

We Are Special

January 17, 2013

A recent study has found what many of us have observed for some time. College students think they are special. One newspaper put it this way: "If you asked a college freshman today who the Greatest Generation is, they might respond by pointing in a mirror." The study documented young people's unprecedented level of self-infatuation.

Psychologist Jean Twenge found that over the last four decades of research on college freshman, there has been a dramatic rise in self-confidence. For example, they describe themselves as "above average" in academic ability and in their personal lives. The problem is that there is a stark disconnect between their opinions of themselves and their actual ability.

I have quoted Jean Twenge before in other studies that she has done. For example, she has found that students suffer from what she calls "ambition inflation." As their ambition increases, it reaches levels of unrealistic expectations. She has also found in another study that there has been a 30 percent increase toward narcissism in students since 1979.

The changing culture is part of the reason for this dramatic change. She explains: "Our culture used to encourage modesty and humility and not bragging about yourself." If someone did that in the past, we called that person "stuck-up" or conceited. Today the culture often rewards such attitudes and behavior.

I would also argue that social media encourages and accentuates this trend. Students posting pictures of themselves on Facebook and Instagram, uploading videos on YouTube, and leaving numerous comments on Twitter receive positive feedback for such behavior. These technologies provide additional vehicles to feed their narcissism.

These studies remind us that this generation needs guidance from pastors and parents so they can apply biblical perspectives on success, humility, and self-image. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Private Sin Impacts Society

June 11, 2012

The June issue of the *AFA Journal* focuses due attention on how five areas of private sin impacts all of society. This is such an important issue since a very large portion of our society has bought into the idea that "what I do in private has no impact on the public." This current issue reminds us that it is not true!

The first area the article addresses is pornography. Dr. Jill Manning documents that about 170 million Americans use the Internet and that nearly one-third go online "for sexual purposes." Her research has also revealed that online sexual activity is "a hidden public health hazard" that is exploding.

Substance abuse is another example of how private sin impacts society. The U.S. Department of Justice has found that more than one-third of convicted felons had been drinking alcohol when they committed their offense. Another study found that more than one-quarter of state and federal drug offenders committed crimes in order to get money to support their drug habits.

A third area is crime in general. The statistics are staggering. The National Center for Victims of Crime estimates that just three areas (robberies, arson, and Internet fraud) cost us more than \$1.6 trillion.

Abortion is a fourth area. Pro-choice advocates say that it shouldn't matter to society what a woman does with her body. Apart from the obvious moral objections to abortion are the social and economic costs. As one expert from the National Right to Life observed, "You can't lose fifty-three million lives and not expect it to have a serious economic impact."

A final area documented in the article is fatherlessness. U. S. Ambassador Gregory Slayton has been on my radio program a number of times and documents the social and economic impact of fatherless homes. The estimated price tag for fatherhood failure is more than a trillion dollars over the last decade alone.

These few examples show the error in believing that private sin has no impact on society. We are paying a huge cost for people's sin. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Young Christians Leaving Church

Oct. 5, 2011

Why are young Christians leaving church? There are lots of reasons, and the latest Barna Report lists six reasons that can be found in the book by David Kinnaman titled, *You Lost Me: Why Young Christians are Leaving the Church and Rethinking Church*.

The first reason young people are leaving is due to the feeling that churches are overprotective. This generation has unprecedented access to ideas and worldviews. But they feel that pastors, church leaders, and members of the congregation

fear the world and are often ignoring problems in the real world.

Young Christians also feel that Christianity is shallow. A significant percentage say that church is boring and many others say “faith is not relevant to my career or interests.”

A third reason for the exodus is that churches often come across as antagonistic to science. Three out of ten young adults with a Christian background feel that “churches are out of step with the scientific world we live in.” Many who majored in science say they are struggling to find ways to stay faithful to their Christian beliefs.

