

# When Your Teen Rejects Your Values – A Christian Response

*Rick Rood looks at a typical teenage rebellion and offers a plan based on a biblical worldview and Christian values to help lead them through rebellion to a strong Christian walk. By reacting from a truly Christian perspective and following a biblical plan of action, our chances of successfully making it through to adulthood and greatly increased.*

## The Fact of Teenage Rebellion

Mark Twain once advised parents that when their child turns 13 they should put them in a barrel, close the lid, and feed them through a hole in the side. When they turn 16, Twain suggested parents close the hole! Twain was a humorist, and we laugh about his counsel. But beneath the laughter is the recognition that the teenage years are seldom easy...for the teen or their parents! And it's particularly challenging when we find that our teen is rejecting our values.

Admittedly, in tackling this issue we are taking on a real lion! If there is anything more humbling than being the parent of a rebelling teenager, it's attempting to pass on advice to others who are struggling with this same situation. But our prayer is that this pamphlet will offer some help and encouragement to parents of a challenging teen.

"Adolescence" is the label we attach to the time of life from the onset of puberty to maturity. It denotes the stage of life during which a young person moves from childhood to adulthood, from dependence upon parents to independence. It's a time of great change not only physically, but emotionally, mentally, spiritually and socially. It's a time when teens are asking questions like "Who am I?," "What do I believe?," "How do I fit into life in this world?"...when they're searching for their

identity as individuals.

Adolescence is also a time when some degree of strain develops between teens and their parents. No longer do parents appear to be infallible and beyond contradiction. Our flaws are much more visible...and probably exaggerated by our teen. It's a time when the values of their peers generally appear much more attractive than their parents', and when acceptance by their friends will likely become much more important than that of their parents.

It is not uncommon in their quest for identity and independence for teens to reject some of the values of their parents, their church, and society. And to a degree this is not unhealthy. Young people need to develop their own convictions about life. And part of the process may involve challenging the values and convictions they have been taught. Some may challenge them more overtly, and others more covertly. Some may challenge them in relatively minor areas such as dress, appearance, music, or the way they keep their room. Others may show total disregard for the moral and spiritual values of their family, their church, and even society. Parents who allow for no individuality in some of the more "minor" areas (such as dress and appearance), may be challenging their teen to test them in the areas that are of much greater consequence.

Several years back, a group that included Dr. James Dobson conducted a survey of some 35,000 parents. The survey concluded that while 25% of teens are of "average" temperament, 40% were considered to be more on the "compliant" side, and 35% on the "strong-willed" side. (More boys than girls fell in this latter category.) Among the strong-willed teens, 74% were found to be in some degree of rebellion during their teenage years, 26% of them to a severe degree. Furthermore, it was surprisingly found that the strong-willed were most susceptible to the influence of their peers! It was no surprise to find that 72% of parents of strong-willed

teens characterized their relationship as “difficult” or “very stressful”! (*Parenting Isn't for Cowards*, by Dr. James Dobson, chaps. 3 & 4).

If you identify with this group of parents, you are definitely not alone! And perhaps this realization is an important first step in responding to a teen who rejects our values!

## **The Sources of Teenage Rebellion**

Many a parent has wondered if the teen living in their home is really the same child that they played with and enjoyed just a few years before! And it is only natural for them to ask “Why?” “Why is this happening? And why is this happening to us?” Most parents are probably also asking themselves, “Where did we go wrong? What could we have done to prevent this from happening?” These questions are not only painful to ask, but are equally difficult to answer. And it's important not to jump to simplistic conclusions in trying to do so.

It is very likely that there is more than one reason why our teen is rejecting our values. And there really are many possible reasons. One that we noted yesterday is that it is simply the nature of adolescents to search for their own identity and independence. We also noted the role that innate temperament plays in teenage rebellion. A survey conducted by a group including Dr. James Dobson concluded that nearly 3/4 of children born with a strong-willed temperament exhibited some degree of rebellion during their teen years. There are, however, a number of other possible reasons why our teen is rejecting our values. It's important to look beyond their behavior to the reasons behind it.

First, it's possible that there are physiological factors involved. Young people who have learning disabilities, or attention deficit/hyperactive disorder are going to be much more inclined to rebel, in part over the frustration they are experiencing in meeting the expectations of their parents,

teachers and other authority figures. Any physical illness, or even imbalanced or insufficient diet can affect a teen's emotional and behavioral pattern. Even apart from such irregularities, the changes that are taking place in an adolescent's hormonal system are apt to result in more volatile emotions.

Second, it is possible that there are difficulties of a psychological nature, or even disorders of a more serious nature involved. In this latter category would fall young people who are manic-depressive or schizophrenic. It is important to realize that many of these disorders have genetic and biological sources, requiring the attention of a medical professional. It is more likely, however, that a teen may be struggling with low self-esteem or depression...and may be engaging in conduct that is aimed at obtaining the acceptance of his peers, or at gaining the attention of his parents or other authority figures (even if it's negative in nature!).

Third, it is not uncommon for a young person to express his anger (and even guilt) over the tensions that may exist within the family at large or between his parents by acting in a rebellious fashion.

Traumatic experiences such as a death in the family, prolonged illness, or serious financial problems can be a source of rebellion. They may even result in a teen's questioning the existence or the goodness of God, and in rejecting of God's moral principles.

We must not fail to mention the negative influence of peers, and of the values portrayed and endorsed in today's movies, television, and by the lyrics of much of the music that young people listen to. All of these media are communicating a message that more often than not challenges the right of anyone (including parents) to limit their freedom or stifle their individuality.

Finally, it is not impossible that our own example as parents, or our parenting style has contributed to their rebellion to a greater or lesser degree. We will return to this issue later in the week, and tomorrow we will begin to look at the question of whether parents are always at fault when their teens reject their values.

## **A Parent's Reaction to His Teen's Rebellion**

In the previous two programs we have briefly examined some basic facts about the nature of teenage rebellion and some of its possible sources. We noted that there are many possible reasons why a teen might choose to reject his parents' values. It is not uncommon, however, for those of us who are Christian parents to feel that we bear the greater (if not exclusive) share of responsibility. After all, have we not been taught that if we train our children "in the way they should go, when they are old they will not depart from it"? (Prov. 22:6). If they do depart from the way they should go, certainly it is our fault for not training them properly!

At the outset, we must affirm that parents are responsible before God to provide the training and instruction that will guide them in His way (Eph. 6:4b). The scriptures also warn us that it is possible for us to "provoke our children to anger" (Eph. 6:4a) and to "exasperate them so that they become discouraged" (Col. 3:21). When our teen is rebelling, it's appropriate for us to evaluate the impact that our own parenting style has had in our child's life.

We must just as emphatically, however, reject the notion that teenage rebellion is invariably the consequence of parental mismanagement. To believe that it is, is to accept the premise that all human behavior is caused by external influences. Behavior may be influenced (even very strongly) by genetic and environmental factors, but to say that there is no such thing

as human will and choice is to deny a fundamental element of biblical teaching. In the final analysis, a young person's rejection of godly values is a personal choice.

Many Christians, however, find themselves adopting an essentially behavioristic and deterministic philosophy in their acceptance of a common interpretation of the verse we alluded to a few moments ago, Proverbs 22:6, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Many a parent has concluded from this proverb that if his teen does "depart from the way he should go," it is because he has failed to provide the training he needed. But that this proverb (as many proverbs) should be taken as general observation about life, rather than as an absolute divine promise, can be deduced from two facts. First, if we do take this proverb as an absolute promise, then other proverbs in the book must be also. Yet there are a number of proverbs for which exceptions can be found on a regular basis. For example, Proverbs 10:27 says that "The fear of the Lord prolongs life, but the years of the wicked will be shortened." This is a general truth. But there are innumerable examples of the wicked who have lived long on the earth, and of the godly whose lives have been cut short. A second reason is that to take it as an absolute promise would contradict the teaching of many other proverbs that it is possible for a young person to reject the training his parents provide. Proverbs 15:5 says, "A fool rejects his father's discipline." The writer of Proverbs also appeals to sons to "receive" and "be attentive" to their parents' instruction (2:1-2), and warns against "neglecting" and "abandoning" their teaching (4:1-2). (Cf. also Deut. 21:18-21)

We must conclude, then, that when our teen rejects our values, we must prayerfully discern to what degree both we and they are responsible for what is happening, as well as what other influences are at work. In some cases, the parents may bear a great deal of responsibility; in others they may bear very

little. The important thing, however, is not so much “who is to blame,” but what ought we to do from this point on in our relationship with our teen.

