Christianity: The Best Thing That Ever Happened to Women

Sue Bohlin examines the facts to show us that a Christian, biblical worldview of women lifted them from a status equivalent to dogs to a position a fellow heirs of the grace of God through Jesus Christ. Christianity, accurately applied, fundamentally changed the value and status of women.

The Low Status of Women in Jesus' Day

Some feminists charge that Christianity, the Bible, and the Church are anti-female and horribly oppressive to women. Does God really hate women? Did the apostle Paul disrespect them in his New Testament writings? In this article we'll be looking at why Christianity is the best thing that ever happened to women, with insights from Alvin Schmidt's book *How Christianity Changed the World*.{1}



"What would be the status of women in the Western world today had Jesus Christ never entered the human arena? One way to answer this question," writes Dr. Schmidt, "is to look at the status of women in most present-day Islamic countries. Here women are still denied many rights that are available to men, and when they appear in public, they must be veiled. In Saudi Arabia, for instance, women are even barred from driving an automobile. Whether in Saudi Arabia or in many other Arab countries where the Islamic religion is adhered to strongly, a man has the right to beat and sexually desert his wife, all with the full support of the Koran. . . .{2} This command is the polar opposite of what the New Testament says regarding a man's relationship with his wife. Paul told the Christians in Ephesus, 'Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.' And he added, 'He who loves his wife loves himself.'"{3}

Jesus loved women and treated them with great respect and dignity. The New Testament's teaching on women developed His perspective even more. The value of women that permeates the New Testament isn't found in the Greco-Roman culture or the cultures of other societies.

In ancient Greece, a respectable woman was not allowed to leave the house unless she was accompanied by a trustworthy male escort. A wife was not permitted to eat or interact with male guests in her husband's home; she had to retire to her woman's quarters. Men kept their wives under lock and key, and women had the social status of a slave. Girls were not allowed to go to school, and when they grew up they were not allowed to speak in public. Women were considered inferior to men. The Greek poets equated women with evil. Remember Pandora and her box? Woman was responsible for unleashing evil on the world.{4}

The status of Roman women was also very low. Roman law placed a wife under the absolute control of her husband, who had ownership of her and all her possessions. He could divorce her if she went out in public without a veil. A husband had the power of life and death over his wife, just as he did his children. As with the Greeks, women were not allowed to speak in public.{5}

Jewish women, as well, were barred from public speaking. The oral law prohibited women from reading the Torah out loud. Synagogue worship was segregated, with women never allowed to be heard.

Jesus and Women

Jesus' treatment of women was very different:

> *The extremely low status that the Greek, Roman, and Jewish woman had for centuries was radically affected by the appearance of Jesus Christ. His actions and teachings raised*

> *the status of women to new heights, often to the consternation and dismay of his friends and enemies. By word and deed, he went against the ancient, taken-for-granted beliefs and practices that defined woman as socially, intellectually, and spiritually inferior.*
>
> *The humane and respectful way Jesus treated and responded to the Samaritan woman [at the well] (recorded in John 4) may not appear unusual to readers in today's Western culture. Yet what he did was extremely unusual, even radical. He ignored the Jewish anti-Samaritan prejudices along with prevailing view that saw women as inferior beings.{6}*

He started a conversation with her—a Samaritan, a woman—in public. The rabbinic oral law was quite explicit: "He who talks with a woman [in public] brings evil upon himself." Another rabbinic teaching prominent in Jesus' day taught, "One is not so much as to greet a woman."{7} So we can understand why his disciples were amazed to find him talking to a woman in public. Can we even imagine how it must have stunned this woman for the Messiah to reach out to her and offer her living water for her thirsty soul?

Among Jesus' closest friends were Mary, Martha and Lazarus, who entertained him at their home. "Martha assumed the traditional female role of preparing a meal for Jesus, her guest, while her sister Mary did what only men would do, namely, learn from Jesus' teachings. Mary was the cultural deviant, but so was Jesus, because he violated the rabbinic law of his day [about speaking to women]."{8} By teaching Mary spiritual truths, he violated another rabbinic law, which said, "Let the words of the Law [Torah] be burned rather than taught to women. . . . If a man teaches his daughter the law, it is as though he taught her lechery."{9}

When Lazarus died, Jesus comforted Martha with this promise containing the heart of the Christian gospel: "I am the

resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:25-26) These remarkable words were spoken to a woman! "To teach a woman was bad enough, but Jesus did more than that. He called for a verbal response from Martha. Once more, he went against the socioreligious custom by teaching a woman and by having her publicly respond to him, a man."{10}

"All three of the Synoptic Gospels note that women followed Jesus, a highly unusual phenomenon in first-century Palestine. . . . This behavior may not seem unusual today, but in Jesus' day it was highly unusual. Scholars note that in the prevailing culture only prostitutes and women of very low repute would follow a man without a male escort."{11} These women were not groupies; some of them provided financial support for Jesus and the apostles (Luke 8:3).

The first people Jesus chose to appear to after his resurrection were women; not only that, but he instructed them to tell his disciples that he was alive (Matt. 28, John 20). In a culture where a woman's testimony was worthless because she was worthless, Jesus elevated the value of women beyond anything the world had seen.

Paul, Peter, and Women

Jesus gave women status and respect equal to men. Not only did he break with the anti-female culture of his era, but he set a standard for Christ-followers. Peter and Paul both rose to the challenge in what they wrote in the New Testament.

In a culture that feared the power of a woman's external beauty and feminine influence, Peter encouraged women to see themselves as valuable because God saw them as valuable. His call to aspire to the inner beauty of a trusting and tranquil spirit is staggeringly counter-cultural. He writes, "Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided

hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful."

Equally staggering is his call to men to elevate their wives with respect and understanding: "Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers." Consideration, respect, fellow heirs; these concepts sound good to us, but they were unheard of in the first century!

The apostle Paul is often accused of being a misogynist, one who hates and fears women. But Paul's teachings on women reflect the creation order and high value God places on women as creatures made in his image. Paul's commands for husbands and wives in Ephesians 5 provided a completely new way to look at marriage: as an earthbound illustration of the spiritual mystery of the union of Christ and His bride, the church. He calls wives to not only submit to their husbands as to the Lord, but he calls husbands to submit to Christ (1 Cor. 11:3). He calls men to love their wives in the self-sacrificing way Christ loves the church. In a culture where a wife was property, and a disrespected piece of property at that, Paul elevates women to a position of honor previously unknown in the world.

Paul also provided highly countercultural direction for the New Testament church. In the Jewish synagogue, women had no place and no voice in worship. In the pagan temples, the place of women was to serve as prostitutes. The church, on the other hand, was a place for women to pray and prophecy out loud (1 Cor. 11:5). The spiritual gifts—supernatural enablings to build God's church—are given to women as well as men. Older women are commanded to teach younger ones. The invitation to

women to participate in worship of Jesus was unthinkable—but true.

Misogyny in the Church

Author Dorothy Sayers, a friend of C.S. Lewis, wrote:

> *Perhaps it is no wonder that the women were first at the Cradle and last at the Cross. They had never known a man like this Man—there had never been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, who never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made arch jokes about them, never treated them either as 'The women, God help us!' or 'The ladies, God bless them!'; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously, who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no ax to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unselfconscious.*

She continues: "There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words of Jesus that there was anything 'funny' about woman's nature."{12} And this is one of the unfortunate truths about Christianity we have to acknowledge: over the centuries, many Christ-followers have fallen far short of the standard Jesus set in showing the worth and dignity of women.

In the second century Clement of Alexandria believed and taught that every woman should blush because she is a woman. Tertullian, who lived about the same time, said, "You [Eve] are the devil's gateway. . . . You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die." Augustine, in the fourth century, believed that a woman's image of God was inferior to that of

the man's.{13} And unfortunately it gets even nastier than that.

Some people mistakenly believe these contemptuous beliefs of the church fathers are rooted in an anti-female Bible, but that couldn't be farther from the truth. People held these misogynistic beliefs *in spite of,* not because of, the biblical teachings. Those who dishonor God by dishonoring His good creation of woman allow themselves to be shaped by the beliefs of the surrounding pagan, anti-female culture instead of following Paul's exhortation to not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:2). The church in North America does the same thing today by allowing the secular culture to shape our thinking more than the Bible. Only nine percent of Americans claiming to be born-again have a biblical worldview.{14} The church in Africa and Asia does the same thing today by allowing animism, the traditional folk religion, to shape their thinking more than the Bible.

It's unfortunate that some of the church fathers did not allow the woman-honoring principles found in Scripture to change their unbiblical beliefs. But that is the failing of imperfect followers of Jesus, not a failure of God nor of His Word. Jesus loves women.

Effects of Christianity on Culture

As Christianity spread throughout the world, its redemptive effects elevated women and set them free in many ways. The Christian ethic declared equal worth and value for both men and women. Husbands were commanded to love their wives and not exasperate their children. These principles were in direct conflict with the Roman institution of *patria potestas,* which gave absolute power of life and death over a man's family, including his wife. When *patria potestas* was finally repealed by an emperor who was moved by high biblical standards, what a tremendous effect that had on the culture! Women were also

granted basically the same control over their property as men, and, for the first time, mothers were allowed to be guardians of their children.{15}

The biblical view of husbands and wives as equal partners caused a sea change in marriage as well. Christian women started marrying later, and they married men of their own choosing. This eroded the ancient practice of men marrying child brides against their will, often as young as eleven or twelve years old. The greater marital freedom that Christianity gave women eventually gained wide appeal. Today, a Western woman is not compelled to marry someone she does not want, nor can she legally be married as a child bride. But the practice continues in parts of the world where Christianity has little or no presence.{16}

Another effect of the salt and light of Christianity was its impact on the common practice of polygamy, which demeans women. Many men, including biblical heroes, have had multiple wives, but Jesus made clear this was never God's intention. Whenever he spoke about marriage, it was always in the context of monogamy. He said, "The two [not three or four] will become one flesh." As Christianity spread, God's intention of monogamous marriages became the norm.{17}

Two more cruel practices were abolished as Christianity gained influence. In some cultures, such as India, widows were burned alive on their husbands' funeral pyres. In China, the crippling practice of foot binding was intended to make women totter on their pointed, slender feet in a seductive manner. It was finally outlawed only about a hundred years ago.{18}

As a result of Jesus Christ and His teachings, women in much of the world today, especially in the West, enjoy more privileges and rights than at any other time in history. It takes only a cursory trip to an Arab nation or to a Third World country to see how little freedom women have in countries where Christianity has had little or no

presence.{19} It's the best thing that ever happened to women.

Notes

1. Schmidt, Alvin. *How Christianity Changed the World*. Originally published under the title *Under the Influence: How Christianity Transformed Civilization* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), which is the copy I reference in these notes.

2. "Men stand superior to women…. But those whose perverseness ye fear, admonish them and remove them into bedchambers and beat them; but if they submit to you then do not seek a way against them" Sura 4:34, as quoted in Schmidt, p. 97.

3. Schmidt, p. 97-98.

4. Ibid., p. 98-99.

5. Ibid., p. 101.

6. Ibid., p. 102-03.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid., p. 103-104.

10. Ibid., p. 104.

11. Ibid., p. 104-105.

12. Dorothy L. Sayers, *Are Women Human?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 47.

13. Schmidt, p. 109.

14. "A Biblical Worldview Has a Radical Effect on a Person's Life," The Barna Research Group, Ltd. http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=154.

15. Ibid., p. 111.

16. Ibid., pp. 111-112.

17. Ibid., p. 115.

18. Ibid., pp. 118-119.

19. Ibid., p. 115.

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Is the World Flat? How Should Christians Respond in Today's Global World

Drawing from Thomas Friedman's book, The World is Flat, Kerby Anderson looks at some of the major new factors in our world which cause not only countries and companies, but also individuals to think and act globally. Most of the factors discussed are givens against which Kerby helps us to consider their impact on Christianity and the spread of the gospel on a global basis.

Introduction

Is the world flat? The question is not as crazy as it might sound in light of the book by Thomas Friedman entitled *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century.* His contention is that the global playing field has been leveled or flattened by new technologies.

In fourteen hundred and ninety-two when Columbus sailed the ocean blue, he used rudimentary navigational equipment to

prove that the earth was *round*. More than 500 years later, Friedman discovered in a conversation with one of the smartest engineers in India that essentially the world was *flat*. Friedman argues that we have entered into a third era of globalization, which he calls Globalization 3.0 that has flattened the world.