A different view of sex is a fourth reason Christian young people want to leave the church. Sadly most young Christians are as sexually active as their non-Christian peers, even though they have more orthodox views about sexuality.

The exclusive nature of Christianity is fifth reason Christian young people leave the church. They have grown up with the tolerance gospel and have trouble reconciling the claims of Christ and the exclusivity of Christian belief.

Finally, Christian young people also feel that the church is not a friendly place for those who doubt. In fact, they say that most churches do not allow them to express their doubts openly.

The church in the 21st century faces a significant challenge from Christian young people who are trying to reconcile the Bible and Christian teaching with their social experiences. We cannot ignore their concerns, but neither should we affirm their unbiblical views about sexuality or the exclusivity of the gospel. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

Muslim Conversion

Sept. 1 , 2011

There are so many encouraging stories of Muslims who have committed their lives to Christ. I thought I might share this one from a friend who works with the Jesus film project and is now using a video entitled Magdalena to reach Muslims.

A young Muslim girl was very strong in her belief, choosing to wear a veil even though that is not something that is very common in her region. Nevertheless, she was preaching a strong message of Islam and admonishing every woman in her village to wear a veil and conform to the strict form of Islam.

One day she went to the market to buy a veil for her cousin as a birthday gift. She told the shop keeper that she knew her cousin would not wear the veil. But she felt as a Muslim it was her obligation to convince her cousin that Islamic law requires it.

The shop owner took the opportunity and gave her a Magdalena video telling her, "I am doing the same thing as a Christian. I am not forcing you to view the movie, but my Lord ordered me to share His message of salvation with you. Please watch this movie." She took the movie in order to not offend the shop owner and left with the veil and the movie.

The next day at 9:00 o'clock she returned to the shop with tears in her eyes saying, "I want to tell you one thing: I have worn a veil for almost five years and I wanted my cousin to be veiled. After watching this movie I understood that the best veil I will have with me forever and for every one is the Spirit and the message of Jesus Christ in me. Jesus gave me power, assurance, new life, dignity and peace." She removed her veil and proclaimed with tears and a smile, "I am a Christian now."

This is but one of millions of stories of Muslims coming to Christ due to personal witness, proclamation through broadcasting, and videos. And it illustrates what can happen when we are willing to pass on a tract, a book, or a video to the Muslims we meet. Most of all, we should all be encouraged by what is happening in our world today. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Air Force Suspends Ethics Class

August 17, 2011

The Air Force suspended an ethics course that has been taught by its chaplains for more than twenty years because the material included passages from the Bible. The course in question carries the title "Christian Just War Theory." It was taught by chaplains at the Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. Both Old Testament and New Testament verses were used.

The challenge to the class was brought by the Military Religious Freedom Foundation that argued that the course violated the constitutional separation of church and state. A spokesman for the Air Force said the purpose of the course was to help missile launch officers understand that "what they are embarking on is very difficult and you have to have a certain amount of ethics about what you are doing to do that job." He went on to say that the class was suspended the same day the complaint was filed.

The class is currently under review by Air Force officials in order to determine whether to revise the material or end the

class. Given the speed at which they suspended the class, I suspect that this will be the last we hear of a class on “Christian Just War Theory.”

Considering the current climate, I guess it is surprising that such a class lasted as long as it did. Various groups calling for freedom from religion have been challenging any teaching or event that could possibly be considered an unconstitutional establishment of religion.

David French, senior counsel at the American Center for Law and Justice, says there is not violation of the Constitution. He has served in the military and reminds us that “Just War theory has been a vital part of American military history for the last several hundred years.” He believes it is “another attempt to cleanse American history of its religious realities.”

Yes, it does seem to be just another case of removing the Bible and biblical principles from public life. I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

Already Gone

August 29, 2011

Most parents believe that their children’s Christian faith really won’t come under attack until they leave home for college. They have seen other kid’s faith falter in college and naturally assume that the university environment is toxic to a Christian’s faith. While the last part of that assumption may be true, the rest of these assumptions are false.