## **A Plan for Parents**

We have looked at the nature of teenage rebellion. We’ve also addressed the question of whether it is always the parents’ fault when their teen rejects their values. But today, we want to focus on how we should respond as parents of a challenging teen.

Our first response must be to look beyond the rebellious behavior to the sources that lie behind it. If we suspect there are factors of a physiological nature, we must not neglect to enlist the help of a qualified physician. Nor should we reject the aid of a godly counselor in addressing issues of depression or self image that may lie hidden in our teen’s heart. But neither should we neglect to look to the Scriptures as our ultimate source of wisdom.

As we do, it will be tempting to look initially for ways in which we can promote change in our teenager’s behavior. But the one factor in our child’s life over which we have the most influence is our own character and approach to parenting. And this is where we must begin—by reflecting on the model which God himself provides in his character and in his relationship with us as his children. In God as our Father we find that perfect balance of judgment and grace, of discipline and love, compassion and firmness. This is a standard from which all of us fall short, the one to which we will never fully attain in this life; but the one by which we must measure our lives, and toward which we must continually strive! Larry Crabb has said, “The key to becoming a more effective parent is to become an increasingly godly person.” (*Parenting Adolescents* by Kevin Huggins, p. 258) Wise is the parent who makes this his primary goal!

Wise too is the parent who resists the impulse to project a perfect image to his teen, but who echoes the prayer of David: "Search me, O God, and know my heart...see if there be any hurtful way in me; and guide me in the everlasting way" (Ps. 139:23-24). Wise is the parent who is willing to offer a sincere apology to his child, and to seek forgiveness for ways he has genuinely fallen short as a parent. But wise also is the parent who refuses to brood over past failures, but who having learned from his mistakes sets out in a new direction! (Phil. 3:13-14). And wise is the parent, as well, who guards against trying to "atone" for past mistakes by becoming overly kind or permissive.

As we seek to allow God to shape our lives after his own model as the divine parent, we will do well to keep two primary qualities in view. The first is an unconditional love for our child. This is the kind of love God manifests toward us. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in that while we were yet sinners (while we were his enemies!), Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8). This is the kind of love He seeks to instill in us for our teenager, regardless of how much anger or contempt he or she has shown toward us—a love that asks not how they can meet our needs, but how God can use us to minister to their genuine needs.

But the second quality is an uncompromising commitment to help our teenager grow toward responsible maturity. "For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines;...but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness" (Heb. 12:6,10). As God guides us in the path of righteousness, and establishes clear expectations for our lives, so must we for our teen. As God disciplines for rebellion through appropriate consequences, so also must we.

Above, we proposed that there are two primary qualities God seeks to instill in those of us who are parents of a teen who is rejecting our values: an unconditional love and an uncompromising commitment to guide them toward responsible

maturity. But how do these qualities take shape in our day to day lives?

How do we show this kind of love toward our teenager? First, we love them when we praise and reward them for the good that we do see in their lives, as God does with us. We love them when we show respect for their feelings and opinions, though not always agreeing with them. We love them when we show interest in and participate with them in activities that are meaningful to them, and refrain from squeezing them into a mold for they were not designed. We love them when we restrain our anger from erupting in violent acts and hurtful words, when we relate as a "fellow struggler," when we don't try to be better than they are at everything, when we handle our own sin in the same way we expect them to, when we listen to their explanations before disciplining them, when we keep alive a sense of hope and excitement about discovering God's purpose for their life!

But the love toward which we strive is also one that guides and disciplines (Prov.13:24). states that "he who loves (his son) disciplines him diligently." Researchers have found that teens are less likely to rebel who grow up in homes that are neither too permissive nor overly authoritarian, where parents gradually allow them more participation in decisions and relinquish more responsibility, while maintaining final authority (*Teen Shaping*, by Len Kageler, chaps. 3 & 12).

What are a few marks of a parent who has this kind of commitment? First, he provides instruction in the ways of the Lord. One teenager who refused to accompany his family to church, was willing to read a chapter of scripture with his father several times a week. By his senior year, they had read through the entire New Testament together! Second, he communicates clear expectations regarding personal conduct (even if parents of his child's friends do not): expectations concerning the use of language in the home, honesty about whereabouts and activities, household chores, attendance at

school, curfew, use of the car, payment for gas, insurance and traffic tickets, drinking, and sexual conduct. Finally, such a parent will enforce meaningful consequences for wilful rebellion. There are some things we are obliged to provide for our child no matter what: a place to live (though it need not be our own home in all situations), food, clothing, and personal respect. But many things that young people take for granted today are privileges that can and must be suspended as a result of irresponsible behavior: use of the phone or TV, tuition for school, use of our car, or even a driver's license. Teenagers who engage in activities that are not only irresponsible but illegal, should have every expectation that their parents will notify the authorities. We do our children no favor when we shield them from the painful consequences of foolish choices. Some teens will become skilled at manipulating their parents through guilt or intimidation. But we must resolve to render such tactics ineffective by refusing to let them work.

God does not hold us responsible for all of our teenager's actions. But He does hold us accountable for the way in which we relate to them as parents—with unconditional love, but uncompromising commitment to responsible maturity.

Yet, even when we do, God provides no guarantee that they will always (or even ever) respond positively. But He does ask that we persist in doing what is right . . . praying for them, gradually relinquishing them to Him who knows them far better than we . . . remembering his exhortation that we “not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary” (Gal. 6:9).

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**Addendum from the author, after his teenagers finished growing up:**

It was over twelve years ago that I wrote the article you have

just read. Since then, I've had a lot of time to reflect on the matter of parenting. If there is one thing I would add to the article, it is the statement in Psalm 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it."

I'm more convinced than ever that though I believe God's word does give us guidance concerning what we as parents should and should not do in relating to our children, being a parent is much more than simply "doing all the right things." It is at root a matter of trusting God to work in our children's lives in his own way and time . . . to accomplish in their lives what only He can. And of course, to trust that He will do the same in our own hearts and lives as well. Sometimes His ways are far beyond our understanding. I have met some who came from very difficult homes, who nonetheless have turned out to be wonderful people. On the other hand, I have met others who grew up in wonderful families, who nonetheless have chosen to walk a very painful path in life. All of this should cause us to make prayer our first priority as parents. There is no greater responsibility or privilege we have as parents than to pray for the children the Lord has entrusted to us. May we never cease to do so.

### **Resources on Parenting Teenagers**

*Emotionally Healthy Teenagers*, by Jay Kesler (Nashville: Word Publishing, 1998)

*Bound by Honor*, by Gary and Greg Smalley (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1998)

*Parenting Today's Adolescent*, by Dennis and Barbara Rainey (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1998)

*How to Really Love Your Teenager*, by Ross Campbell (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1983)

*Parenting Adolescents*, by Kevin Huggins (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1992)

*Teen-Shaping: Solving the Discipline Dilemma—What Works, What Doesn't*, by Len Kageler (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1990)

*Parents & Teenagers*, ed. by Jay Kesler (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1984)

*Parents in Pain*, by John White (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1979)

*Parenting Isn't for Cowards*, by Dr. James Dobson (Waco: Word Books, 1987)

*The Wounded Parent*, by Guy Greenfield (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1991)

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## **Satanism: The World of the Occult – A Christian View of Demonic Worship**

*Russ Wise provides a good understanding of why people are attracted to a negative sounding practice: the worship of Satan. Looking at this issue from a biblical worldview, he presents information on how God can free people who have bought into this lie. From a Christian perspective, we don't need to fear them but instead stand ready to offer them the deliverance found only in Jesus Christ.*

*[Webservant's Note: Since this article was written in 1994, a "new face" of Satanism has emerged, consisting of pagans and atheists who claim to not believe in Satan yet who have appropriated the name "Satanist" for themselves. Many of these young "neo-Satanists" (to coin a phrase) deny the concepts of*

*good and evil, worship themselves, and take great offense at articles like this that describe a Satanic-oriented description of their chosen set of beliefs.*

*Nonetheless, we believe Russ Wise's original article is still worth offering because of the high numbers of people drawn into the openly occult practices described herein.]*

## **The Growing Problem**

The occult is on the rise; many young people are seeking their spiritual identity through Satanism.