The first era of globalization (he calls Globalization 1.0) lasted from when Columbus set sail until around 1800. "It shrank the world from a size large to a size medium. Globalization 1.0 was about countries and muscles."{1} The key change agent in this era was how much muscle your country had (horsepower, wind power, etc.). Driven by such factors as imperialism and even religion, countries broke down walls and began the process of global integration.

The second era (he calls Globalization 2.0) lasted from 1800 to 2000 with interruptions during the Great Depression and World Wars I and II. "This era shrank the world from size medium to a size small. In Globalization 2.0, the key agent of change, the dynamic force driving global integration, was multinational companies."{2} At first these were Dutch and English joint-stock companies, and later was the growth of a global economy due to computers, satellites, and even the Internet.

The dynamic force in Globalization 1.0 was *countries* globalizing, while the dynamic force in Globalization 2.0 was *companies* globalizing. Friedman contends that Globalization 3.0 will be different because it provides "the newfound power for *individuals* to collaborate and compete globally."{3}

The players in this new world of commerce will also be different. "Globalization 1.0 and 2.0 were driven primarily by European and American individuals and businesses. . . . Because it is flattening and shrinking the world, Globalization 3.0 is going to be more and more driven not only by individuals but also by a much more diverse—non-Western,

non-white—group of individuals. Individuals from every corner of the flat world are being empowered."{4}

The Flatteners

Friedman argues in his book that the global playing field has been flattened by new technologies.

The first flattener occurred on November 9, 1989. "The fall of the Berlin Wall on 11/9/89 unleashed forces that ultimately liberated all the captive peoples of the Soviet Empire. But it actually did so much more. It tipped the balance of power across the world toward those advocating democratic, consensual, free-market-oriented governance, and away from those advocating authoritarian rule with centrally planned economies."{5}

The economic change was even more important. The fall of the Berlin Wall encouraged the free movement of ideas, goods, and services. "When an economic or technological standard emerged and proved itself on the world stage, it was much more quickly adopted after the wall was out of the way."{6}

Thomas Friedman also makes a connection between the two dates 11/9 and 9/11. He noted that in "a world away, in Muslim lands, many thought [Osama] bin Laden and his comrades brought down the Soviet Empire and the wall with religious zeal, and millions of them were inspired to upload the past. In short, while we were celebrating 11/9, the seeds of another memorable date—9/11—were being sown."{7}

A second flattener was Netscape. This new software played a huge role in flattening the world by making the Internet truly interoperable. Until then, there were disconnected islands of information.

We used to go to the post office to send mail; now most of us send digitized mail over the Internet known as *e-mail*. We used

to go to bookstores to browse and buy books, now we browse digitally. We used to buy a CD to listen to music, now many of us obtain our digitized music off the Internet and download it to a MP3 player.

A third flattener was work flow software. As the Internet developed, people wanted to do more than browse books and send e-mail. “They wanted to shape things, design things, create things, sell things, buy things, keep track of inventories, do somebody else’s taxes, and read somebody else’s X-rays from half a world away. And they wanted to be able to do any of these things from anywhere to anywhere and from any computer to any computer—seamlessly.”{8}

All the computers needed to be interoperable not only between departments within a company but between the systems of any other company. Work flow software made this possible.

Where will this lead? Consider this likely scenario. When you want to make a dentist appointment, your computer translates your voice into a digital instruction. Then it will check your calendar against the available dates on the dentist’s calendar. It will offer you three choices, and you will click on the preferred date and hour. Then a week before your appointment, the dentist’s calendar will send you an e-mail reminding you of the appointment. The night before your appointment, a computer-generated voice message will remind you.

The fourth flattener is open-sourcing. Open-source comes from the idea that groups would make available online the source code for software and then let anyone who has something to contribute improve it and let millions of others download it for free.

One example of open-source software is Apache which currently powers about two-thirds of the websites in the world. Another example of open-sourcing is blogging. Bloggers are often one-

person online commentators linked to others by their common commitments. They have created essentially an open-source newsroom.

News bloggers were responsible for exposing the bogus documents use by CBS and Dan Rather in a report about President Bush's Air National Guard service. Howard Kurtz of *The Washington Post* wrote (Sept 20, 2004): "It was like throwing a match on kerosene-soaked wood. The ensuing blaze ripped through the media establishment as previously obscure bloggers managed to put the network of Murrow and Cronkite on the defensive."

Another example of open-sourcing is the Wikipedia project which has become perhaps the most popular online encyclopedia in the world. Linux is another example. It offers a family of operating systems that can be adapted to small desktop computers or laptops all the way up to large supercomputers.

A fifth flattener is outsourcing. In many ways, this was made possible when American companies laid fiber-optic cable to India. Ultimately, India became the beneficiary.

India has become very good at producing brain power, especially in the sciences, engineering, and medicine. There are a limited number of Indian Institutes within a population of one billion people. The resulting competition produces a phenomenal knowledge meritocracy. Until India was connected, many of the graduates would come to America. "It was as if someone installed a brain drain that filled up in New Delhi and emptied in Palo Alto."{9}

Fiber-optic cable became the ocean crosser. You no longer need to leave India to be a professional because you can plug into the world from India.

A sixth flattener was offshoring. Offshoring is when a company takes one of its factories that is operating in Canton, Ohio and moves the whole factory to Canton, China.

When China joined the World Trade Organization, it took Beijing and the rest of the world to a new level of offshoring. Companies began to shift production offshore and integrate their products and services into their global supply chains.

The more attractive China makes itself offshoring, the more attractive other developed and developing countries have to make themselves. This created a process of competitive flattening and a scramble to give companies the best tax breaks and subsidies.

How does this affect the United States? "According to the U.S. Department of Commerce, nearly 90 percent of the output from U.S.-owned offshore factories is sold to foreign consumers. But this actually stimulates American exports. There is a variety of studies indicating that every dollar a company invests overseas in an offshore factory yields additional exports for its home country, because roughly one-third of global trade today is within multi-national companies."{10}

The seventh flattener is supply chaining. "No company has been more efficient at improving its supply chain (and thereby flattening the world) than Wal-Mart; and no company epitomizes the tension the supply chains evoke between the consumer in us and the worker in us than Wal-Mart."{11}

Thomas Friedman calls Wal-Mart "the China of companies" because it can use its leverage to grind down any supplier to the last halfpenny. And speaking of China, if Wal-Mart were an individual economy, it would rank as China's eighth-biggest trading partner, ahead of Russia, Australia and Canada.

An eighth flattener is what Friedman calls *insourcing*. A good example of this is UPS. UPS is not just delivering packages, the company is doing logistics. Their slogan is Your World Synchronized. The company is synchronizing global supply chains.

For example, if you own a Toshiba laptop computer under warranty that you need fixed, you call Toshiba. What you probably don't know is that UPS will pick up your laptop and repair it at their own UPS-run workshop dedicated to computer and printer repair. They fix it and return it in much less time than it would take to send it all the way to Toshiba.

A ninth flattener is in-forming. A good example of that is Google. Google has been the ultimate equalizer. Whether you are a university professor with a high speed Internet connection or a poor kid in Asia with access to an Internet café, you have the same basic access to research information.

Google puts an enormous amount of information at our fingertips. Essentially, all of the information on the Internet is available to anyone, anywhere, at anytime.

Friedman says that, "In-forming is the ability to build and deploy your own personal supply chain—a supply chain of information, knowledge, and entertainment. In-forming is about self-collaboration—becoming your own self-directed and self-empowered researcher, editor, and selector of entertainment, without having to go to the library or movie theater or through network television."{12}

A tenth flattener is what he calls "the steroids." These are all the things that speed the process (computer speed, wireless).

For example, the increased speed of computers is dazzling. The Intel 4004 microprocessor (in 1971) produced 60,000 instructions per second. Today's Intel Pentium 4 Extreme has a maximum of 10.8 billion instructions per second.

The wireless revolution allows anyone portable access to everything that has been digitized anywhere in the world. When I was at graduate school at Yale University, all of us were tied to a single mainframe computer. In order to use the computer, I had to hand computer cards to someone in the

computer lab in order to input data or extract information. Now thanks to digitization, miniaturization, and wireless I can do all of that and much more from my home, office, coffee shop, airport—you name it.

Biblical Perspective

Although futurists have long talked about globalization and a global village, many of these forces have made that a reality. At this point it might be valuable to distinguish between *globalization* and *globalism*. Although these terms are sometimes used interchangeably, I want to draw some important distinctions. Globalization is used to describe the changes taking place in society and the world due to economic and technological forces. Essentially, we have a global economy and live in the global village.

Globalism is the attempt to draw us together into a new world order with a one world government and one world economy. Sometimes this even involves a desire to develop a one world religion. In a previous article ("Globalism and Foreign Policy"), I addressed many of the legitimate concerns about this push towards global government. We should be concerned about political attempts to form a new world order.

On the other hand, we should also recognize that globalization is already taking place. *The World is Flat* focuses on many of the positive aspects of this phenomenon, even though there are many critics would believe it may be harmful.

Some believe that it will benefit the rich at the expense of the poor. Some believe it will diminish the role of nations in deference to world government. These are important issues that we will attempt to address in future articles.

For now, let's look at some important implications of a flat world. First, we should prepare our children and grandchild for global competition. Thomas Friedman says that when he was

growing up his parents would tell him “Finish your dinner. People in China and India are starving.” Today he tells his daughters, “Girls, finish your homework—people in China and India are starving for your jobs.”{13}

Another implication is the growing influence of the two countries with the largest populations: China and India. Major companies are looking to these countries for research and development. The twentieth century was called “the American Century.” It is likely that the twenty-first century will be “the Asian Century.”

These two countries represent one-third of the world’s population. They will no doubt transform the entire global economy and political landscape.

Students of biblical prophecy wonder if these two countries represent the “Kings of the East” (Rev. 16:12). In the past, most of the focus was only on China. Perhaps the Kings (plural) represent both China and India.

A final implication is that this flattened world has opened up ministry through the Internet and subsequent travel to these countries. Probe Ministries, for example, now has a global ministry. In the past, it was the occasional letter we received from a foreign country. We now interact daily with people from countries around the world.

Last month the Probe website had nearly a quarter of a million visitors from over 140 countries. These online contacts open up additional opportunities for speaking and ministry overseas.

The flattening of the world may have its downsides, but it has also opened up ministry in ways that were unimaginable just a few years ago. Welcome to the flat world.

Notes

1. Thomas Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 9.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., 10.
4. Ibid., 11.
5. Ibid., 49.
6. Ibid., 52.
7. Ibid., 55.
8. Ibid., 73.
9. Ibid., 105.
10. Ibid., 123.
11. Ibid., 129.
12. Ibid., 153.
13. Ibid, 237.

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Dungeons and Dragons and FRPGs

Dungeons and Dragons is a fantasy role playing game (or FRPG). Role playing in and of itself can be a useful exercise of the imagination, such as helping kids practice saying no to drugs or alcohol when offered them at a party, or learning to set boundaries by practicing with a part of one's support group. Fantasy can also be a legitimate exercise of the imagination, and learning to distinguish fantasy from reality is an essential part of maturing intellectually. The problem comes when the values and content in the fantasy affect a person adversely.

In this way, D&D or any other FRPG can be compared to rock

music: the genre itself is not inherently evil or dangerous, but the content (lyrics, in the case of rock music) is what makes the difference. (For more on that concept, see Jerry Solomon's article "Rock Music" on our website.)

The content of D&D and its effect on players are worth examining.

Worldview

In contrast to a Christian worldview, D&D was created with a magic worldview (and this has not changed over the years). Rather like "the force" of Star Wars, magic is a neutral force, something like gravity, that pervades reality. Characters learn to use magic to manipulate the universe to get what they want. It's a very mechanistic universe, like a vending machine where you insert your coin and out comes a productonly in this universe, people use spells and magical instruments to manipulate the magic toward their desired end. Magic can be used for good or evil.