First, Christian young people begin to have doubts about their Christian faith long before they head off to college. That is

the researched conclusion from the book *Already Gone* by Ken Ham and Britt Beemer. On my radio program they explained the results of their research. American Research Group made 20,000 phone calls and conducted detailed surveys of 1,000 twenty-somethings who used to attend evangelical churches on a regular basis. When asked when they first had doubts, 40 percent said in Middle School and 44 percent said in High School.

The study found that we are losing our Christian kids in middle school and high school rather than college. The title of the book says it all. They are “already gone” even though they are sitting in the pews and going to church. Ham and Beemer concluded that the youth in our churches are not being taught apologetics and therefore do not know how to answer the skeptical questions of our age.

A second issue is whether the university is toxic to Christian faith. Of course it is, but the latest studies by sociologist Christian Smith shows that youth that do not go to college show the same (even slightly greater) drop off in religious commitment. In other words, the culture is just as toxic to Christian faith as the university.

Parents (as well as pastors, teachers, and youth leaders) need to understand the crucial need to prepare our youth for a culture that is hostile to their faith. They may be in our churches and youth groups, but there is growing evidence that many of them are “already gone.” I’m Kerby Anderson, and that’s my point of view.

What Bible?

May 29, 2013

Sometimes the only way you can respond to a statement is to ask, What Bible are they reading? That happened recently on my radio program when Penna Dexter and I were interviewing Joseph Farah of WorldNetDaily. He said that he allows commentators of various political persuasions to write and post their columns.

One of those columnists is Bill Press who recently wrote: "Nowhere in the Bible does God condemn homosexuality." The predictable response from us was, What Bible is he reading? He goes on to argue that "nowhere in the Bible does God say marriage must only be between one man and one woman. After all, Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines."

Actually, the argument goes the other way. If you legalize same-sex marriage, then sooner or later you will probably legalize polygamy. Every argument for redefining marriage to allow same-sex unions also is an argument for other marital arrangements.

But the more important question is whether the Bible ever condemns homosexuality. Two passages in Leviticus call it an abomination. The Apostle Paul in his letter to the church in Rome and the church in Corinth condemns homosexuality. Those are four verses for starters.

But of course, we can also understand the negative prohibitions by looking at the positive principles. Genesis 2 sets forth the biblical principle of a man and woman leaving father and mother to become one flesh. Jesus refers back to this foundational principle in Matthew 19 (which we also can find again in Mark 10).

And the Bible also teaches that this sexual sin has consequences not only for the individual but for the nation.

Joseph Farah said: "This is about as serious as the Bible gets in condemnation. This is not only sin that affects the individuals involved, it's the kind of sin that has ramifications for the entire nation."

While it may be easy for Bible-believing Christians to shake their heads and ask, What Bible is he reading? But in this culture of biblical illiteracy, many people are likely to take the word of Bill Press rather than look it up in the Word of God. That's why we must firmly, but lovingly, teach God's Word. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Maximum Faith

May 31, 2011

How does God transform the lives of Christians? If you think the answer to that question is easy, perhaps you should talk with George Barna. Six years after beginning what he assumed would be a relatively typical research process that sought to better understand how God transforms people's lives, he discovered he had tackled a deeply challenging and amazingly revealing journey. The end product was his new book, *Maximum Faith*.

After lots of research and exhausting surveys, he was able to describe what he calls ten stop points on the journey to wholeness. Stop 1 is ignorance of the concept or existence of sin. Millions of people grow up oblivious to the fact that God exists and that we have a sin nature. Stop 2 is an awareness and indifference to sin. As life goes on, people gain exposure to the idea of sin, but many do not accept it as valid or significant. Stop 3 is concerned about the implications of personal sin. And stop 4 is a decision to confess sin and ask

Jesus Christ to be savior. It is worth noting that about 2/3rd of Americans are stuck in one of these four stops.