Satanism has become an issue of great concern in our society. It is a phenomena that crosses the city limits into the rural areas of our nation. Satanism is not just a big city problem. The news wires carry story after story about young children being kidnapped, only to be found later as victims of some bizarre ritualistic crime. To help us gain a balanced perspective of the subject, C. S. Lewis in his book *Screwtape Letters*, says this about Satan:

There are two equal and opposite errors into which our race can fall about the devils. One is to disbelieve in their existence. The other is to believe and to feel an unhealthy interest in them. They themselves are equally pleased by both errors and hail a materialist or a magician with the same delight.

As satanic involvement among our youth increases, we begin to see the primary goal of such activity. It has become clear, according to the data thus far analyzed by those who investigate satanic involvement, that the primary goal is to alter people's values and turn them against themselves, their beliefs, family, God, and society.

When we begin to take a close look at the occult, it becomes necessary to define terms. There is a great difference between cults and the occult. The term *cult* refers to a group of

people polarized around one individual who is often a magnetic personality. This individual has his or her own understanding of truth, who God is, man's relationship to God, the existence of heaven and hell, as well as a number of other issues of faith. In most cases such individuals incorporate some degree of biblical truth into their teachings in order to gain a certain amount of credibility and in order to deceive the unwary.

The term *occult* means "hidden" or those things or teachings that are "unknown" or secret. So, the occult is the seeking after knowledge of unknown information, knowledge that is gained beyond the five senses. Therefore, knowledge is received by some supernatural involvement or connection.

Anton LaVey of the First Church of Satan in San Francisco, California, says that

Satanism is a blatantly selfish, brutal religion. It is based on the belief that man is inherently a selfish, violent creature... that the earth will be ruled by those who fight to win.

Satanism challenges the biblical teaching regarding man's relationship to others. We are to esteem others better than ourselves, and we are to be team players. In 1 Corinthians we read about being a part of the body of Christ, whereas, Satanism esteems the "self" over others.

Young satanists believe that the strong will rule with Satan. Once they are sufficiently involved, they often make a pact with Satan. They commit themselves to a future date when they will take their own lives by suicide. They believe that if they submit themselves to Satan in death, they will come back in another life as a stronger being and rule with him forever. According to recent statistics, fourteen young people a day take their own lives. A major concern for those who uphold a Judeo-Christian worldview is that this generation is becoming

detached and is losing all sense of morality. Many have lost their mooring. It is imperative for the church, as a corporate body, and we as individuals, to share the message that Jesus Christ is the only possible solution to our emotional and spiritual needs.

## **The Power that Entices**

Power has become an obsession with young satanists. It is sought after on the physical, mental, and spiritual levels. According to one former occultist, the greatest lure into the occult is "power" and "knowledge." Not just corporate power but personal power. Gaining knowledge that others do not possess is another aspect of the occult. When an individuals have more knowledge it affords them a degree of power over those who do not have access to that knowledge.

Likewise, Satanism offers its lure to the youth in our society. Drugs and sex have become the bait that so often ensnare the unsuspecting.

With the increase of satanic activity, a profile of those involved in Satanism has emerged. They are generally from a white, middle to upper-middle class family. In most cases they are bright and do well in school; however, they are often bored and are not challenged to meet their full potential. They tend to have a low self-worth and are unable to distinguish between right and wrong because of their relative ethical system. They often have problems in the home and in relating to other people around them. They use drugs and are sexually promiscuous. It is a rare occasion when these last two elements are not present in the mix.

Abuse, both physically and emotionally, is another aspect of this mix. Young satanists are often abused children who know no other way to relate to people. Some are a part of a multi-generational family involved in worshiping Satan as savior.

Anton LaVey, Satanist High Priest of the First Church of Satan in San Francisco gives us a glimpse of how Satan is seen in his book *The Satanic Bible*:

We hold Satan as a symbolic personal savior, who takes care of mundane, fleshly, carnal things.

Satan has attempted to usurp the place of Christ in redeeming mankind. He has endeavored to establish himself as a god who is equal to or greater than Jehovah and in a sense render God ineffective. LaVey goes on to say that "God exists as a universal force, a balancing factor in nature, too impersonal to care one whit whether we live or die."

Therefore, the Judeo-Christian God is inaccessible and has no compassion. Thus, Satan becomes the solution to man's deepest needs.

Satanism leads one into bondage through mind control and fear, whereas Christianity allows the individual the freedom of choice. We have the opportunity to either accept God's free gift of life or reject Him and simply exist separate from God's love.

## **An Agent of Change**

Music has always been at the center of the youth culture. The problem arises when the lyrics promote aberrant behavior. The Night Stalker, Richard Ramirez of Los Angeles, believed that Satan made him invincible. Police say the style of the brutal rapes and 16 murders Ramirez committed resembled the lyrics of the song "Night Prowler" on AC/DC's LP "Highway to Hell."

Along with Ramirez' fascination with AC/DC, he used cocaine and PCP in conjunction with a deep interest in Satan worship. He believed that Satan would protect him and not allow harm to come to him. According to a *People* magazine article as long ago as September 1985,

Rock 'n roll is turning too often to sex, Satanism, drugs and violence for its major themes and corrupting the values and views of unwary young people.

The lyrics of the last few years of the 1980s have continued on a downward slope. Rachel Matthews, an artist and repertoire representative for Capitol Records, recruits new groups for her company. Her comments regarding a newly signed band reveal what she, as one individual representing the music industry, is looking for in a band:

I was just going, 'Oh (expletive)! I've never heard anything like this!' I've heard plenty of metal and speed metal, but it was just so intense and out of control, just like this caged psychosis going on. I loved it, because you could actually understand the lyrics. And even if they're morbid and gruesome, it's really cool that you could understand what they're saying. It just makes it twice as evil. I like that." (*Dallas Life Magazine*, 1 July 1988)

The demo that interested Ms. Matthews in the group contained songs like "Die in Pain" and "Foaming at the Mouth."

The music that causes the greatest concern is the various types of "metal" music. Metal has been classified into three types. First, is party metal, and it represents the most popular style of music. Groups like Bon Jovi, Motley Crue, and Def Leppard are representative of party metal. They tend to glorify sexuality and the party spirit.

The second type is "thrash metal" represented by groups like Metallica, Anthrax, and Megadeth. The primary focus of "thrash metal" is violence and death.

The third type is known as "black metal" and is overtly satanic. The lyrics encourage such activities as incest, necrophilia, rape, torture, and human sacrifice. Black metal is represented by groups like Venom and Slayer.

King Diamond is perhaps the most satanic of all “black metal” groups. He openly professes Satan and incorporates a large amount of satanic activity into his performances.

Music has always been an agent of change in our society. It tends to shape the moral attitudes of each generation. As Christians we should be especially concerned about the lyrics in the music of the youth culture. We cannot afford to allow another generation to become polluted with the immoral themes found in today’s music. As parents it is imperative that we maintain open communication lines with our young people. Without open communication it becomes improbable that we can affect the listening habits of our children. Second, we cannot be hypocritical in our personal listening habits. Third, we need to become familiar with the type of music our children listen to and be willing to acknowledge the good and be prepared to positively criticize that which is not appropriate within our household.