Two insightful writers, Brian Onken and Elliot Miller, offer a responsible analysis of D&D and FRPGs in general in a paper from Christian Research Institute, "Fantasy Games People Play."{1} They point out that many proponents of D&D try to draw a parallel between their game of choice and the Christian fantasy of J.R.R. Tolkien in *Lord of the Rings*. There are some common elements, but it's the great differences that are a real problem, differences which proponents of FRPGs "either ignore or rationalize away. Christian fantasy works by Tolkien, Lewis, and others are accepted and considered to be a good use of fantasy because they offer a reflection of an essentially Christian world view."{2}

"Though the creators of Dungeons and Dragons may have borrowed many aspects from Tolkien's 'middle earth,' one part they did not consider was the overall setting in which everything took place and from which everything derived its ultimate meaning

Tolkien's Christian world view. As a result, the game's world view does not represent the moral universe God created. In place of the creator God, its universe is governed by a multiplicity of gods and demigods. Moreover, its universe is not infused with an absolute, inherent morality. The more thoroughly one investigates the writings of Tolkien, Lewis, and others and compares them to FRP games, the more one will see that there are not only crucial differences in the theological and moral perspectives but also in the context and motives of their respective inventors. Furthermore, there are important differences in the kind and extent of participation required in each (e.g., the cultivation of fantasy in the participatory amoral milieu of Dungeons and Dragons versus the passive moral universe of Tolkien)."{3}

The worldview of D&D is anti-biblical because it presents a universe without a transcendent, good God. The deities of D&D are mythical, like the ancient pantheon of the Roman gods and goddesses.

Morality

Because most FRPGs pit good against evil, some of their proponents point to the games as moral. But their overall morality is pragmatic (what works to get what you want) at best and amoral at worst.{4} "[T]he universes created in fantasy role-playing games generally tend to be confused on the issue of morality. Though they have borrowed many aspects of Tolkien's 'Middle Earth,' the makers of Dungeons and Dragons and other FRP games have not created theistic 'universes.' Rather, their universes are generally governed by a multiplicity of gods and demigods. While in a theistic universe, good is determined by the attributes of God Himself, in FRP worlds good and evil are presented as equal and opposite impersonal poles, and the gods as well as the creatures may align themselves with either. Since there is no supreme God, and since good does not ultimately triumph over

evil, many players eventually find themselves preferring to play evil roles; fewer demands are placed on them that way. “Cornerstone [magazine] quotes Rett Kipp, a college student who plays FRP games forty hours a week: “‘In D&D it’s better to be evil. You get more advantages being evil, and it’s easier to go on and not have to think of what to do and what not to do. If for some reason you had the idea in your head that you no longer trust someone, if you chop him down from behind as an evil character there’s no penalty for it…'”{5}

Time-eating Monster

You can find any number of family members who have watched FRPGs gobble up their loved ones as they spend hours every day, or each week, engrossed in “their game,” either online or in real life. Students have flunked out of school because they didn’t go to class or do their homework. People have lost their jobs because they were more committed to playing their game than keeping their commitments at work. And nobody knows how many relationships have collapsed because people were consumed by their games to the exclusion of all else. The popular online game “EverQuest” has been aptly nicknamed “EverCrack” by many players.{6}

Brian Onken writes, “In a world where more and more demands are made on our time and there seems less and less time available to accomplish the tasks at hand, Dungeons & Dragons (and other fantasy role-playing games) is indeed a creature with a voracious appetite. One of the main requirements of the game is time, and lots of it. Gary Gygax, the originator of Dungeons & Dragons, says: ‘the most extensive requirement is time.’{7}

“As advocates of the game get more involved it has a tendency to become a sort of time eating monster in and of itself. After playing the game with her family, a New West magazine researcher noted that, ‘Good or evil, it becomes a compulsive force in the lives of those who play.’{8} “What is the problem

here? Well, we are exhorted to 'walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil' (Eph. 5:15, 16). In the light of such words, a fantasy game with a ferocious appetite for time is hardly the wise way to walk. To play one will require a tremendous amount of time, and since no one wants to play badly, perhaps such time consumption would best be exchanged for more profitable pursuits."{9}

Bill Schnoebelen, who spent years in the occult before coming to Christ, says, "Remember, as a Christian, we are exhorted to bring 'into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ' (2 Cor. 10:5). How can this be done with so many hours being spent in a game which never mentions Christ and pushes the very sorcery He forbids?"{10}

Blurred Reality

While many people have no trouble distinguishing between reality and fantasy, some FRPG players are sucked into what could be called "reality distortion." Players sometimes begin to think of their characters as real people with separate existences. (This is not limited to FRPG, however. I know of one person so caught up in the Left Behind series that she fell asleep thinking about the characters and action in the book she was reading, and upon waking, found herself praying for a character in crisis! And many fans of TV shows don't really "get it" that the actor who plays a character has a real-life, different existence from the one he or she plays on TV. Not to mention the many letters the author of the Harry Potter books has received from children begging for acceptance into the Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry!)

One Dungeon Master (the person with the most control and power in a D&D game) noted that sometimes, when a player's character gets killed, the game player sometimes suffers psychic shock and may go into depression.{11}

Magic and the Occult

Whether the discussion is Harry Potter or D&D, the objection inevitably arises that this is make believe, it's fiction, and fairy-tale magic doesn't exist in the real world, so what's the big deal?

Elliot Miller of CRI points out, "We must agree that there is a fundamental difference between actually attempting to work magic, and only pretending to do so (this point has not been sufficiently recognized in some of the Christian reviews). However real this distinction may be in the minds of the players, though, I feel no assurance that the spirit world will not respond when it is beckoned."{12}

Others experienced in spiritual warfare have observed that the very real demonic realm are quite legalistic and literal: when anyone opens a door to them, they will come through it! Most people are completely oblivious to the reality of their choices opening a door to the demonic, but the consequences catch up with them. This is one reason God has said that all forms of magic are an abomination to Him (Deut. 18)out of His loving desire to protect us.

Miller continues, "Though the possibility of actual contact with the satanic realm through role-playing cannot be denied, my greatest concern is that FRP involvement can create a predisposition toward actual occult activity. There are certain needs and desires which draw people to FRP in the first place. Many sensitive teenagers and adults continually bombarded with evolutionary theories and naturalistic philosophies, seek through FRP an escape from the cold, mechanistic view of the universe which they've been led to believe is 'reality.' Who wouldn't prefer an adventurous existence in a magical, purposeful world over the complex, impersonal 'real world' being pushed on young people by our educational institutions and the media?"{13}

I would suggest that that "predisposition toward actual occult activity" is indeed, a door propped open for demons to enter in. When players' views of magic and occultic exercises of power (even pretend) are shaped to see them in a positive, friendly light, they are accepting the very things God condemns. They are buying a lie, and intentionally or not, embracing rebellion against one of God's absolutes. Internalizing lies and rebellion provides a place for the Enemy to gain first a foothold (Eph. 4:27) and then a stronghold (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

So the occultic magic element of D&D and any other FRPG can be spiritually dangerous.

Bill Schnoebelen says, "Even if you have no intention to 'do magic' when you play D&D, you are immersing yourself in an alien, magic worldview which can gradually change the way you think about life and spiritual matters."{14}

But what about the magic in the works of Tolkien and Lewis? That kind of fantasy magic is different because the worldview of the literature is biblical, and consistent with the world God made. Behind all the magic is a good, transcendent, holy God. Magic doesn't have a life and power of its own, as a force to be manipulated. Furthermore, the magic in the books of Tolkien and Lewis and other Christian fantasy writers is viewed passively by the reader. In D&D, the player is immersed in the story, and actively uses occult magic as part of the game.

Lust for Power

Elliot Miller writes, "The human craving for power is also given an avenue for expression in FRP games. . . The various magical abilities that players exercise in these imaginary worlds can also whet their appetites for power. The same young man who is unable to prevent his parents from separating, or to make the cute blonde in his history class notice him, can,

through FRP, conquer a kingdom or obtain immense treasure simply by casting a spell.

“What happens, then, when the inevitable occurs and this young man is befriended by someone who can introduce him to the occult world? He will discover that practices he has enjoyed in his fantasy world actually go on in the real world. He would like nothing more than to believe that he can divine the future, project his soul outside of his body, perform healings, or cast a spell and get results. The transition from make-believe sorcery to actual sorcery would not be all that difficult. Once he encounters the real power that exists in the occult world, he will happily accept the magical world view of occultism in place of the naturalism he had absorbed.”{15}

Bill Schnoebelen makes an excellent point about the lust for power: “Make no mistake about it, magic and sorcery ARE spiritual. It does not matter if they are ‘make believe’ magic or not. It is the mind that is the battleground. I just recently had a D&D player who professed Christ tell me that everything he did had Christ in it, because Christ lived in him, even as he was playing D&D. While that may be true of a Christian, the question needs to be asked: is Christ pleased with what His servant is doing? “I used the metaphor of a porn role-playing game, where the participants play acted in various forms of sexual sin such as fornication, adultery or homosexuality. There was no actual sexual touching involved among the players, nor any nudity required. It was all in the mind. Would Jesus be pleased with that? “See, most of us can understand that concept better because most of us are more familiar with the power human sexuality can have over our minds. It is one of the most powerful forces God created within us. Yet, what most Christian gamers do not understand that magic is a kind of spiritual lust. Allowing the concepts of magic and sorcery into our minds awakens within us a kind of sexual itch that has no definable source or cause. It is,

however subtle, an itch for power. Magic, at its root, is about power and about rebellion. It is about not liking how God runs the universe and thinking you can do a better job yourself.

“Now of course, we are not saying that everyone who plays D&D is going to end up a sorcerer or a Satanist. But we are saying that being exposed to all these ideas of magic to the degree that the game requires cannot but help have a significant impact on the minds of the players, no matter if they are Christian or unbeliever, and no matter what the ‘template.’

“This is not just chess, football or bridge. This is a game that envelops the player in an entirely different fantasy world in which the power of magic and violence is pervasive. It is a game with a distinct and seductive spiritual worldview that is diametrically opposed to the Bible. Yes, sorcery appears in the Bible. But it is NEVER in the context of a good thing to do. It is always presented as something dangerous and utterly contrary to the will of God.

“The question still stands. Why would a Christian wish to involve themselves in such a game?”{16}

Heart Issue

Onken and Miller offer this insightful analysis of the heart issue:

“[N]either fantasy nor fantasy role playing is wrong in and of itself. When carried out within the context of the Christian world view, it can serve as a useful and creative activity. We are creatures made in the image of an imaginative God, and we should consider it a privilege to possess and exercise this precious gift of imagination. But we must also realize our obligation before God to use this gift in a wholesome way, and to guard against any misuse.

“Discerning the difference between a wholesome use and misuse

begins with the question, 'To what end or for what purpose (is the imagination) being exercised in a particular direction?' This certainly appears to be the question Jesus had in mind in His Sermon on the Mount when He stated, 'Every one who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart' (Matthew 5:28). "If Jesus taught that lust is tantamount to adultery (which God condemns see Deuteronomy 5:18, 22:13-27), would He approve of the deliberate cultivation and enjoyment of fantasy regarding other things that God condemns? Obviously not. To fantasize about those things that God has forbidden in His Word (immorality, the occult, the pursuit of other deities all elements of Dungeons and Dragons) is tantamount to doing them. This cannot be understood in any other way than a misuse of our God-given imagination.

"With the Bible as our guide, this is what we as Christians must guard against 'so that [we] may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects' (Colossians 1:10)."{17}

Notes

1. "Fantasy Games People Play," Christian Resource Institute, http://www.equip.org/free/DD401.pdf
2. Ibid, p. 2.
3. Ibid., p. 2-3.
4. "Should a Christian Play Dungeons and Dragons?", William Schnoebelen, www.chick.com/articles/frpg.asp.
5. "Fantasy Games People Play," p. 7.
6. "When Games Stop Being Fun," April 12, 2002, http://news.com.com/2100-1040_3-881673.html
7. Gary Gygax, Dungeons and Dragons, basic manual. TSR Hobbies, Inc., 1979, 3. Quoted in "Fantasy Games People Play,"

p. 4.
8. Moira Johnston, “It’s Only a Game Or Is It?”, New West, (August 25, 1980), 34. Quoted in “Fantasy Games People Play,” p. 4.
9. Fantasy Games People Play, p. 4.
10. Should a Christian Play Dungeons and Dragons?, op.cit.
11. John Eric Holmes, “Confessions of a Dungeon Master,” *Psychology Today* (November 1980), 89. Cited in “Fantasy Games People Play,” p. 4.
12. Fantasy Games People Play, p. 5.
13. Ibid.
14. Should Christians Play Dungeons and Dragons? Op cit.
15. Fantasy Games People Play, p. 5-6.
16. Should Christians Play Dungeons and Dragons? Op cit.
17. Ibid., p. 3.

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Terrorist Attack in London

July 7, 2005

The recent terrorist attack in London once again reminds us that we are still engaged in a war on terrorism. For some reason we seem to forget this fundamental fact. The March 2004 bombing in Madrid was a reminder. The July terrorist attack in London was another. Yet there is abundant evidence that we still have not learned some fundamental lessons in our war on terrorism.

