watched significant amounts of TV violence at the age of 8 were consistently more likely to commit violent crimes or engage in child or spouse abuse at 30.

They concluded "that heavy exposure to televised violence is one of the causes of aggressive behavior, crime and violence in society. Television violence affects youngsters of all ages, of both genders, at all socioeconomic levels and all levels of intelligence."

Since their report in the 1980s, MTV has come on the scene with even more troubling images. Adolescents already listen to an estimated 10,500 hours of rock music between the 7th and 12th grades. Now they also spend countless hours in front of MTV seeing the visual images of rock songs that depict violence, rebellion, sadomasochism, the occult, drug abuse, and promiscuity. MTV reaches 57 million cable households, and its video images are even more lurid than the ones shown on regular TV. Music videos filled with sex, rape, murder, and other images of mayhem assault the senses. And MTV cartoons like Beavis and "the other guy" assault the sensibilities while enticing young people to start fires and commit other acts of violence. Critics count 18 acts of violence in each hour of MTV videos.

Violent images on television and in the movies do contribute to greater violence in society. Sociological studies along

with common sense dictate that we do something to reduce the violence in the media before it further damages society.

Television Promotes Not Only Violence But Fear As Well.

Children see thousands of TV murders every year. And the impact on behavior is predictable. Various reports by the Surgeon General in the last two decades link violence on television and aggressive behavior in children and teenagers. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health issued a 94-page report entitled, "Television and Behavior: Ten Years of Scientific Progress and Implications for the Eighties." They found "overwhelming" scientific evidence that "excessive" violence on television spills over into the playground and the streets. In one five-year study of 732 children, "several kinds of aggression (such as conflicts with parents, fighting and delinquency) were all positively correlated with the total amount of television viewing."

Confronted with such statistics, many parents respond that their children aren't allowed to watch violent programs. Such action is commendable, but some of the greatest dangers of television are more subtle and insidious. It now appears that simply watching television for long periods can manipulate your view of the world— whether the content is particularly violent or not.

George Gerbner and Larry Gross working at the Annenberg School of Communications in the 1970s found that heavy TV viewers live in a scary world. "We have found that people who watch a lot of TV see the real world as more dangerous and frightening than those who watch very little. Heavy viewers are less trustful of their fellow citizens, and more fearful of the real world."

So heavy viewers were less trustful and more fearful than the average citizen. But what constitutes a heavy viewer. Gerber

and Gross defined heavy viewers as those adults who watch an average of four or more hours of television a day. Approximately one-third of all American adults fit that category.

They found that violence on prime-time TV exaggerated heavy viewers' fears about the threat of danger in the real world. Heavy viewers, for example, were less likely to trust someone than light viewers. Heavy viewers also tended to overestimate their likelihood of being involved in a violent crime.

And if this is true of adults, imagine how much TV violence affects children's perception of the world. Gerbner and Gross say, "Imagine spending six hours a day at the local movie house when you were 12 years old. No parent would have permitted it. Yet, in our sample of children, nearly half the 12-year-olds watch an average of six or more hours of television per day." This would mean that a large portion of young people fit into the category of heavy viewers. Their view of the world must be profoundly shaped by TV. Gerbner and Gross therefore conclude: "If adults can be so accepting of the reality of television, imagine its effect on children. By the time the average American child reaches public school, he has already spent several years in an electronic nursery school."

Television violence affects both adults and children in subtle ways. While we may not personally feel or observe the effects of TV violence, we should not ignore the growing body of data that suggests that televised imagery does affect our perception and behavior.

Obviously something must be done. Parents, programmers, and general citizens must take responsible actions to prevent the increasing violence in our society. Violent homes, violence on television, violence in the movies, violence in the schools all contribute to the increasingly violent society we live in. We have a responsibility to make a difference and apply the

appropriate principles in order to help stem the tide of violence in our society.

Some Suggestions for Dealing with Violence in the Media

Christians must address this issue of violence in our society. Here are a number of specific suggestions for dealing with violence.

1. Learn about the impact of violence in our society. Share this material with your pastor, elders, deacons, and church members. Help them understand how important this issue is to them and their community.

2. Create a safe environment. Families live in the midst of violence. We must make our homes safe for our families. A child should feel that his or her world is safe. Providing care and protection are obvious first steps. But parents must also establish limits, provide emotional security, and teach values and virtue in the home.

3. Parents should limit the amount of media exposure in their homes. The average young person sees entirely too much violence on TV and at the movies. Set limits to what a child watches, and evaluate both the quantity and quality of their media input (Rom. 12:2). Focus on what is pure, beautiful, true, right, honorable, excellent, and praiseworthy (Phil. 4:8).

4. Watch TV with children. Obviously we should limit the amount of TV our children watch. But when they watch television, we should try to watch it with them. We can encourage discussion with children during the programs. The plots and actions of the programs provides a natural context for discussion and teach important principles about relationships and violence. The discussion could focus on how cartoon characters or TV actors could solve their problems

without resorting to violence. TV often ignores the consequences of violence. What are the consequences in real life?

5. Develop children's faith and trust in God. Children at an early age instinctively trust their parents. As the children grow, parents should work to develop their child's trust in God. God is sovereign and omnipotent. Children should learn to trust Him in their lives and depend upon Him to watch over them and keep them safe.

6. Discuss the reasons for pain and suffering in the world. We live in the fallen world (Gen. 3), and even those who follow God will encounter pain, suffering, and violence. Bad things do happen to good people.

7. Teach vigilance without hysteria. By talking about the dangers in society, some parents have instilled fear—even terror—in their children. We need to balance our discussions with them and not make them hysterical. Kids have been known to become hysterical if a car comes down their street or if someone looks at them.

8. Work to establish broadcaster guidelines. No TV or movie producer wants to unilaterally disarm all the actors on their screens out of fear that viewers will watch other programs and movies. Yet many of these same TV and movie producers would like to tone down the violence, but they don't want to be the first to do so. National standards would be able to achieve what individuals would not do by themselves in a competitive market.

Violence is the scourge of our society, but we can make a difference. We must educate ourselves about its influence and impact on our lives. Please feel free to write or call Probe Ministries for more information on this topic. And then take time to apply the principles developed here to make a difference in your home and community. You can help stem the

tide of violence in our society.

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