Last, we as parents need to recognize that if our child is involved in rebellious music, we must attempt to understand what unmet need in his life is being met by his musical diet.

Galatians 5:19-21 says that

The deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery . . . those who practice such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, it is imperative for us as adults and youth to only listen to and think upon those lyrics that would honor God and His principles.

## **The Games of Destruction**

Satan has used a number of tools over the centuries to ensnare the naive. The Ouija Board has proven to be particularly useful. According to the Dictionary of Mysticism the Ouija Board is “an instrument for communication with the spirits of

the dead." The Ouija Board is an open door into the world of the occult and demonic activity. Disembodied spirits speak to the living through the medium of the Ouija Board. This information is believed to be truth from the other side and is not recognized for what it is: Lucifer's delusion to gain our allegiance.

Jane Roberts, the author of *The Seth Material*, relates her story regarding the Ouija Board. She was about to write a book on ESP, and to stimulate her thoughts, she and her husband used a Ouija Board to gain perspective. After a few sessions they were able to receive messages from someone who later identified himself as Seth. The use of the Ouija Board and the gradual, but ever-growing, influence of Seth in Jane's life brought her to the point of possession. Her mind would enter a trance state and a deep male voice would begin to speak, indicating he had a message to get across to our world the wisdom that it was only now ready for. Over a period of ten years Seth produced through Jane over 5000 typewritten records of alleged higher esoteric truth. Then Seth tried to kill her. Though she had not previously believed in demons, this experience changed her mind.

Internationally-known observer of the occult, Kurt Koch, says that by the use of the Ouija Board revelations from the past and predictions about the future are made.

Edmond Gruss tells us in his book *Cults and the Occult in the Age of Aquarius* that there have been "many cases of 'possession' after a period of Ouija Board use." Supernatural contact is commonly made through use of the board and has become a primary tool of Satan in reaching young people.

The Rev. Donald Page of the Christian Spiritualist Church reports that most possession cases he has dealt with are people who have used the Ouija Board. Francoise Strachan's book, *A Company of Devils*, states that the Ouija Board is "one of the easiest and quickest ways to become possessed."

The greatest danger of the Ouija Board is that an individual begins to place his trust and future hope in the message the board brings. As a Christian our only source of revelation regarding future things is to be God's Word. We are to look to Jesus Christ and His teachings to properly understand our problems and seek a solution. Deuteronomy 18 tells us to beware of mediums and those who practice divination.

1 Chronicles 10 tells the story of Saul who was unfaithful to the Lord and consulted a medium, seeking guidance and did not seek guidance from the Lord. Therefore, the Lord slew him and turned the Kingdom over to David.

Christians can offer several reasons as to why one should not be involved in the use of the Ouija Board. One is simply that the Bible condemns it as being involvement in the occult (Leviticus 19:31, 20:6). Another relates to the tragic experiences of those who have been involved with this medium. And then there's the fact that the messages received are often false and misleading. They are often obscene and contrary to biblical teaching.

The following passages in Scripture give us, and those who would seek God's perspective, where to go for truth.

"And when they shall say unto you, seek unto them that have familiar spirits and into wizards . . . should not a people seek unto their God?" (Isaiah 8:19)

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, . . . and it shall be given him." (James 1:5)

## **The Great Delivery**

God is able to deliver those who seek Him. Victory is ours. But first, we must receive God's power.

We have been discussing the problems of satanic involvement.

Whether we become deceived by use of the Ouija Board, music, divination or by Dungeons and Dragons, the end result is the same occult bondage.

Mark Bubeck's Moody Press book, *The Adversary*, gives us a sound basis for applying sound biblical doctrine in resisting the devil as he attempts to infiltrate our lives. Basic to all victory of the believer over Satan is the absolute truth of biblical doctrine. There is no substitute. The greatest key in warfare against Satan is when we recognize that God's truth is our only offense.

Bubeck refers to "doctrinal prayer" as an effective tool to use in spiritual warfare. The sixth chapter of Ephesians tells us that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood but against spiritual forces. We cannot effectively engage Satan in warfare on the natural plane; we must enter the spiritual dimension to adequately challenge Satan and defeat him and his host. According to Bubeck, doctrinal prayer

...is the practice of praying or applying the objective, absolute truths of the Word of God as the hope and basis of resolving our prayer burden.

Doctrinal prayer presupposes that we have a deep understanding of the Scriptures. Bible memorization is a must for this type of prayer.

Another aspect of our spiritual warfare is that of resistance. We are called to resist the devil. The term "resist" basically means to stand, to stand invincibly or successfully. We can stand firm and remain invincible because of the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross. Jesus was victorious over Satan at the cross. As God's people, we are victorious over Satan because of Jesus. We can successfully resist Satan as we stand in right relationship with Christ. Since we are in Christ, and He has all authority in heaven and earth, we are in the only place of victory.

Ephesians 6 speaks of our spiritual armor. With the exception of the sword, this armor is defensive in nature. We have the victory; it has been won we simply need to stand our ground. Satan has been defeated at the cross (Colossians 2:8-15) and made powerless (Hebrews 2:14-15). The believer needs to stand in his rightful position in Christ as victor; Jesus has already won the battle.

The Holy Spirit of God shows us the way to righteousness and restoration. Satan attempts to convince us that we are so bad that God wouldn't want anything to do with us. He seeks to convince us that there is no forgiveness for what we have done or that we have committed the unpardonable sin.

The Holy Spirit uses God's Word to give us hope and assurance of God's love and forgiveness, whereas Satan creates despair, doubt, resentment, and anger toward God, His Word, and His people. Satan intends for us to feel as though no one as bad as we are could ever really be saved.

Doctrine and right understanding is important to our spiritual welfare. It is the foundation upon which everything stands. Without it we are subject to every wind that blows, every false teaching that Satan would use to lure us.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ who have trusted in His blood atonement, we have a vast number of tools to render the enemy ineffective. Power, position, authority, total victory over Satan's world belong to us. All that remains is for us to appropriate God's promises and recognize our position in Christ, focus our attention against the devil's work, and to rest in what our Lord has done for us.

Satanism is a growing concern in our culture. With this growth comes a great deal of confusion and a lack of understanding. The following information is designed to help you understand the problem by clearly defining the different aspects of the occult and giving you concise information that you can use.

# **Defining the Occult**

## **Cult**

A cult is a group of people polarized around an individual with a magnetic personality, who deviates from orthodox Christianity by distorting the central message of the Bible by additional revelation or by introducing their personal understanding of primary biblical doctrines such as the person of Jesus Christ, heaven, hell, salvation, atonement, the virgin birth, etc.

## **Occult**

Secret or hidden knowledge. This knowledge is not discerned by the five senses and is therefore, supernaturally received through the practice of divination.

## **Witchcraft**

The use of scripturally forbidden supernatural powers to manipulate people and events. Commonly known as the "craft of the wise" or "wicca," the worship of nature and feminine energies mother nature. Witchcraft is manifested in two opposing views: white magic, and black magic or witchcraft (see Deuteronomy 18:10)

## **White Magic**

The use of supernatural power to manipulate a person or an event to bring about good. The practice of divination is used to bring about "positive" results such as knowledge, healing, etc.

## **Black Magic**

The use of supernatural power to manipulate a person or an event to bring about evil or destruction. Manipulation is achieved by use of rituals and the casting of spells.

## **Satanism**

Unlike Witchcraft, Satanism is the worship of Satan, formerly known as Lucifer, and the practice of Black Magic. Satanism is a reaction against the Christian church and the Word of God in particular. Satanism promotes a do-what-you-want attitude and is ultimately the worship of oneself.

## **Categories of Involvement**

**Individuals involved in satanic activity fall into one of four categories:**

- Multi-generational international organization
- National organizations
- Independent self-styled groups
- Individual dabblers

The greatest increase in involvement is among the latter group the dabbler. The dabbler is, in most cases, from a middle to upper- middle class, caucasian home and is a user of drugs and other controlled substances.