I was on two different talk shows (one as host, one as guest), and I was struck by the number of times I heard comments about bringing the terrorists to justice. But let me ask a basic question: is a terrorist a common criminal?

If terrorists are only common criminals, then biblically speaking, they should merely be dealt with by their host governments. In Romans 13, the Apostle Paul says, “he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil.”

Paul’s teaching on government shows that criminals are those who do evil and threaten the civil peace. Any outside threat to the existence of the state is not a criminal threat but an act of war which is also to be dealt with by the government.

In other words, criminals threaten the state from within, while foreign armies threaten the state from outside. In the case of seeking domestic peace, Paul outlines how governments will approve of good works, but that governments should bring fear to those who are wrongdoers.

When terrorists attack, we should not view them as criminals but as foreign soldiers who attempt to threaten the very existence of the American government or the British government. To borrow a phrase from President Bush, we should not try to “bring them to justice,” we should “bring justice to them.”

Another important lesson we must learn is the need to place our governments on a war footing. That is, there are certain steps governments must take if we are to truly win the war on terrorism. At the outset, we need to develop the mindset that we are fighting a war with radical Muslim terrorists (often called Islamofascists). We can’t negotiate with them as some of the callers to my talk show suggested. They are enemy

combatants willing to die for their perverted religious views.

Governments shouldn't negotiate with them or bring them to justice. Governments must fight a war on terrorism. This requires governments to press their advantages over terrorists in terms of military hardware, intelligence gathering, and technological applications. It also demands that our governmental leaders think clearly about what terrorism is and how it is being advanced by Muslim terrorists around the world.

The terrorist attack in London (as well as the bombing in Madrid) also reminds us of the role each of us can play in stopping terrorism. Each involved citizens multiplies the eyes and ears of the government. These attacks were not high tech attacks using nuclear, chemical, or biological weapons. They used bombs and timers. An alert citizen might have discovered these bombs before they went off.

To prevent future attacks, we must pay attention to our surroundings and those around us. That doesn't mean we need to be paranoid of everything and suspicious of everyone. But it does mean that we need to be alert.

One terrorist expert I interviewed said that a successful terrorist attack occurs when all the pieces of the puzzle come together. Terrorism is like a jigsaw puzzle with lots of pieces that all must be present for success. This includes funding, organizers, explosives, location, a plan of operation, research, a dry run, trusted people, etc. Alert citizens who report suspicious activity can help law enforcement thwart the plans of terrorists.

Countering terrorism in the 21st century will not be easy, but understanding, resolve, and alertness are key ingredients in our success. This is our generation's challenge. We need to meet it with wisdom and boldness.

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Protecting Your Family On the Internet

Protecting from Pornography

What's available for free and sometimes delivered without asking for it is not just airbrushed naked women anymore—it's very clear pictures of people actually engaging in various types of sex, bestiality, and adults molesting children.

Like the tobacco industry used to, the pornography industry aggressively targets young children as consumers. They position their Web sites to be found in seemingly innocent searches using words like toys, Disney, Nintendo, or dolls. According to NetValue, children spent 64.9 percent more time on pornography sites than they did on game sites in September 2000. Over one quarter (27.5%) of children age 17 and under visited an adult Web site, which represents 3 million unique underage visitors.{1}

But they are not the only ones struggling with easy and anonymous access to pornography—over 200,000 Americans, classified as "cybersex compulsives," are hopelessly addicted to e-porn. The study, conducted by psychologists at Stanford and Duquesne universities, appears in the March 2001 issue of the journal *Sexual Addiction and Compulsivity.*

We personally know of people now in jail for stealing to support their porn addiction. Pastors are hearing from scores of people in their congregations who are secretly addicted to e-porn. Exposure to pornography, for some, escalates into more perverse and dehumanizing images. Online pornography is so strongly graphic, sending a hormonal power surge through the

brain, that it has been called “electronic crack cocaine.”

Protection from online pornography is essential. Parental involvement is the first line of defense. And Internet filters will add an additional layer of security in the home. Whether a filtered Internet service provider, a filtering software program, or even hardware filters just recently available, some level of filtering is better than none, but none are perfect. The technology is developing every day and filters are far more effective and less intrusive than a couple of years ago.

Many organizations have tested filtering technologies, and their evaluations and experience is available to parents. The Center for Decency (www.centerfordecency.org), the National Coalition for the Protection of Children and Families (www.filterreview.org) and a combination of several organizations at www.getnetwise.org are excellent resources.

Those sites will also provide excellent advice to parents about monitoring their children or spouse’s online activities as well as provide resources to deal with situations that arise if pornography is a problem in the home.

Put your computer in a public place in your home where anyone can see what’s on the screen. Determine how much time children can spend online. Some families link screen time to reading time: a half-hour of reading earns you 30 minutes of Internet time. Talk to your children about the dangers of pornography. We warned our boys about “mind dirt,” the kind of mental images that can’t be washed out of memory like the mud that was ground into their soccer uniforms. Talk about why pornography is wrong: because it destroys the dignity that God gives people made in His image, and because it fuels our flesh instead of our spirits.{2}

Protecting our families from Internet pornography in our homes, businesses, schools, and libraries is one of the most

loving and important things we can do for them.

Protecting from Predators

Several years ago when my son was about eight or nine, we had a memorable conversation when he decided he was going to run away from home. I used all the arguments from reason to try and dissuade him, but he was determined to leave. He was quite confident that if he met any bad guys, he'd just "beat 'em up," and that would be the end of that. I had to tell him about the *real* bad guys who are out there looking for vulnerable runaways, alone and defenseless, who either capture or lure them to places where they make horrible videos of grownups doing horrible things to kids—or worse. Thankfully, he decided to stay home.

As parents, of course we want to protect our kids from predators "out there" in the world; but it's just as important to protect them from predators online. Evil people and pedophiles know how to find children who don't know enough to be suspicious and self-protective, and they often rationalize their actions by saying that if parents don't protect their kids, then they deserve whatever happens.

One of the most unsafe places on the Internet is chat rooms. Conversations start out in a group, but one person can invite another into a private conversation. Anyone can initiate a private conversation, called an "instant message" or IM, with any other computer user once they know their nickname or screen name. I strongly suggest you teach your kids not to go into chat rooms or have private conversations unless you are supervising. Some "kids" they meet in chat rooms or IM's may not be kids at all, but adults with bad intentions.

It's essential to set down safety rules for our families. Teach your kids never to give out personal information like their age, phone number, school, or your town or city. Don't even let them use their real names. Kids must never call or

meet an online friend in person unless a parent is there. And it would be wise also not to have a personal profile, which is a big part of the America Online community, but also Web sites like Yahoo (www.yahoo.com). Predators prowl the profiles looking for likely victims.

Donna Rice Hughes,{3} a children's Internet safety advocate, suggests some excellent questions to ask your kids who spend time online:

- Have you seen any pornographic pictures?
- Has anyone online talked dirty to you?
- Have you met anyone online whom you don't know?
- Has anyone asked you for personal information?
- Has anyone asked to meet you in person?

Ask the questions, and watch their body language for clues that anything has happened. We need to stay alert. We need to protect our kids from predators.

Protecting Ourselves Emotionally

The Internet has opened an almost literal Pandora's box of emotional disasters for huge numbers of people.

An innocent looking computer screen or television set, for those with Web TV, turns out to be a portal to enormously addictive and powerful relationships with people we would never otherwise meet. People can be overwhelmed by the sense of truly connecting with people in an intense, compelling way. It can be a shock and a thrill to get a computer for doing mundane tasks like word processing or bookkeeping and discover that when it connects to the Internet, there are live people on the other side of the screen! The nature of online communication is different from the face-to-face or telephone communication we're used to in real life (or "RL" in net-speak). For one thing, people can project themselves as they wish to be. The painfully shy introvert can become a witty

conversationalist, the charismatic center of attention in a chat room. Overweight, slovenly people can pretend to be buff and beautiful. Middle-aged men can—and do—present themselves as young girls.

This means that online communication so often isn't between *people* as much as between *personas*. Add to that the development of a dizzily rapid sense of intimacy, and you have the potential for people to get hurt by not guarding their hearts as Proverbs 4:23 tells us to do.

For instance, one young man met disaster when, lonely after his divorce, he thought he fell in love with a young lady he met in a chat room. They started talking by phone. He professed his love for her; she professed her love for him. She visited him for a romantic weekend tryst. But it turns out she was a fourteen-year-old runaway, not eighteen as she had said, and when her parents tracked her down they had him arrested as a sex offender.{4}

Many married people have discovered how intrusive the Internet can be when their spouses start spending hours online in chat rooms and private conversation. Many marriages have broken up over online affairs. It doesn't matter if the relationships become physical or not; when people give their affections to another person, it's adultery of the heart.

How do we protect ourselves emotionally?

First, pre-decide to guard your heart (Prov. 4:23). If you start to think and daydream about someone in a way that you would be embarrassed if others knew what you were thinking, pull back. You're probably spending too much time online and spending too much emotional energy on that person. Redirect your thoughts to ones that are more righteous.

Second, if you're married, shore up your relationship. Spend at least as much time building into your marriage as you do with online friends. Resolve not to take your spouse for

granted or compare him or her to your image of your online friends. Remember that we tend to project onto online friends the qualities we want them to have, and it's not fair to compare the reality of the person you're married to with the fantasy of the *persona* on the other side of the screen. Consider that it is extremely rare, and frankly unwise, for married people to have close friends of the opposite sex.

Third, watch how much of your heart you share with people online. They are, after all, strangers. Our emotions follow our hearts, and when we give chunks of our hearts away by sharing our hopes and dreams and feelings, our affections are tied to those pieces of our hearts. I've heard it called "emotional fornication," and for good reason.

It's important to realize how quickly and easily we can fall into the false and fast intimacy of online relationships. We need to remember that the intimacy is not real, but the pain that might come from forgetting that *is* very real.

Protecting Ourselves Financially

Every year, more and more people are buying and selling on the Internet. That means more opportunity for fraud, mischief and flat-out evil intentions. How do we protect ourselves financially?{5}

First, protect your online identity. Identity theft is a growing problem, and the Internet has only made it easier. Don't store your personal information or credit card numbers with online retailers. Reputable merchants will ask if you want them to keep track of your personal information so you don't have to enter it every time. It's not that hard or time-consuming, and it's a good way to protect yourself. Don't give out more information than is necessary, especially your social security number. You're not being paranoid. You're being wise.

Now let's talk about making a purchase online. You don't have

to be afraid to do this if you're dealing with a reputable company or organization. Be sure you're dealing with a real company or organization. Look for a physical address and at least one customer service number. (Call it to make sure it's active.) Check out the company online at the Better Business Bureau (www.bbb.org).

Before entering personal information, make sure you're using a secure, or encrypted, connection. Look at the site's Web address. If it changed to "https," the 's' shows that it's secure. Although, not all secure connections use the https designation. The one thing you absolutely must see is that the padlock icon on your Web browser is locked.

Once you make your purchase, print a copy of your online order and keep it for the length of the return or warranty period. Your printed copy may be the only proof of your purchase.

Use a credit card instead of a debit card. Credit cards give you bargaining leverage if you need to dispute a charge—for instance, if the item never arrived. With debit cards, it's like spending cash; once the money is out of your account, it's gone.

If you participate in online auctions like eBay or Amazon.com, be aware that auctions are the number one online scam today.{6} If you don't want to gamble, you can use a third-party escrow service where the seller doesn't get paid until the buyer receives and approves his purchase. The most money lost in Internet scamming is through the Nigerian money offers.{7} "These offers, which used to come by airmail but now are increasingly arriving by email, promise millions of dollars in exchange for allowing your bank account to be used to safeguard someone else's riches. But the real intent is to take money out of your account, not put money in it."{8}

We need to be just as good stewards of God's money online as we do every other place.

Protecting Ourselves from Unnecessary Losses

The rise of the Internet has opened new doors to all kinds of unnecessary losses from which the wise person protects himself or herself. Probably the biggest loss is time. And probably the biggest time-waster is chat rooms. They are not productive, and many are not safe because predators prowl there. They encourage a false sense of intimacy and community. Chat rooms are a way to spend time, but when we stand before the judgment seat of Christ, one wonders how much of that activity will withstand the fiery test and endure into eternity? (1 Cor. 3:12-15)

Another consumer of time is e-mail. The problem with this is that, like handwritten letters, some e-mail is valuable for true communication. And like newspapers, some is valuable for disseminating information. But a lot of time is spent forwarding messages that are actually hoaxes and urban legends. Like fake virus warnings, for instance. I get several of these a week, and often per day, urging me to forward the letter to everyone in my address book. Please, before passing on a virus warning, check it out at one of the sites that expose virus warning hoaxes, like www.Vmyths.com. And please don't waste your time or anybody else's by passing on e-mails that promise goodies in exchange for forwarding the message to a certain number of people. There is no such thing as e-mail tracking. Nobody will know if you forwarded the message, and you won't ever get the goodies.