Stop 5 is a commitment to faith activities. A believer gets involved in church activities (church service, Sunday School classes, etc.). Another quarter of Americans are at this stop. This means that nearly 90 percent of Americans are stuck at one of the first five stops and are not therefore not experiencing the other five stops that George Barna has identified.

Stop 6 is a prolonged period of spiritual discontent. Stop 7 is an experience of personal brokenness. Stop 8 is a decision to surrender and submit fully to God. Stop 9 is enjoying a profound intimacy with the love for God. And stop 10 is experiencing a profound compassion and love for humanity.

It is worth noting that only a fraction of a percent find themselves in these last two stops. In general, Christians in America are not experiencing what God intends for them. Put another way, most Christians are captive to the culture and therefore unwilling to seek godliness. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Ominous Ruling from the UK

March 14, 2011

A landmark ruling in the U.K. will have a major impact on the future of foster care and adoption in that country. The High Court suggested that Christians with traditional beliefs on sexual ethics are unsuitable as foster care parents. And they went on to argue that gay rights trump religious beliefs and freedom of conscience.

A key lawyer in the case was Paul Diamond, a prominent Christian barrister in England. I have had him on my radio program on two occasions to talk about how ideas in the U.K. often make it to the U.S. He has noticed that our legal system is going down the same path as England and has wanted to warn us about this trend. What happens in the U.K. doesn't stay in the U.K. It crosses the Atlantic to our nation. Many justices are interested in trends in international law and work to implement those ideas in our opinions. And when the Supreme Court takes a break over the summer, many of the justices go over to Europe to study and lecture.

This current case has ominous implications for Christians in England and could eventually have an impact in this country. A married couple (Eunice and Owen Johns) applied to be foster care parents in 2007. The Derby City Council blocked their application because the Johns were not willing to promote the practice of homosexuality to a young child. Both parties asked the High Court to rule on whether they could be foster parents.

The High Court Judges upheld an Equalities and Human Rights submission that children that might be in the care of the couple risk being "infected" (their word) by Christian moral beliefs. That stated that Christian beliefs on sexual ethics may be "inimical" to children. In other words, these Christian beliefs are harmful to children.

While it is true that this ruling merely applies to this particular couple, it signals that other Christians who hold to orthodox Christian views on sex, marriage, and family are likely to face difficulties in the future. This ruling will likely be applied to any Christian wanting to be a foster parent or adopt a child. And it is possible that some day in the future we may see a similar ruling in America. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.

Psalm 8

April 22, 2011

If you study astronomy for very long, you can feel very small. We are a small planet in one solar system in one of many galaxies. Just consider some of the comments by scientists about our place in the universe.

Werner von Braun said: "We find that we live on an insignificant planet of a humdrum star lost in a galaxy tucked away in some forgotten corner of a universe in which there are far more galaxies than people."

Astronaut Neil Armstrong said he felt very small when he was in space. "It suddenly struck me that that tiny pea, pretty and blue, was the Earth. I put up my thumb and shut one eye, and my thumb blotted out the planet Earth. I didn't feel like a giant. I felt very small."

Stephen Hawking said: "We are just an advanced breed of monkeys on a minor planet of a very average star. But we can understand the universe. That makes us something very special." I don't know about you, but I don't feel very special just because I can understand the universe.

David asks the same question in Psalm 8. Are human beings special? Speaking to God he says: "When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him?"

David then gives God's answer to this important question. "Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion

over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.”

Our significance doesn't come from being on planet Earth or even from understanding the nature of the universe. Our significance comes from the fact that an all-powerful, loving God created us in His image and gave us dominion over His creation.

Astronomy interpreted from a naturalistic worldview doesn't give us significance. Only a Christian worldview which teaches that we are God's special creation can give us true significance. I'm Kerby Anderson, and that's my point of view.