The larger concern is not in the number of young people involved in satanic activity but what they are capable of doing when they become absorbed in the worship of Satan.

Satanism centers around involvement in animal sacrifice, blood ritual, sex, the use of drugs and sometimes murder. According to "The Addiction Letter" (1/89),

Most Satanism revolves around a drug and alcohol dependent lifestyle which glorifies violence, hate, lying, stealing, and vandalism. The involved youngster craves a higher power to validate . . . chemical dependence and Satan fills the spiritual void.

### **The Mental Profile of the Dabbler**

- Rebellion

- Boredom
- Low self-worth

### **Warning Signs of the Dabbler**

The dabbler is likely to have difficulty relating to peers and in most cases, they have withdrawn from their family and religious heritage. They tend to become involved in a variety of the following:

- A drop in grades
- Burglary
- Drug use
- Physical and sexual abuse
- Mind control
- Animal mutilation
- Increased hatred
- Murder
- Suicide

Drug abuse is the common denominator in all levels of Satanism. Drugs have become the primary source of mind-altering experiences for the Satanist, thereby, giving him a false sense of power and spiritual potency.

### **Characteristics that may indicate satanic involvement**

- Avoiding family members
- A change in friends
- Becoming secretive about activities
- Loss of interest in extra-curricular activities
- Personality changes
- An unusual interest in books, movies, videos, etc. with an occult theme
- Use of drugs and alcohol
- Lack of attendance of worship with family

**Individuals are recruited into satanic groups by any number or combination of the following:**

- Free drugs or sex
- Companionship
- Power
- Money
- Pornography
- Personal choice

## **Satan's Goal**

According to scripture (Matthew 4:9, 2 Corinthians 4:4, Revelation 12:9), Satan's goal is to deceive man by blinding him to the truth of the gospel and to receive worship for himself (Isaiah 14:12-14). On a more practical level Satan desires to alter an individual's values and turn them against themselves, their beliefs, family, God and society.

## **The Church of Satan**

Anton Szandor LaVey formed the Church of Satan in 1966. LaVey, the author of *The Satanic Bible*, is perhaps the most common source of satanic ritual and understanding available to young people today. It can be found in most large secular bookstores. The Satanic Bible has sold more than 600,000 copies since it was first published by Avon Books in 1969.

## **Secret things**

Another common denominator in satanic groups is secrecy. Individuals keep a journal of activity, rituals, charms, or messages in a notebook, blank book and sometimes even a floppy disc. This information is often written in an alphabet that is not widely known. Alphabets commonly used by occultists are: the witches alphabet, the celtic alphabet used by the Druids, the Enochian alphabet, the Egyptian and others.

## **Personal Initiation**

Initiation plays a major role in group activity. Through initiation an individual is given a chance to declare total

allegiance to Satan by participation. Often one will sever a portion of a finger or a toe to indicate their commitment to the unholy one.

Other acts include being a participant in a ritual where mutilation of an animal or human is a part of the activity. These acts are usually video-taped to be used at a later time to keep the individual in line if need be. In some cases a criminal act is perpetrated where the initiate is involved in a key role. An unholy communion of sorts is taken during initiatory rituals where a cup or chalice (usually stolen from a church) is used containing a mixture of wine, blood (human or animal) and urine. Satanism is not for the faint-hearted.

Other methods of initiation include body markings. An inverted cross may be burned into one's forearm or chest, etc.

### **Body Markings**

Commonly used markings include the following (it is important to note that body markings can be used for the preparation of a sacrifice, as well as initiation into a group):

- Goathead
- Inverted cross
- Skull
- Pentagram
- Baphomet
- MENA (amen)
- Black rose
- Swastika

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# **Broken Homes, Broken Hearts – A Christian Perspective on Sex Outside of Marriage**

*Kerby Anderson examines the impact of teen pregnancies on our society from a Christian, biblical worldview perspective. He suggests steps we must take if Christians are to combat this problem of our American society.*

## **As the family goes, so goes society.**

Families are the bedrock of society. When families fall apart, society falls into social and cultural decline. Ultimately the breakdown of the American family is at the root of nearly every other social problem and pathology.

Just a few decades ago, most children in America grew up in intact, two-parent families. Today, children who do so are a minority. Illegitimacy, divorce, and other lifestyle choices have radically altered the American family, and thus have altered the social landscape.

Karl Zinsmeister of the American Enterprise Institute has said, “There is a mountain of scientific evidence showing that when families disintegrate, children often end up with intellectual, physical and emotional scars that persist for life.” He continues, “We talk about the drug crisis, the education crisis, and the problem of teen pregnancy and juvenile crime. But all these ills trace back predominantly to one source: broken families.”

Broken homes and broken hearts are not only the reason for so many social problems. They are also the reason for the

incumbent economic difficulties we face as a culture. The moral foundation of society erodes as children learn the savage values of the street rather than the civilized values of culture. And government inevitably expands to intervene in family and social crises brought about by the breakdown of the family. Sociologist Daniel Yankelovich puts it this way:

*Americans suspect that the nation's economic difficulties are rooted not in technical economic forces (for example, exchange rates or capital formation) but in fundamental moral causes. There exists a deeply intuitive sense that the success of a market-based economy depends on a highly developed social morality—trustworthiness, honesty, concern for future generations, an ethic of service to others, a humane society that takes care of those in need, frugality instead of greed, high standards of quality and concern for community. These economically desirable social values, in turn, are seen as rooted in family values. Thus the link in public thinking between a healthy family and a robust economy, though indirect, is clear and firm.*

## **Illegitimacy is our most important social problem.**

One of the most significant factors contributing to the breakdown of the family has been the steady rise of unwed births. Since 1960, illegitimate births have increased more than 400 percent. In 1960, 5 percent of all births were out of wedlock. Thirty years later nearly 30 percent of all births were illegitimate. Among blacks two out of every three births are illegitimate.

To put this astonishing increase in illegitimate births in perspective, compare 1961 with 1991. Roughly the same number of babies were born in both years (about 4 million). But in 1991, five times as many of these babies were born out of wedlock.

Social commentator Charles Murray believes that **“illegitimacy is the single most important social problem of our time—more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare or homelessness because it drives everything else.”** The public costs of illegitimacy are very high. “Children born out of wedlock tend to have high infant mortality, low birth weight (with attendant morbidities), and high probabilities of being poor, not completing school, and staying on welfare themselves. As a matter of public policy, if not of morality, it pays for society to approve of marriage as the best setting for children, and to discourage having children out of wedlock.”

In her famous article in *Atlantic Monthly* entitled “Dan Quayle Was Right,” Barbara Dafoe Whitehead warned Americans of the cost of ignoring the breakdown of the family:

*If we fail to come to terms with the relationship between family structure and declining child well-being, then it will be increasingly difficult to improve children’s life prospects, no matter how many new programs the federal government funds. Nor will we be able to make progress in bettering school performance or reducing crime or improving the quality of the nation’s future work force—all domestic problems closely connected to family breakup. Worse, we may contribute to the problem by pursuing policies that actually increase family instability and breakup.*

While speaking of Dan Quayle, it might be wise to remind ourselves of what the former Vice-President said that brought such a firestorm from his critics. While speaking to the Commonwealth Club in San Francisco, Vice President Quayle argued that “It doesn’t help matters when prime time TV has Murphy Brown—a character who supposedly epitomized today’s intelligent, highly paid, professional woman—mocking the importance of fathers by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another lifestyle choice.”

At the time, one would have thought the Vice-President had uttered the greatest blasphemy of our time. Yes, he was using a fictional character to make a point. Yes, he was challenging the tolerant, politically-correct conventions of the time. But he was addressing an important issue neglected by so many.

Fortunately, a year later *Atlantic Monthly* magazine devoted the cover of its April 1993 issue to the story: "Dan Quayle Was Right. After decades of public dispute about so-called family diversity, the evidence from social-science research is coming in: The dissolution of two-parent families, though it may benefit the adults involved, is harmful to many children, and dramatically undermines our society."