But real viruses are a true threat, and they can wipe out data on your computer. That is a completely unnecessary loss because of the excellent virus-protection software available today, such as Norton Anti-Virus or McAfee VirusScan. Don't open e-mail attachments if you don't know what they are or if you don't know the person who sent them. (You generally{9} don't need to worry about opening the e-mail message itself,

though. It's the attachments you need to be concerned about.) Many programs infect a person's computer and send out copies of themselves to people in their address books and the sender doesn't even know it's happening. I regularly receive messages containing viruses and worms from people I don't know because I'm the one who sends out our online newsletter, the *Probe-Alert*, and some people's infected e-mail programs automatically reply back with nasty surprises for my computer.

In this article we've looked at ways to protect ourselves and our families from online pornography and online predators. We suggested how to prevent emotional and financial disasters. And finally we've examined some unnecessary losses. Hopefully, you've found something that will help you pursue the worthy scriptural goal of "doing all to the glory of God," (1 Cor. 10:31) even in your online life.

Notes

1. "The NetValue Report on Minors Online," *Business Wire*, December 19, 2000.

2. I enthusiastically recommend two Web sites for people addicted to porn and those who love them. The first is divided into two sections, targeted at both groups of people, with different articles on each. www.pureintimacy.org. The second is www.settingcaptivesfree.com, which features an online Bible study program ("Pure Freedom") through which many have found freedom from sexual addiction for the first time in their lives.

3. http://www.protectkids.com

4. http://www.ozarkcountry.com/jerry.

5. The Kim Komando National Talkradio Show E-Zine, May 26, 2001.

6. http://www.natlconsumersleague.org/susantestimony52301.html

7. http://www.fraud.org/scamsagainstbusinesses/tips/nigerian.htm

8. http://www.natlconsumersleague.org/susantestimony52301.html

9. There are exceptions, such as the Wscript.Kakworm that someone sent me. According to the Symantec web site, “The worm utilizes a known Microsoft Outlook Express security hole so that a viral file is created on the system without having to run any attachment. Simply reading the received email message causes the virus to be placed on the system.” This shows the importance of running an up-to-date virus protection program, because I was alerted to the presence of the worm as soon as it arrived in my inbox and before I opened the e-mail message that contained it.

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Martial Arts

The Origins and Popularity of the Martial Arts

Gliding across the Pacific, the Asian martial arts have become part of the mainstream of American culture. Today there are an estimated two to three million practitioners in the United States, 40 percent of which are children between the ages of 7 and 14.{1} The martial arts industry generates annual revenue topping the $1 billion mark.

Why this rise in popularity? For one thing, people today are interested in and more willing to accept Eastern ideas. What was once considered “foreign” is now embraced as old, and thus

“tried and true.” Advocates extol the physical benefits and self- discipline that result from its practices. Movies further popularize martial arts with films such as *Enter the Dragon*, *Rush Hour,* and the Oscar winning *Crouching Tiger-Hidden Dragon*. The rise in crime also has people seeking to learn ways to protect themselves and their loved ones.

There are few written records regarding the origin of martial arts. These are interwoven with myths or verbal traditions that make it difficult to accurately trace the record. Archaeological evidence indicates that the martial arts may have begun as early as 2000 BC in the Fertile Crescent.{2} From there it traveled eastward to India and China.

The father of the Asian martial arts according to the most popular tradition is an Indian Buddhist Monk named Bodhidharma who arrived in China in the late fifth century A.D. Settling in a monastery in the Songshan Mountains located in the Kingdom of Wei, he developed a series of mind-body exercises designed to improve the health of the monks and assist them in meditation. Based on the movements of different real and mythological animals and incorporating concepts from Taoism and Zen Buddhism, Bodhidharma taught a style of combat known as Shao-lin gung fu. Gradually, Shao-lin gung fu migrated from the temples to the Chinese populace. It was adapted and refined as it spread across the country and eventually, to the world.

Martial arts have been very popular among Christians. Scot Conway, founder of the Christian Martial Arts Foundation, estimates between 50 and 70 percent of American martial artists – and roughly 20 percent of all instructors – consider themselves Christians.{3} But other Christians argue that the philosophy of Asian martial arts is wholly incompatible with biblical teaching. They point to the origin of Eastern mysticism as reason for Christians to avoid any level of participation. Still others say Jesus’ exhortation to “turn the other cheek” shows that using force is wrong.

How should a discerning Christian respond? Can we participate in the martial arts and be consistent with our biblical convictions?

Differences in the Martial Arts

Should Christians participate in the martial arts? In order to make an informed decision, it is helpful to recognize that there are two basic categories for martial arts. It is important to note that the division is not rigid; in some cases, values from one type may be blended or subtly integrated into the other. But for simplicity and clarity, we will use the two main groups.

One type, called "internal" or "soft" martial art, focuses on inner spiritual development, balance, form, and mental awareness. This soft art emphasizes two principles – that the mind dictates action and that the opponent's own force is used to defeat him or her.{4} Students are taught Taoist and Buddhist philosophical principles such as the "chi" force and the "yin and yang" concept. Through breath control, soft art practitioners seek to "collect, cultivate, and store" this chi force which is located in the body. Some believe they can use the chi force to strike down opponents from a distance. Examples of internal or soft martial arts include the Chinese Tai-chi Chuan and the Japanese Aikido.

The second category of martial arts is called the "external" or "hard" art. This type teaches that physical reactions precede mental reaction. It also promotes the idea that an opponent's force should be met with an equal but opposite force. While the hard martial art system also uses breath control like the soft arts, the emphasis is on developing strength and quickness through the use of straight and linear body motions.{5} The hard arts include certain forms of Chinese kung fu, and Shao Lin boxing. The Japanese arts were adapted from Chinese kung fu. The hard arts include Ju-jitsu, Judo, Karate, Ninjitsu, and Kendo. The Korean martial arts

include Tae Kwon Do and Tang Soo Do.

While there are religious concepts in the martial arts, few schools would qualify as religious movements, and few seek to meet the religious needs of the student. However, a little exposure to Eastern mysticism may lead to greater involvement in the future. So as a general rule, Christians should avoid the internal or soft martial arts because of the concentration on the teachings of Eastern religions and philosophies. Several schools even utilize the occult techniques of meditation and altering consciousness. External or hard martial arts, on the other hand, concentrate primarily on physical training. These physical lessons usually do not conflict with our biblical convictions.

Before joining a dojo or martial arts gym, one needs to know the worldview of the instructor. Even some hard martial arts teachers incorporate Eastern ideas and occult practices into their styles. Look for instructors who teach the physical movements but exclude the Eastern ideas.

Eastern Concepts in the Martial Arts

Since martial arts are traditionally based on the Eastern philosophies of Taoism and Zen Buddhism, several key concepts can be prominent in the classes. Let’s look at three of them.

The concept of “chi” or “ki” is central in some martial arts. Chi is believed to be the impersonal life energy that flows throughout the universe and pulses through the human body. By harnessing the chi in individuals, martial artists believe they can perform at higher levels of ability or can release chi power resulting in devastating effects. Chi is controlled through specialized breathing techniques, gymnastics, and meditation.

Another common martial arts teaching is the Taoist (pronounced “dow-ist”) concept of yin and yang, that nature consists of

conflicting elements which function in perfect balance to one another. As mankind should live in harmony with the Tao, so the martial artist must strike hard with firmness at times, but at other times accept the energy of the opponent, then reroute the energy, causing the opponent to defeat himself. This redirection allows a relatively gentle resolution, and brings one into harmony with the opponent and the flow of nature.

A Christian must also avoid the practice of Eastern meditation. The goal of this type of meditation is to empty one's mind, alter one's consciousness, or unite with the impersonal divine. Scott Shaw writes, "Meditation is a sacred process. It is the method used by the spiritual warrior to calm the mind and to connect the body and mind with the infinite."{6} This greater awareness supposedly enables the martial artist to increase his or her performance. In many schools, the combined use of Eastern meditation and the chi are essential to mastering the art. (Not all martial arts use meditation for this purpose. Some use it to focus on the lesson or task at hand such as picturing the action in your mind before physically carrying it out.)

But the mysticism of Taoism and Buddhism is not compatible with Christianity; neither is Eastern meditation the same as biblical meditation. The Bible does not teach altering our consciousness or emptying our minds. Instead, the goal of Scriptural meditation is to *fill* our minds with God's Word. (Psalm 1:2) Another danger of Eastern meditation is that it can open our minds to the occult, a practice the Bible prohibits. The Bible does not teach the Eastern idea of chi, that there is an impersonal life energy of the universe within us. Rather, the Bible says that each individual has an eternal soul that will either go to heaven or to hell based on whether or not they have a relationship with Christ.

Self Defense or Turn the Other Cheek?

Besides concerns about the role of Eastern religion in the martial arts, some people think martial arts encourages violence. Martial arts teach fighting, and so are contrary to the Bible's instructions about pacifism. Is there ever a time when Christians can use force?

Christian pacifists believe it is always wrong to injure another person. Many interpret Jesus' teaching in Matthew 5:38-48, where he states, "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also . . .", to mean never use violence. This is exemplified in the life of Christ who suffered silently and did not retaliate while enduring torture even unto death.

Despite these arguments, the proper interpretation of the Matthew 5 passage does not teach pacifism. In Jewish culture, to be struck or slapped on the cheek was an insult (2 Corinthians 11:20). Jesus was teaching that when a disciple is insulted for being a follower of Christ, the disciple should not retaliate with force. However, being insulted is a very different situation from being attacked by a mugger or your wife being attacked by a rapist.

In the Gospels, Christ did not resist violent attacks because of His unique mission to be the sacrifice for our sins. However, in the Old Testament, the preincarnate Christ judged wicked nations with the sword. (Judges 6:11-16). Not only did He smite His enemies, He aided Israel in being an instrument of judgment as well. Revelation predicts the glorified Christ coming to judge the nations with a sword. Also in the New Testament, Jesus and His disciples did not teach military leaders to withdraw from the military (e.g., Matthew 8:8-13, Luke 3:14). In Romans 13, Paul writes that the government has the right to "bear the sword." In other words, a righteous government can use capital punishment when an offender is worthy of death.

Therefore, complete pacifism is not the spirit of Christian teaching. In fact, the most loving thing to do when a friend or family member is attacked by a harmful foe is to risk one's life and use force to restrain the enemy. If a man is attacking a child, or a woman is being raped, it would be morally wrong not to sacrifice your life and restrain the assailant even with deadly force if necessary.

The Bible allows a Christian to use self-defense and force when confronted with a criminal act. Force may not be used for revenge or out of unjust anger. Christians who engage in the martial arts should have a clear understanding of this. The use of martial arts must be for self-defense and protecting loved ones from acts of evil. One should never use their fighting system to instigate combat or seek revenge.

Should Christians Participate in the Martial Arts?

To summarize what I have covered so far, I believe that the physical aspect of martial arts can be separated from the Eastern religious and philosophical teachings. Also, I believe the Bible teaches us that there is a time when we are called to use force, even deadly force to halt acts of evil.

Here are some practical guidelines if one is deciding to participate in the martial arts or if one is selecting a school. First, a person should check his or her motives. One should not engage in martial arts if one's motives include becoming a tough guy, showing off, or gaining revenge. Parents should make it clear to their children that the martial arts are never to be used for affectation or for instigating conflicts. Unworthy motives are detrimental to one's walk with the Lord and witness to others. Positive reasons include physical conditioning, discipline, and self-defense. Develop parameters for limiting the use of force. One of the fruits of the Spirit is self-control. Force is used in defensive

purposes only.

Generally speaking, Christians should avoid the soft or internal form of martial arts because they tend to emphasize Eastern philosophical and religious ideas. External or hard martial arts emphasize the physical training. However, it would be wise to be on guard because many instructors of external martial arts may incorporate Eastern mysticism in to their system. Also, one should be careful to avoid the possibility of being enticed to learn about Eastern spirituality as they advance.

Find out the worldview of the instructor. The role of religion in the martial arts depends mostly on the instructor, so choosing a proper instructor is the most important factor. Some instructors claim to teach the physical aspect only. However, as students advance, instructors begin to incorporate Eastern religious ideas to help students attain a higher level of performance. Observe advanced classes to see if they incorporate Eastern practices. There is also helpful information through Christian organizations such as Karate for Christ and the Christian Martial Arts Foundation.

The Christian life involves caring for the nurture and growth of our mind, spirit, and our body which is the temple of the Holy Spirit. I have benefited greatly from my time in the martial arts. It has provided me great exercise, discipline, and opportunities to witness for Christ. There were times in my life when I had to use force to restrain hostile persons or protect loved ones. I believe that the martial arts can be beneficial to Christians who are informed and mature.

Notes

1. Glenn Rifkin, “The Black Belts of the Screen Are Filling the Dojos,” *The New York Times*, 16 February 1992, 10.

2. Howard Reid and Michael Croucher, *The Way of the Warrior,* (Woodstock, NY.: Overlook Press, 1983), 16-17.

3. Erwin Castro, B.J. Oropeza, and Ron Rhodes, "Enter the Dragon? Wrestling with the Martial Arts Phenomenon Part I," Christian Research Institute, http://www.equip.org/free/dm066.htm, 2.

4. Reid and Croucher, *The Way of the Warrior*, 229.

5. Ibid., 61 & 227.

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1. "Should a Christian Practice the Martial Arts?" *Christian Research Institute.* http://www.equip.org/free/DM065.htm

2. Castro, Erwin, Oropeza, B.J., and Rhodes, Ron. "Enter the Dragon? Wrestling with the Martial Arts

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See Also:

"Martial Arts and Just War Theory"

Cyberporn

This article has been updated.

Please see Kerby Anderson's new article Pornography.

Race and Racial Issues – A Biblical Christian Perspective

Kerby Anderson looks at the issue of race from a Christian worldview perspective. The Bible clearly teaches that all

people are valuable and loved by God with no distinction based on race. As Christians, we are called to set an example by seeing all peoples as worthy of our love and our respect.

 *This article is also available in Spanish.*

Race has divided people in our world for millennia, and the prejudice of racism is still with us today. So in this article we are going to focus on some important aspects of race and racial issues.

At the outset we should acknowledge that, although we will use the term "race" through this discussion, it is not a very precise term. First, the Bible really only talks of one race: the human race. Superficial differences in skin color, hair color, hair texture, or eye shape may provide physiological differences between people groups. But the Bible doesn't provide any justification for treating people differently simply because of these physical differences.

The Bible teaches that God has made "from one blood every nation of men" (Acts 17:26). Here Paul is teaching the Athenians that they came from the same source in the creation as everyone else. We are all from one blood. In other words, there are no superior or inferior races. We are all from the same race: the human race.

Race is also an imprecise term in large part because it is not based upon scientific data. People of every race can interbreed and produce fertile offspring. It turns out that the so-called differences in the races is not very great. A recent study of human genetic material of different races concluded that the DNA of any two people in the world would differ by just 2/10ths of one percent.{1} And of this variation, only six percent can be linked to racial categories. The remaining 94 percent is "within race" variation.

Let’s put it another way. All the racial differences that have been so important to people for generations are statistically insignificant from a scientific point of view. These differences are trivial when you consider the 3 trillion base pairs of human DNA.

A third reason the term “race” also lacks precision is due to interracial marriage. While it is probably true that the so-called races of the world were never completely divided, it is certainly true that the lines are becoming quite blurred today. Take golfer Tiger Woods as one example. His heritage is Thai, black, white, Chinese, and Native American.

Isn’t it ironic that at a time when racial lines are blurring more and more each generation, the government still collects data that requires individuals to check one box that represents their racial or ethnic heritage? A growing number of people are finding it hard to classify themselves by checking just one box.

The Curse on Ham

Sadly, one of the most destructive false teachings supposedly based on the Bible is the so-called “curse on Ham.” Ham was one of Noah’s three sons (along with Shem and Japheth).

In the past, certain cults and even some orthodox Christian groups have held to the belief that the skin color of black people was due to a curse on Ham and his descendants. Unfortunately, this false teaching has been used to justify racial discrimination and even slavery.

One group said, “We know the circumstances under which the posterity of Cain (and later Ham) were cursed with what we call Negroid racial characteristics.”{2} Another group argued that “The curse which Noah pronounced upon Canaan was the origin of the black race.”{3}

First, let’s clearly state that the Bible does not teach that people with black skin color are cursed by God. This curse was not the origin of the black race or black racial characteristics.

Second, it wasn’t Ham who was cursed but his son Canaan (Gen. 9:18-27; 10:6). Only one of Ham’s four sons (Cush, Mizraim, Put, and Canaan) was cursed, so how could all black people be cursed?

As it turns out, the curse on Canaan has unfolded in history. The descendants of Canaan were perhaps one of the most wicked people to live on earth. They were the inhabitants, for example, of Sodom and Gomorrah.

Third, even if a curse is given, the Bible clearly places limitations on curses to three or four generations. In Exodus 20:5-6 God says, “You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”

Notice that this passage seems to teach that curses based upon disobedience are reversed when people repent and turn back to obedience. So not only is a curse limited, obedience to God’s principles can break it.

Fourth, the Bible teaches that the fulfillment of the curse on Canaan took place with the defeat and subjugation of Canaan by Israel (Joshua 9:23; 1 Kings 9:20-21). This had nothing to do with placing black people under a permanent curse.

Although the idea of “the curse on Ham” has been dying a well-deserved death, it is still important to remember that not so long ago people were misinterpreting a biblical passage to justify their racism and discrimination. No one race or people group is inferior to any other. In fact, the Bible teaches

that preferences based upon race, class, or ethnic origin are sinful and subject to God’s judgment (James 2:9-13). All of us are created in God’s image (Gen. 1:27) and have value and dignity.

Racism

Racism has no doubt been the scourge of humanity. It usually surfaces from generalized assumptions made about a particular race or cultural group. While it is wrong and unfair to assign particular negative characteristics to everyone within a racial group, it is done all the time. The bitter result of these racial attitudes is intolerance and discrimination.

Often racism goes beyond just individual attitudes. These racial attitudes can become the mindset of a particular people group who may use cultural as well as legal means to suppress another race. These cultural norms and laws can be used by the majority race to exploit and discriminate against the minority race.

Although racism has existed throughout the centuries, it gained an unexpected ally in the scientific realm in the nineteenth century. In 1859, Charles Darwin published his famous work *The Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection of the Preservation of Favored Races in the Struggle for Life*. It was the last part of that title that no doubt furthered some of the ideas of racial superiority that flourished during that time.

It is not at all clear that Darwin meant to apply the concept of favored races in this particular book to human beings. In fact, he did write more on this subject later, but the provocative nature of the subtitle was enough to fuel discussions about racial superiority and inferiority. Later Darwinists took the concept far beyond what Charles Darwin intended.

So why do people hold racist attitudes? Three reasons are: feelings of pride, feelings of inferiority, and feelings of fear. Pride and arrogance fuel racism. When we are proud of who we are, we can easily look down upon those who are different from us and do not manifest the same characteristics that we do. We can start believing we are superior to another person or race.

Racism, however, can come from the opposite end of the emotional spectrum: inferiority. We may not feel good about ourselves. So in order to feel good about ourselves, we disparage another person or race.

Racism also results from fear. We fear what we don't understand. We fear what is strange and foreign. Racial and cultural differences may even seem dangerous to us. Racial attitudes can surface if we don't seek to know and understand those who are different from us.

We should stand strong against racism and racist attitudes wherever we find them: in the society, in individuals, even within the church.

Biblical Perspective

We have already noted that the Bible really only talks of one race: the human race. Superficial differences in skin color, hair color, hair texture, or eye shape may provide physiological differences between people groups, but the Bible doesn't provide any justification for treating people differently simply because of these physical differences. The Bible teaches that God has made "of one blood all nations of men" (Acts 17:26 KJV).

The Bible also teaches that it is wrong for a Christian to have feelings of superiority. In Philippians 2, Paul admonishes the Christians to live in harmony with one another.

They are to have a gentle spirit toward one another, and to let this gentle spirit be known to others.

Christians are also admonished to refrain from using class distinctions within the church. In James 2, believers are told not to make class distinctions between various people. They are not to show partiality within the church. Showing favoritism is called sin and the one showing favoritism is convicted by the law. Surely these commands would also apply to holding views of racial superiority and inferiority.

Likewise Paul instructs Timothy (1 Tim. 5:21) to keep his instructions without partiality and to do nothing out of favoritism. This command would also exclude making racial distinctions based on a view of racial superiority.

Finally, we see that Paul teaches the spiritual equality of all people in Christ. For example, he teaches in Colossians 3:11 that "there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all." This is a significant passage because it shows that Christ has removed four kinds of distinctions: national distinctions (Greek or Jew), religious distinctions (circumcised or uncircumcised), cultural distinctions (barbarian or Scythian), and economic distinctions (slave or free).

A similar passage would be Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." In Christ, our human distinctions lose their significance. No one is superior to another. A believing Jew is not superior to a believing Greek. A believing slave is of no higher rank than a believing free person.

Racism and racist attitudes are wrong. Christians should work to remove such ideas and attitudes from society.

Becoming Culturally Sensitive

Here are some suggestions on how to become more sensitive to differences in race and culture.

First, we need to take an accurate assessment of ourselves. Often our assumptions and predispositions affect the way we perceive and even treat others. A person who says he or she has no prejudices is probably in denial. All of us perceive the world differently and find it easier to accept people who are like us and harder to understand people who are different from us.

Our cultural worldview affects how we perceive others. It affects how we evaluate what others think and what others do. So an important first step in becoming more racial and culturally sensitive is to evaluate ourselves.

Second, we should try to empathize with others. We must start learning how to look at life and our circumstances from the viewpoint of others. Instead of trying to make others think like us, we should strive to begin to begin to think like them. That doesn't mean we have to agree with their viewpoint, but it does mean that becoming empathetic will be helpful in bridging racial and cultural barriers.

Third, learn to withhold judgment. Tolerance (in the biblical sense of the word) is a virtue we should cultivate. We should be willing to put aside our critical thinking and judgment until we know someone better. Taking the time to listen and understand the other person will help build bridges and dismantle barriers that often separate and isolate races and cultures.

Fourth, do not consider yourself superior to another. One of the root causes of racism is a belief in racial superiority. Paul tell us in Romans 12:3 that a man should not "think more

highly of himself than he ought to think." Differences in race and culture should never be used to justify feelings of racial superiority which can lead to racist attitudes.

Fifth, develop cross cultural traits. A missionary who goes overseas must learn to develop personal traits that will make him or her successful in a new and different culture. Likewise, we should develop these traits so that we can reach across a racial and cultural divide. Friendliness and open communication are important. Flexibility and open-mindedness are also important. Developing these traits will enhance our ability to bridge a racial and cultural gap.

Finally, we should take a stand. We shouldn't tell (or allow others to tell) racial and ethnic jokes. These are demeaning to others and perpetuate racism and racial attitudes. Instead we should be God's instrument in bring about racial reconciliation. We should seek to build bridges and close the racial and cultural divide between people groups and reach out with the love of Jesus Christ.

Notes

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The Psychology of Prisoner

Abuse

Those Awful Pictures

Do you remember how you felt as the Iraq prisoner abuse scandal began to unfold in spring 2004? Maybe you saw the disturbing pictures when they were first aired on CBS television's *60 Minutes II*. Soon they were transmitted around the globe. They greeted you on the front page of your morning newspaper and on the evening news. The stream seemed endless.

You saw naked Iraqi prisoners in various stages of humiliation: hooded, naked men stacked in a pyramid; others lying on the floor or secured to a bed; one in a smock standing on a box with his arms outstretched and wires attached to him. In some of the photos, male and female American soldiers grinned and pointed. In one picture, a female soldier stood holding a leash around the neck of a naked male prisoner. In others, soldiers grinned over what appeared to be a corpse packed in ice.

What feelings did you experience? Shock? Anger? Rage? Disgust? Maybe you felt embarrassed or ashamed. "How could they do such degrading things to other human beings?" you might have wondered. Perhaps you feared how the growing storm might affect the life of your friend or family member serving in Iraq. Or wrestled with how to explain the abuse to your children.

Finger pointing began almost as soon as the story broke. High-ranking military and government officials announced that these were aberrations carried out by a few unprincipled prison guards. Accused military police claimed they were merely following orders of military intelligence officials to soften prisoners up for interrogation. Others insisted soldiers had a moral obligation to disobey orders to do wrong. The accused countered that the harsh techniques were in place before they

arrived for duty at the prison. Ethical arguments surfaced that the war on terror demanded tough methods to help prevent another 9/11.