The conclusion should not be startling, yet in a society that no longer operates from a Christian world and life view, it has nearly become front page news. For decades, the United States has engaged in a dangerous social experiment. Two parents are no longer seen as necessary. Stable, intact families are no longer seen as important. We are trying to reinvent the family and are finding out the devastating consequences of illegitimacy, divorce, and other lifestyle choices. As a society, we must return to the values of abstinence, chastity, fidelity, and commitment. Our desire to reject Christian family values has inevitably lead to the decline of Western civilization. It is time to find the road back to home.

## **The flood of teenage pregnancies is destroying our social fabric.**

One of the most significant factors contributing to the breakdown of the family has been the steady rise of unwed births. Since 1960, illegitimate births have increased more than 400 percent. In 1960, 5 percent of all births were out of wedlock. Thirty years later nearly 30 percent of all births were illegitimate. Among blacks two out of every three births

are illegitimate.

One of the most significant factors contributing to the breakdown of the family has been the steady rise of unwed births. Since 1960, illegitimate births have increased more than 400 percent. In 1960, 5 percent of all births were out of wedlock. Thirty years later nearly 30 percent of all births were illegitimate. Among blacks two out of every three births are illegitimate.

One of the driving forces of illegitimacy is births to unmarried teenagers. Every 64 seconds, a baby is born to a teenage mother, and every five minutes a baby is born to a teenager who already has a child. More than two thirds of these births are to teen girls who are not married.

Becoming a teenage parent significantly decreases the chance that the young mother will be able to complete high school, attend college, and successfully compete for a job. She is much more likely to rear the child in poverty than girls who do not become mothers as teenagers. "When teenagers have babies both mothers and children tend to have problems—health, social, psychological, and economic. Teens who have children out of wedlock are more likely to end up at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder."

If the increase in teenage pregnancy isn't disturbing enough, there are other disturbing trends. A growing number of adults are having sex with teens. This is more than just Joey Buttafuoco and Amy Fisher or Woody Allen and Soon-Yi Previn. Social statistics show that adult males are fathers of two thirds of the babies born to teenage girls.

In some ways, this is not a new phenomenon. In 1920, for example, 93 percent of babies born to teenagers were fathered by adults. But the difference is that pregnant teens no longer marry the father. Today, 65 percent of teenage moms are unmarried. Many of these kids are destined to spend a lifetime

in a cycle of poverty and welfare dependency.

Why teenage girls become sexually involved with adult males is sometimes difficult to discern. A desire for a mature male and teenage insecurity are significant reasons. Teenage girls from broken homes or abusive homes often are easy prey for adult men, which may explain why adult men seek out teenager girls. In many cases, teen sex is not consensual. Girls under the age of 18 are victims of approximately half the rapes each year.

Stemming the tide of teen pregnancy, and reforming the current welfare system that often encourages it, are important action points. But doing so must take into account that adult males are a significant reason why teenage girls are becoming pregnant.

Whether we look at the increase in illegitimate births in general or teenage pregnancy in particular, we can see a disturbing trend. In essence, Americans have been conducting a social experiment for the last three decades. And the evidence clearly points to major problems when children are reared in families without two parents. Illegitimate births are part of the reason for the breakdown of the family; divorce is the other.

## **We must honor and promote sexual abstinence.**

Thus far we have been talking about the problems. Now it's time to propose a solution. There are two parts to this approach. First, we must teach sexual abstinence. A fundamental reason for the increase in unwed births is teenage sexual promiscuity. Reduce teenage sexuality and you will reduce illegitimacy. Fortunately, the abstinence message seems to be gaining in popularity and getting the media attention it deserves.

or example, the front page of the Sunday *New York Times* Style

section featured the surprising headline: "Proud to Be a Virgin: Nowadays, You Can be Respected Even if You Don't Do It." And the March 1994 issue of *Mademoiselle* featured an article proclaiming "The New Chastity." The article wondered if "saying no to sex might turn out to be the latest stage in the sexual revolution." *Mademoiselle* found that views on sexuality seem to be changing. Virgins, for example, are no longer seen as individuals who are fearful or socially inept. In fact, abstinence is now being equated with strength of will and character. Those once labeled "carefree" are now considered "careless" in light of the AIDS and STDs.

One of the most visible campaign for abstinence has come from the "True Love Waits" campaign by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) begun in the spring of 1993. Students pledge: "Believing that true love waits, I make a commitment to God, myself, my family, those I date, my future mate, and my future children to be sexually pure until the day I enter a covenant marriage relationship."

A grassroots movement to promote abstinence through a variety of programs has been spreading throughout the country. Crisis Pregnancy Centers provide speakers to address the issue of abstinence. Untold groups—with names like "Aim for Success" and "Best Friends" and "Athletes for Abstinence"—are spreading the positive message of abstinence to teens who need to hear an alternative to the safe sex message.

There are substantial personal benefits to abstinence. But the greatest benefit to society is a reduction in the illegitimate birth rate which drives nearly all of the social problems discussed in this book.

## **We must target teen pregnancy.**

Now we must address the second part of the problem; that is, we must target teen pregnancy. The problem with teenage sex is not simply that teens are having sex. In approximately half

the cases, adults are having sex with teenagers. State laws governing statutory rape are often called a "fictitious chastity belt" since law enforcement often ignore the laws.

The reasons for lax enforcement are varied, but they surely include the fallout from the sexual revolution and the children's rights movement. As a society, we have come to accept the notion that even young teenagers are engaging in consensual sex. While there may be some tawdry publicity when a high profile entertainer like Woody Allen or Kelsey Grammar is accused of sex with a teenager, generally the issue is ignored.

But the issue cannot be ignored. "Welfare reform, sex education and teen pregnancy prevention programs and welfare reform are doomed to failure when they ignore the prevalence of adult-teen sex." Education about the problem and enforcement of statutory rape laws would substantially reduce the number of unwed teens.

## **We must honor and promote strong marriages.**

Now I would like to propose additional solutions to the problem of family breakdown. First, we must teach marriage principles. Marriages are falling apart and other marriages never begin as sexual partners choose to live together rather than get married. Churches and Christian organizations must teach marriage principles so that marriages will last. Once built on commitment, today's marriages are a contract: as long as love shall last. Sound, biblical education is necessary to put marriages back on a firm foundation.

Fortunately, a growing number of effective organizations are providing that needed education. Family Life Ministry holds weekend Family Life Conferences through out the country and the world to packed audiences eager to learn more about how to build strong marriages and families. The Marriage Encounter

program has been providing the same important teaching in church and retreat settings. And lots and lots of books, tapes, videos, and other seminars are focusing needed attention on the principles that will build strong marriages and allow them to flourish.

## **We must honor and support fatherhood.**

Second, we must emphasize fatherhood. As more and more children grow up in single-parent homes (which are primarily female-headed homes), fathers appear irrelevant and superfluous. Not only are they seen as expendable; they are often seen as part of the problem.

Yet the consequences of fatherless homes is devastating. "More than 70 percent of all juveniles in state reform institutions come from fatherless homes." Children who grow up without fathers are more likely to be involved in criminal behavior because they lack a positive male role model in their lives. Fathers are not irrelevant. They may indeed spell the difference between success and failure for their children.

Often fatherless homes feed the cycle of illegitimacy itself. "Young white women who grow up without a father in the home are more than twice as likely to bear children out of wedlock. And boys living in a single-parent family are twice as likely to father a child out of wedlock as boys from intact homes."

Fortunately, there are many ministries encouraging men to stand with their families. Gatherings like the Promise Keepers conferences nationwide are highly visible symbols of a much greater movement of men (individual churches or parachurch organizations) who have dedicated themselves to running their families on biblical principles. Groups like Mad Dads (Men Against Destruction Defending Against Drugs and Social disorder) have been organized to encourage fathers in high crime urban areas. Especially critical are young urban (often black) youths who do not have strong male role models to

emulate. One organizer said, "They saw pimps and hustlers and dope dealers and gang bangers and hypersexual individuals who like to make babies but didn't assume the responsibility of taking care of them—so why should the kids? And so our first goal was just to mobilize strong, black fathers who were drug-free, who were willing to stand up and be role models, giving our kids another group of men they could look at."