What factors prompt people to abuse others in such degrading ways? What goes on inside the minds of the abusers? Are there special social forces at work? While this article won't attempt to analyze specific cases in the Iraq prison scandal, it will consider some fascinating psychological experiments that reveal clues to the roots of such behavior. The results -- and their implications -- may disturb you. A biblical perspective will also offer some insight.

The Stanford Prison Experiment

CBS News correspondent Andy Rooney said the Iraq prisoner abuse is "a black mark that will be in the history books in a hundred languages for as long as there are history books."{1}

Stanford University psychologist Philip Zimbardo was not surprised by the Abu Ghraib prison abuse. He had observed similar behavior in his famous 1971 experiment involving a mock prison in the basement of the Stanford psychology building.{2} The experiment showed that otherwise normal people can behave in surprisingly outrageous ways.

Zimbardo and his colleagues selected twenty-four young men considered from interviews and psychological tests to be normal and healthy. Volunteers were randomly assigned to be either "prisoners" or "guards." Guards wore uniforms and were told to maintain control of the prison and not to use violence.

On the second day, prisoners rebelled, asserting their independence with barricades, taunting and cursing. Guards suppressed the rebellion. Zimbardo reports that the guards then "steadily increased their coercive aggression tactics, humiliation and dehumanization of the prisoners."{3} He says

the worst abuse came at night when guards thought no psychology staff were observing.{4} Zimbardo remembers that the guards "began to use the prisoners as playthings for their amusement…. They would get them to simulate sodomy. They also stripped prisoners naked for various offenses and put them in solitary for excessive periods."{5} They dressed them in smocks, chained them together at the ankles, blindfolded them with paper bags on their heads, and herded them along in a group.{6} Sound familiar?

It was Berkeley professor Christina Maslach, Zimbardo's then romantic interest whom he later married, who jolted him back to reality. On Day Five, she entered the prison to preview the experiment in preparation for some subject interviews she had agreed to conduct the next day. Shocked by what she saw, she challenged Zimbardo's ethics later that evening – screaming and yelling in quite a fight, she recalls. That night, Zimbardo decided to halt the experiment.{7}

Zimbardo feels that prisons are ripe for abuse without firm measures to check guards' lower impulses.{8} He recommends "clear rules, a staff that is well trained in those rules and tight management that includes punishment for violations."{9}

An old Jewish proverb says, "Like a roaring lion or a charging bear is a wicked man ruling over a helpless people."{10} Unfettered prison officials -– or most anyone -– can yield to their baser natures when tempted by power inequalities.

The Perils of Obedience

What about those who say they were only obeying authority? How far will people go to inflict harm under orders? In the 1960s, Yale psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted classic experiments on obedience.{11} (Ironically, Milgram and Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo were high school classmates.{12})

At Yale, Milgram set up a series of experiments "to test how

much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist." He writes, "Stark authority was pitted against the subjects' strongest moral imperatives against hurting others, and, with the subjects' ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won more often than not."{13}

Milgram's basic design involved a volunteer "teacher" and a "learner." The learner was actually an actor who was in on the deception. The learner was strapped to "a kind of miniature electric chair" with an electrode on his wrist. The teacher sat before an impressive-looking "shock generator " with switches indicating voltages from 15-450 volts.{14}

The teacher asked test questions of the learner and was instructed to administer increasingly large shocks for each incorrect answer. (You say you've known some teachers like that?) The machine here was a fake —- no learner received shocks -— but the teacher thought it was real.

In the initial experiment, over 60 percent of teachers obeyed the experimenter's orders to the end and punished the victim with the maximum 450 volts. Milgram found similarly disturbing levels of obedience across various socioeconomic levels. His conclusions after hundreds of experiments were chilling:

> *…Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.{15}*

Why did they obey? Milgram offers several possibilities. Fears of appearing rude, desires to please an authority, aspirations to do one's best, and lack of direct accountability can all cloud judgment. But could there be something deeper, something

in human nature that influences abuse? A famous novel illustrates how the dark side of human nature can affect group behavior.

Lord of the Flies

Prisoner abuse shows what can happen when power inequalities and inappropriate devotion to authority distort one's moral compass. Nobel laureate William Golding's short novel, *Lord of the Flies,*{16} illustrates through a fictional story how similar flaws can manifest in society. A film version of the book helped inspire the popular television series *Survivor*.{17}

Lord of the Flies opens on a remote, uninhabited island on which some British schoolboys, ages six to twelve, find themselves after an airplane crash. An atomic war has begun, and apparently the plane was evacuating the boys when it was shot down. The island has fresh water, fruit, and other food. The setting seems idyllic. Best of all, the boys discover, there are no grownups (the plane and its crew presumably have washed into the sea).

Four central characters soon emerge. Ralph is elected leader. Piggy, an overweight asthmatic and champion of reason, becomes Ralph's friend. Simon is a quiet lad with keen discernment. Jack becomes a hunter.

At first, the boys get along without much conflict. Soon, though, fears envelop them, and they debate whether an evil beast might inhabit the island. Jack and his followers kill a wild pig and, in frenzied blood lust, dance to chants of "*Kill the pig! Cut her throat! Bash her in!*"{18} When Ralph criticizes Jack for breaking some tribal rules, Jack replies, "Who cares?" His hunting prowess will rule.{19}

One night, some boys see a dead parachutist, which they mistake for the "evil beast" and flee. Jack posts a pig's head onto a stick in the ground as a gift for the beast. The

decaying, fly- covered pig's head soon becomes for Simon the "Lord of the Flies," a sort of personification of evil.{20} Later, Simon discovers that the feared "beast" is only a human corpse. Running to tell the group this good news, he encounters their mock pig-killing ritual. The crazed boys attack Simon and kill him. Nearly all the boys follow Jack and, acting like savages with painted bodies and spears, kill Piggy and hunt down Ralph. Only the surprise appearance of a British naval officer, drawn by the smoke from a fire, halts the mad pursuit. Ralph and the boys dissolve in tears. Ralph weeps, as Golding writes, "for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart…."{21}

Lord of the Flies is filled with symbolism, both biblical and from Greek tragedy. But Golding's stated purpose was "to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature."{22} Could his point that darkness lurks in the human heart help explain the prisoner abuse?

Animal House Meets *Lord of the Flies*

Prisoner abuse is a sad reality in the U.S. and abroad.{23} The Iraq prisoner abuse scandal smacks of fraternity hazing on steroids, *Animal House* meets *Lord of the Flies.* Consider from this sad episode some lessons for both prison reform and society in general:

- *Establish clear rules for prison staff; train them well and punish them for violations*, as Stanford psychologist Philip Zimbardo recommends.
- *Educate against blind conformity*. Some of Milgram's experimental subjects found the strength to resist abusive authority.{24} Some psychologists feel that strong moral values and experience with conformity can strengthen moral courage.{25}
- *Involve external observers and critics*. Often outsiders, not emotionally swept up in a project or event, can

through their psychological distance more clearly assess ethical issues. For example, Christina Maslach, Philip Zimbardo's friend and colleague who challenged the ethics of his prison experiment, credits her late arrival on the scene with facilitating her concern. The experimenters who had planned and had been conducting the experiment for five days were less likely to be startled by the developing misconduct, she maintained.{26}

- *Realistically appraise human nature's dark side.* Again, Golding said *Lord of the Flies* was "an attempt to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature."{27} Jesus of Nazareth was, of course, quite clear on this point. He said, "From within, out of a person's heart, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder,adultery, greed, wickedness, deceit, eagerness for lustful pleasure, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these vile things come from within…."{28}

Some dismiss as simplistic any analyses of human suffering that begin with alleged defects in human nature. They would rather focus on changing social structures and political systems. While many structures and political systems need changing, may I suggest that a careful analysis of the human heart is not simplistic? Rather it is fundamental.

Perhaps that's why Paul, a leader who agreed with Jesus' assessment of human nature,{29} focused on changing hearts. Paul was a former persecutor of Jesus' followers who zealously imprisoned them{30} but later joined them and became a prisoner himself.{31} Paul eventually claimed that when people place their faith in Jesus as he had, they "become new persons. They are not the same anymore, for the old life is gone. A new life has begun!"{32} Could this diagnosis and prescription have something to say to us amidst today's prisoner abuse scandals?

Notes

1. Andy Rooney, “Our Darkest Days are Here,” CBS 60 Minutes, May 23, 2004, http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/05/20/60minutes/rooney/main618783.shtml.

2. Kathleen O’Toole, “The Stanford Prison Experiment: Still powerful after all these years,” Stanford University News Service, January 8, 1997, http://www.stanford.edu/dept/news/pr/97/970108prisonexp.html. A slideshow presentation of the experiment is at www.prisonexp.org. See also W. Lawrence Neuman, *Social Research Methods: Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches*, Third Edition (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1997), 447; Claudia Wallis, “Why Did They Do It?” TIME.com, posted May 9, 2004 (from *TIME* magazine, cover date May 17, 2004), http://www.time.com/time/covers/1101040517/wtorturers.html; John Schwartz, “Simulated Prison in ’71 Showed a Fine Line Between ‘Normal’ and ‘Monster’,” *New York Times*, May 6, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/06/international/middleeast/06PSYC.html?pagewanted=print&position=.

3. O’Toole, loc. cit.

4. Ibid.

5. Wallis, loc. cit.

6. O’Toole, loc. cit.

7. Ibid.

8. Schwartz, loc. cit.

9. Wallis, loc. cit. The words are Wallis’.

10. Proverbs 28:15 NIV.

11. Stanley Milgram, “The Perils of Obedience,” *Harper’s*,

December 1973, 62-66, 75-77. (The article is adapted from Milgram's book, Obedience to Authority [Harper and Row, 1974]). See also Neuman, loc. cit.; O'Toole, loc. cit.; Schwartz, loc. cit.; Wallis, loc. cit.; Anahad O'Connor, "Pressure to Go Along With Abuse Is Strong, but Some Soldiers Find Strength to Refuse," New York Times, May 14, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/14/international/14RESI.html?ei=5059&en=854c94250243f62d&ex=1084593600&partner=AOL&pagewanted=print&position=.

12. O'Toole, loc. cit.

13. Milgram 1973, op. cit., 62.

14. Ibid., 62-63.

15. Ibid., 75- 76.

16. William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* (New York: Perigee, 1988). This "Casebook Edition" includes the 1954 novel plus notes and criticism edited by James R. Baker and Arthur P. Ziegler, Jr.

17. http://www.cbs.com/primetime/survivor8/show/episode14/s8story3.shtml.

18. Golding, op. cit., 69; emphasis Golding's.

19. Ibid., 84.

20. Many have noted that the phrase "lord of the flies" translates the word "Beelzebub." See, for instance, E.L. Epstein, "Notes on Lord of the Flies," in Golding, op. cit., 279: "'The lord of the flies' is, of course, a translation of the Hebrew Ba'alzevuv (Beelzebub in Greek) which means literally 'lord of insects.'" Theologian Louis A. Barbieri, Jr., commenting on Matthew 10:24 ff. says, "Beelzebub (the Gr. has Beezeboul) was a name for Satan, the prince of the demons,

perhaps derived from Baal-Zebub, god of the Philistine city of Ekron (2 Kings 1:2). 'Beelzebub' means 'lord of the flies,' and 'Beezeboul' or 'Beelzeboul' means 'lord of the high place.'" (In "Matthew," John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* [Wheaton, Illinois: Scripture Press Publications, Inc., 1983, 1985], Logos Research Systems digital version.) Biblical references to Beelzebub include Matthew 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18, 19. In a 1962 interview, Golding himself referred to "the pig's head on the stick" as "Beelzebub, or Satan, the devil, whatever you'd like to call it…." (James Keating, "Interview with William Golding," in Golding, op. cit., 192.)

21. Golding, op. cit., 186-187.

22. Epstein, op. cit., 277-278. The words are Golding's.

23. For example, see "Missouri 'Rain' Leads to Toilet Duty," *Inside Journal: The Hometown Newspaper of America's Prisoners*, 14:7, November/December 2003, 5. Inside Journal publisher Prison Fellowship, www.pfm.org, and its affiliates seek to help rehabilitate prisoners and promote restorative justice.

24. Milgram 1973, op. cit., 63-64.

25. O'Connor, loc. cit.

26. O'Toole, loc. cit.

27. Epstein, loc. cit.

28. Mark 7:21-23 NLT.

29. For detailed information on Jesus and evidence to support His claims, see www.WhoIsJesus-Really.com.

30. Acts 8:3; 22:3-5 ff.

31. E.g., Acts 16:19-40.

32. 2 Corinthians 5:17 NLT.

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Feminism: A Christian Perspective

Sue Bohlin provides a Christian view on feminism. How does this prevalent view of women measure up from a biblical perspective?

This article is also available in Spanish.

The worldview of feminism has permeated just about every aspect of American life, education and culture. We see it in the way men are portrayed as lovable but stupid buffoons on TV sitcoms. We see it in the way boys are punished and marginalized in school for not being enough like girls. We see it in politically correct speech that attempts to change the way people think by harassing them for their choice of words.

The anger and frustration that drove feminism's history is legitimate; women have been devalued and dishonored ever since the fall of man. Very real, harmful inequities needed to be addressed, and it's important to honor some of the success of feminist activists. But at the same time, we need to examine and expose the worldview that fuels much of feminist thought.

Modern-day feminism got its major start when Betty Friedan wrote her landmark book *The Feminine Mystique,* in which she coined the phrase "The Housewife Blahs" to describe millions of unfulfilled women. There are many reasons that women can feel unfulfilled and dishonored, but from a Christian perspective I would suggest that this is what life feels like when we are disconnected from God and disconnected from living

out *His* purpose for our lives. As Augustine said, “We are restless, O God, until we find our rest in Thee.”

Betty Friedan looked at unhappy, unfulfilled women and diagnosed the problem as *patriarchy,* which means a male-dominated society. If women are unhappy, the reason is that men are in charge.

The early feminists decided that women are oppressed because bearing and raising children is a severe limitation and liability. What makes women *different* from men equals *weakness.* The next step, then, was to overcome that difference so that women could be just like men. The invention of the birth control pill helped fuel that illusion.

Out of the consciousness-raising groups in the ’70s came a shift in the view of women’s differences. Instead of seeing those differences as weakness, they now saw those differences as a source of pride and confidence. It was now a good thing to be a woman.

The next step in feminist thought was that women were not just *equal* to men, they were *better* than men. This spawned famous quotes like Gloria Steinem’s comment that “A woman without a man is like a fish without a bicycle.”{1} Male-bashing became the sport of the ’90s.

Feminism says, “The problem is patriarchy—male dominated society.” The problem is actually the sin of people within a God-ordained hierarchy. In a fallen world, there are going to be problems between men and women, and especially abuses of power. We must not confuse the abuses of the structure with the structure itself.{2}

Feminism and the Church

Feminism has so permeated our culture that we should not be surprised that it has impacted the church as well. Religious feminists uncovered the “Church Women Blahs.” People became

aware that for the most part, women were relegated to service positions like making coffee and rocking babies. If a woman had gifts in teaching, shepherding, administration or evangelism, she was out of luck.

The *Magna Carta* for Christian feminists is Galatians 3:28: "In Christ there is no male or female." However, the context of this verse is not about equal rights, but that all believers have the same position of humility at the foot of the Cross. The issue is not capability, but God-ordained positions within a God-ordained authority structure of male leadership. Other biblical passages that go into detail about gender-dependent roles show that Galatians 3:28 cannot mean the obliteration of those roles.

There are two main areas where religious feminists seek to change gender roles: the role of women in the church, and the role of women in marriage. The discussion has produced two camps: egalitarians and complementarians.

Egalitarians are the feminist camp, with an emphasis on equality of *roles*, not just *value.* They believe that hierarchy produces inequality, and that different means unequal. The solution, therefore, is to get rid of the differences between men's and women's roles. Women should be ordained, allowed to occupy the office of pastor and elder, and exercise authority over others in the church. Instead of differences in the roles of husband and wife, both spouses are called to mutual submission.

Egalitarians are reacting against a very real problem in the church. But the problem of authoritarian men, and women relegated to minor serving positions, is due to an abuse and distortion of the hierarchy God designed. Egalitarians reject the male authority structure along with the abuse of that structure.

Complementarians believe that God has ordained a hierarchy of

authority in the church and within the family that reflects the hierarchy of authority within the Trinity. And just as there is equality in the Trinity, there is equality in the church and in marriage because we are all made in the image of God. Women are just as gifted as men, but there are biblical restrictions on the exercise of some of those gifts, such as not teaching men from a position of authority, and not occupying the office of pastor or elder. In marriage, wives are called to submit to their husbands. Mutual submission in marriage is no more appropriate than submission of parents to children.

Christian feminists did not evaluate whether the structures or hierarchies of leadership were there because God designed them that way. They just demanded wholesale change. But some things are worth keeping!

Feminism on Campus

As with the family and the church, feminism has had an impact on our college campuses. Abraham Lincoln once warned, "The philosophy of the school room in one generation will become the philosophy of government in the next." What happens on college campuses eventually affects the rest of the culture, and nowhere is feminism's pervasiveness more evident than in our colleges.

A new discipline of Women's Studies has arisen in many universities. These courses usually stress women's literature, treating with contempt anything written by "dead white European males." They often incorporate women's religions in the curricula, especially the Goddess worship of Wicca on campus. The main tenet of this pagan religion is that the worshipper is in harmony with Mother Earth and with all life. They worship the Goddess, which is described as "the immanent life force, . . . Mother Nature, the Earth, the Cosmos, the interconnectedness of all life."{3} Many witches (followers of Wicca, not Satanists) and pagans are involved in women's

studies programs because, as one Wiccan Web site put it, “Many feminists have turned to Wicca and the role of priestess for healing and strength after the patriarchal oppression and lack of voice for women in the major world religions.”{4}

Christianity is often portrayed on college campuses, and especially within Women’s Studies, as an abusive religion. There are several reasons. First, because Christianity is hierarchical, teaching differentiation of roles and that some are to submit to and follow others. Second, their skewed view of the Bible is that Christianity teaches that women are inferior to men. Third, Christ was male, so he is insufficient as a role model for women and can’t possibly understand what it means to be a woman. And fourth, since the language of the Bible is male-oriented and patriarchal (both of which are evil), it must be dismissed or changed.

Feminism impacts dating relationships on campus. Heterosexual dating is often colored by an attempt to persuade women that all men are potential rapists and cannot be trusted. Even a remark meant to compliment a woman is taken as sexist and unacceptable. One woman, wearing a short skirt on campus, heard someone whistle appreciatively. She strode into the women’s study center complaining, “I’ve just been raped!”

Angry feminists convey a hatred and fear of men as part of the feminist ideology. When it comes to dating, for a number of feminists, lesbianism is considered the only appropriate option. If men are brutes and idiots, why would anyone want to have an intimate relationship with one? In fact, there’s a new acronym on campus, GUG: “Gay until graduation.” But the fact is, most women really like men; that’s always been a problem for feminists. Let’s consider more problems that result from feminism.

The Problematic Legacy of Feminism

Feminists started from a reasonable point in recognizing a

most unhappy aspect of life in a fallen world: women tend to be dishonored, disrespected, and devalued by many men. This is as true in religious systems as it is in society and political systems. Feminists started out trying to rectify this problem first by trying to prove that women were as good as men. Then they decided that women were better than men. They ended up trying to erase the lines of distinction between men and women altogether. This has resulted in tremendous confusion about what it means to be a woman, as well as what it means to be a man. And naturally, it has produced a lot of confusion in relationships as well. This confusion ranges from men who are afraid to open doors for women for fear of receiving a rude tongue-lashing, to women who are baffled in the workplace because the men they compete against at work won't ask them out on a date.

Radical feminist thought despised much of what it means to be a woman—to be receptive and responsive and relational, to treasure marriage and family. Only masculine traits and behaviors and jobs were deemed valuable. Nonetheless, many young women are confused by the messages they are getting from the culture: that an education and a job are the only worthwhile pursuits, and the social capital of marriage and family is no longer valued. However, these same women feel guilty and confused for finding themselves still longing for marriage and family when they're supposed to be content without them. One college student said, "I've taken all the women's studies courses—I know that marriage and motherhood are traps—but I still want to do both."{5}

The legacy of feminism is the refusal of the God-given role of men to be initiator, protector and provider. And the God-given role of women to be responder, nurturer and helper is equally disdained. The consequence of this rebellion is relational confusion, especially in the home. Dads aren't communicating to their sons why it's a blessing to be male, because frankly, they're not sure that it is. The message of feminism is that

being male is a joke or a curse. Moms aren't teaching their daughters the basic skill sets that homemakers need because they're too busy at their jobs and besides, haven't we been taught that being a homemaker is demeaning? As a mentoring Mom to mothers of preschoolers, I see how many young women are totally clueless about how to be a wife and mother because those essential skills just weren't considered important by their mothers. Radical feminism hates family and families, and we all suffer as a result.

Feminism says, "The problem is patriarchy—male dominated society." The problem is actually the sin of people within a God-ordained hierarchy. The heart of feminism is a rebellion against the abuses of this God-ordained hierarchy, but it's also a rebellion against God's plan itself. This is a perfect example of throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Feminists believe they have the right to reinvent reality and to change the rules to suit them. This rebellious belief system has had some disastrous effects on our culture and society.

For example, one of feminism's biggest achievements was the legalization of abortion. *Keeping* it legal is one of feminism's biggest goals: see, if women are to be truly free, then they must be free to decide whether or not to carry a pregnancy to term. A woman's ability to conceive, give birth, and nurture babies is seen as weakness and vulnerability, because women can be forced to be impregnated and to bear unwanted babies. Removing the consequence of sexual activity, and getting rid of unwanted pregnancy to cancel out a woman's so-called "weakness," is important to many feminists. So, since 1973, there have been over 40 million abortions in the U.S.{6}. But that only tells part of the story; "while some women report relatively little trauma following abortion, for many, the experience is devastating, causing severe and long-lasting emotional, psychological and spiritual trauma."{7} I have the privilege of helping post-abortal women grieve the loss of their babies and receive God's forgiveness for their

sin. They know that feminism's insistence that abortion is every woman's right is a lie.

Another impact of feminism is seen in the feminization of American schools. Feminism's disrespect for men and boys has shaped schools and educational policy around values and methods that favor girls over boys. Competition, a natural state of being for many boys, is considered harmful and evil, to be replaced with girl-friendly cooperative, relational activities. "Schools are denying the very behavior that makes little boys boys. In Southern California, a mother was stunned to find out that her son was disciplined for running and jumping over a bench at recess."{8} My colleague Don Closson wrote, "Gender crusaders believe that if they can influence little boys early enough, they can make them more like little girls."{9}

To despise the glory of masculinity is to reject the very image of God. To despise the treasure of femininity is to reject what the Bible calls the glory of man.{10} That's the problem with feminism: it is a rejection of what God has called good. It has gone too far in addressing the inequities of living in a fallen world. It's a rebellion against God's right to be God and our responsibility to submit joyfully to Him.

Notes

1. Actually, I have discovered, it wasn't original with Ms. Steinem. She had this to say in a letter she wrote to *Time* magazine in autumn 2000: "In your note on my new and happy marital partnership with David Bale, you credit me with the witticism 'A woman needs a man like a fish needs a bicycle.' In fact, Irina Dunn, a distinguished Australian educator, journalist and politician, coined the phrase back in 1970 when she was a student at the University of Sydney." Irina Dunn has confirmed this story, in an e-mail of January 28, 2002: "Yes,

indeed, I am the one Gloria referred to. I was paraphrasing from a phrase I read in a philosophical text I was reading for my Honours year in English Literature and Language in 1970. It was "A man needs God like a fish needs a bicycle." My inspiration arose from being involved in the renascent women's movement at the time, and from being a bit if a smart-arse. I scribbled the phrase on the backs of two toilet doors, would you believe, one at Sydney University where I was a student, and the other at Soren's Wine Bar at Woolloomooloo, a seedy suburb in south Sydney. The doors, I have to add, were already favoured graffiti sites."
www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/414150.html
2. I am indebted to the wisdom and insight of Mary Kassian as expressed in her excellent book *The Feminist Gospel* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1992).
3. www.cog.org/wicca/about.html
4. Ibid.
5. Quoted by Barbara DeFoe Whitehead, *Mars Hill Audio Journal* No. 61, Mar./Apr. 2003.
6. www.nrlc.org/abortion/aboramt.html
7. www.hopeafterabortion.com/aftermath/
8. William Pollack, *Real Boys: Rescuing Our Sons from the Myths of Boyhood,* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1998), 94. The entire quote is from Don Closson, "The Feminization of American Schools".
9. Ibid.
10. 1 Cor. 11:7

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