Building strong families must include building families with fathers. Fatherlessness is one of the primary causes of social disintegration. Parenting cannot be left to mothers and grandmothers. Fathers are essential.

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## **Why Wait Till Marriage? – A Christian Perspective**

*Jimmy Williams and Jerry Solomon take a biblical worldview look at the question of premarital sex or fornication. They clearly show that regardless of the dominant teaching of the culture, the Bible describes the role of sex as far deeper in meaning and impact than simple physical intercourse.*

Crucial moral battles are being fought in our culture. Nowhere is this seen more vividly than in the present sexual attitudes and behaviors of Americans. The average young person experiences many pressures in the formation of personal sexual standards and behavior.

The fact that some standard must be chosen cannot be ignored. Sex is here to stay, and it remains a very basic force in our lives. We cannot ignore its presence any more than we can

ignore other ordinary human drives.

This essay explores contemporary sexual perspectives within a biblical framework. Each of us needs to think through the implications of sexual alternatives and choose a personal sexual ethic based on intellectual and Christian factors, not merely biological, emotional, or social ones.

## **Sex and Love**

Before we begin our survey of various perspectives, we need to face squarely the relationship of the physical act of sexual intercourse to the more intangible aspects of a meaningful relationship between two human beings.

Is having sex really making love? Modern case studies, psychological insights, church teachings, and biblical premises all seem to suggest not. As psychoanalyst Erich Fromm puts it, "To love a person productively implies to care and to feel responsible for his life, not only for his physical powers but for the growth and development of all his human powers."[\[1\]](#)

If sex is merely a physical thing, then masturbation or other forms of autoeroticism should provide true and complete sexual satisfaction. Such is not the case. Alternatives to normal sexual intercourse may satisfy physically, but not emotionally. Meaningful sexual activity involves the physical union of a man and a woman in a relationship of mutual caring and intimacy.

Every normal person has the physical desire for sexual activity accompanied with a desire to know and be known, to love and be loved. Both desires make up the real quest for intimacy in a relationship; sexual intercourse represents only one ingredient that allows us to experience true intimacy.

A maximum sexual relationship exists where mutual communication, understanding, affection, and trust have

formed, and two people have lastingly committed themselves to each other in a permanent relationship. The more of these qualities that are present, the deeper the intimacy and the more meaningful the relationship. It becomes more valuable as time passes because it is one of a kind—unique. To spread the intimacy around through a variety of sexual liaisons destroys the accumulated value of the previous relationship(s) and dilutes and scatters (in little doses to a number of people) what one has to give.

A real challenge faces young people today. Given the choice between hamburger at five o'clock or filet mignon at seven-thirty, are there any good reasons to forego the hamburger and wait for the filet? Why not both? Why not take the hamburger now **and** the filet later?

The latter attitude is precisely the rationale of those who encourage sexual activity outside of marriage. But it is not possible to have both without encountering problems later. Too many hamburgers ruin one's taste and appreciation for filet and tend to turn filet into hamburger as well!

## **Contemporary Arguments for Premarital Sex**

Now we will begin to consider the arguments that are presented to justify sexual activity before and outside of marriage. We will analyze the arguments briefly and explore the general implications of each rationale so that **you can decide** which will provide the best path for your future.

### **Biological Argument**

Perhaps the most common reason used to justify premarital sexual activity is that the sex drive is a basic biological one. The argument is as old as the Bible, where Paul states in 1 Corinthians 6:13, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food." The Corinthians were using the biological argument to justify their immorality, but Paul explained that

the analogy to the sex appetite was (and is) fallacious. Humans cannot live without food, air, or water. But we can live without sex.

Nature says several things on this point. First, God has built into the natural world a mechanism for sexual release: nocturnal emissions, or orgasmic release during dreams. Second, nature rejects human promiscuity, as the growing problem of sexually-transmitted diseases makes abundantly clear.

Couples who confine sex to their marriage partners face no such danger from disease. Further, we can safely conclude that abstinence does not impair one's health. Sociologist Robert Bell quips, "There appear to be no records of males hospitalized because girls refused to provide sexual outlets."  
[{2}](#)

While recognizing that human beings share many common characteristics with animals, we do not find comparable sexual behavioral patterns in the animal world. Human sexuality is unique in that it *includes*, but *transcends*, physical reproductive elements. It reaches an intimacy unknown among animals. Humans are different from animals.

## Statistical Argument

A second popular argument reasons that everyone is doing it. First, we must categorically emphasize that this is not a true statement. A recent study (1991) of college freshmen shows that "about two-thirds of men (66.3 percent) and slightly more than one-third of the women (37.9 percent) support the idea of sex between people who have known each other only for a short time."[{3}](#) As sobering as such statistics may be, they obviously indicate that not everyone is sexually active.

Further, **statistics** do not establish moral values. Is something right because it happens frequently or because many people believe it? A primitive tribe may have a 100 percent

majority consensus that cannibalism is right! Does that make it right? A majority can be wrong. If a **society** sets the standards, those standards are subject to change with the whim and will of the majority. In one generation slavery may be right and abortion wrong, as in early nineteenth-century America; but in another generation, abortion is in and slavery is out, as today.

There are enough young people in any school or community who prefer to wait until marriage that the young person who wants to wait has plenty of company. Each person must decide where he or she wants to be in a given statistical analysis of current sexual mores and behavior.

## **Proof of Love**

A third argument suggests that sexual activity tests or provides proof of love. Supposedly, it symbolizes how much the other cares. One therefore exerts pressure on the more reluctant partner to demonstrate a certain level of care. Reluctant partners succumbing to this pressure often do so with an underlying hope that it will somehow cement the relationship and discourage the other partner from searching elsewhere for a less hesitant friend.

Any person who insists on making sex the ultimate proof of a genuine relationship isn't saying "I love you," but rather "I love it." True love concerns itself with the well-being of the other person and would not interpret sexual hesitation in such a selfish way. Furthermore, the person adopting this practice develops a pattern of demonstrating love by purely sexual responsiveness. Ultimately he or she enters marriage with something of a distortion as to what real intimacy means, to say nothing of having to deal with the memories of previous loves. Some behaviors are irreversible, and this process is like trying to unscramble an egg. Once it's done, it's done.

The broader perspective sees sex as an integral and important

part of a meaningful relationship but not the totality of it. Remembering this will help any individual to make the right decision to refrain from sexual involvement if a potential partner puts on the pressure to make sex the test of a meaningful relationship.

## **Psychological Argument**

The psychological argument is also a popular one and is closely tied to the biological argument previously discussed. Here's the question: Is sexual restraint bad for you?

Sublimating one's sex drive is not unhealthy. In sublimation the processes of sexual and aggressive energy are displaced by nonsexual and nondestructive goals.

But guilt, unlike sublimation, can produce devastating results in human behavior. It is anger turned inward, producing depression, a lowered self-esteem, and fatigue. Further, chastity and virginity contribute very little to sexual problems. Unsatisfying relationships, guilt, hostility toward the opposite sex, and low self-esteem do. In short, there are no scars where there have been no wounds.

In this hedonistic society, some persons need no further justification for sexual activity beyond the fact that it's fun. "If it feels good, do it!" says the bumper sticker. But the fun syndrome forces us to sacrifice the permanent on the altar of the immediate.

The sex act itself is no guarantee of fun. Initial sex experiences outside of marriage are often disappointing because of high anxiety and guilt levels. Fear of discovery, haste, and lack of commitment and communication all combine to spoil some of the fun. Further, there is no way to avoid the exploitation of someone in the relationship if it's just for fun. Sometimes one person's pleasure is another's pain. No one likes to be or feel used.

Marilyn Monroe was a sex symbol for millions. She said, "People took a lot for granted; not only could they be friendly, but they could suddenly get overly friendly and expect an awful lot for a very little." {4} She felt used. She died naked and alone, with an empty bottle of sleeping pills beside a silent telephone. Was the fame and fun worth it? Evidently she thought not.

## **Experiential Argument**

This perspective emphasizes a desire on the part of an individual not to appear like a sexual novice on the wedding night. One answer to this is to have enough sexual experience prior to marriage so that one brings practice, not theory to the initial sexual encounter in marriage. But the body was designed to perform sexually and will do so given the opportunity.

This is not to say that sexual skill cannot be gained through experience. It is to say that every skill acquired by humans must have a beginning point. If the idea of two virgins on their wedding night brings amusement to our minds instead of admiration, it is actually a sad commentary on how far we have slipped as individuals and as a culture.

It must be emphasized again that healthy sexual adjustment depends much more on communication than technique. World-famous sex therapists Masters and Johnson found

Nothing good is going to happen in bed between a husband and wife unless good things have been happening between them before they go into bed. There is no way for a good sexual technique to remedy a poor emotional relationship. {5}

In other words, a deeply-committed couple with **no** sexual experience is far ahead of a sexually-experienced couple with shallow and tentative commitment, as far as the marriage's future sexual success is concerned.

## **Compatibility Argument**

A corollary to the experiential argument is the one of compatibility. The idea is, How will I know if the shoe fits unless first I try it on? A foot stays about the same size, but the human sex organs are wonderfully stretchable and adaptable. A woman's vagina can enlarge to accommodate the birth of a baby or to fit a male organ of any size. Physical compatibility is 99 percent guaranteed, and the other 1 percent can become so with medical consultation and assistance.

Of greater importance is to test person-to-person compatibility. Sexual dysfunction in young people is usually psychologically based. Building bridges of love and mutual care in the non-physical facets of the relationship are the sure roads to a honeymoon that can last a lifetime.

## **Contraceptive Argument**

The contraceptive argument supposedly takes the fear of pregnancy out of sexual activity and gives moderns a virtual green light. Actually, the light is at most pale green and perhaps only yellow. The simple fact is that pregnancy (along with sexually-transmitted diseases) remains a possibility.

Beyond the question of contraceptive use is the entire area of unwanted children. There are no good alternatives for children born out of wedlock. Do we have the right to deprive children of life or a secure family setting and loving parents to supply their basic needs? Ironically, even severely battered children choose to be with their parents over other alternatives. Parental love and security are highly prized.

Sexual intimacy between a man and a woman is not exclusively their private affair. Sexual intercourse must take place with a view toward facing the consequences. The time of moral decision in sexual matters comes before one decides to have sex with someone, not later when unforeseen circumstances take

things the wrong way.

## **Marital Argument**

Perhaps the most prominent argument for premarital sex among Christians is the marital argument, which says, "We are in love and plan to marry soon. Why should we wait?"

Dr. Howard Hendricks, an authority on the family, comments that the best way to mortgage your marriage is to play around at the door of marriage.<sup>{6}</sup> Loss of respect and intensity of feelings may occur, as well as guilt and dissatisfaction. Restraint for a time adds excitement to the relationship and makes the honeymoon something very special, not a continuation of already-established patterns. Some couples also see little value in a public declaration of marital intent. Or they may think the formality of a wedding is the equivalent of dogma. Those who prefer no public declaration but rather seek anonymity may be saying something about the depth (or lack thereof) of their commitment to one another. Do they have their fingers crossed?

Contemporary studies indicate that the marital argument is not sound. Of 100 couples who cohabit, 40 break up before they marry. Of the 60 who marry, 45 divorce—leaving only 15 of 100 with a lasting marriage. Thus, cohabitation has two negative effects: it sharply reduces the number who marry, and dramatically increases the divorce rate of those who do.<sup>{7}</sup>

Engaged couples, according to Paul in 1 Corinthians 7:36-37, should either control their sexual drives or marry. Intercourse, then, is not proper for engaged couples. They should either keep their emotions in check or marry.

## **Conclusion**

We have examined some of the major arguments used to justify premarital sex. If these are the strongest defenses of sex outside of marriage, the case is weak. Our brief trek through

the wilderness of contemporary sexual ideas has led to some virtual dead ends.

There are good reasons to make a commitment to limit our sexual experience to a time when the sex act can be reinforced in a context of permanent love and care. From this perspective, virginity is not viewed as something that must be eliminated as soon as possible, but as a gift to treasure and save for a special and unique person.

The biblical standard that puts sex within the fidelity and security of marriage is the most responsible code that has ever been developed. You are justified in following it without apology as the best standard for protecting human, moral, and Christian values that has been devised.

Some reading this may have already had sexual experience outside of marriage. The data we have discussed is not intended to condemn or produce guilt.

The good news is that Jesus Christ came for the expressed purpose of forgiving our sins, sexual and all other. Jesus, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever, will forgive us. The real question now is, What shall we do with the future? Christ can cleanse the past, but He expects us to respond to the light He gives us. Hopefully this discussion will help you strengthen your convictions with regard to sexual decisions and behavior in the days ahead. As the adage says, today is the first day of the rest of your life.

## **Notes**

1. Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1956).
2. Robert R. Bell, *Premarital Sex in a Changing Society*. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1966) p. 150.
3. [Editor's note] We believe this data is from the American Freshman annual study, but unfortunately neither of the authors is able to verify the source.

4. Evelyn M. Duvall, *Why Wait Till Marriage?* (New York: Association Press, 1965, p. 38.
5. William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson, *The Pleasure Bond* (New York: Bantam Books, 1976), pp. 113-14).
6. Howard Hendricks, lecture at Dallas Theological Seminary. "Christian Home Course," 1978.
7. See Kerby Anderson's article "Cohabitation" at [Probe.org/cohabitation](http://Probe.org/cohabitation).

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# Sociobiology: Evolution, Genes and Morality – A Christian Perspective

*Dr. Bohlin looks at the basic tenets of sociobiology from a biblical worldview perspective. Looking at them as a scientist and a Christian, he finds a lack of consistency and obvious paradoxes in this way of looking at our world.*



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

In 1981 I wrote an article for *Christianity Today*, which they titled "Sociobiology: Cloned from the Gene Cult." (1) At the time I was fresh from a graduate program in population genetics and had participated in two graduate seminars on the subject of sociobiology. You might be thinking, "What in the world is sociobiology, and why should I care?"

That's a good question. Sociobiology explores the biological basis of all social behavior, including morality. You should care because sociobiologists are claiming that all moral and

religious systems, including Christianity, exist simply because they help promote the survival and reproduction of the group. These sociobiologists, otherwise known as *evolutionary ethicists*, claim to be able to explain the existence of every major world religion or belief system, including Christianity, Judaism, Islam, and even Marxism and secular humanism, in terms of natural selection and evolution. E. O. Wilson, a Harvard biologist and major advocate of sociobiology, claims that scientific materialism (a fully evolutionary worldview) will eventually overcome both traditional religion and any other secular ideology. While Wilson does admit that religion in some form will always exist, he suggests that theology as an explanatory discipline will cease to exist.

## The First Paradox

While the arrogance of sociobiology is readily apparent, it contains a number of paradoxes. The first paradox is simply that the worldview of sociobiology offers nothing but despair when taken to its logical conclusion, yet it continues to gain acceptance in the academic community.

## Four Foundational Principles of Sociobiology

The despair of the sociobiological worldview and the ultimate lack of meaning it presents are derived from what I consider the four foundational principles of sociobiology. The first principle is the assertion that human social systems have been shaped by evolutionary processes. Human societies exist in their present form because they work, or at least have worked in the past, not because they are based on any kind of revelation.

Second, there is what sociobiologist Robert Wallace called the **reproductive imperative**.<sup>(2)</sup> The ultimate goal of any organism is to survive and reproduce. Species survival is the ultimate goal. Moral systems exist because they ultimately promote human survival and reproduction.

Third, the individual—at least in respect to evolutionary time—is meaningless. Species, not individuals, evolve and persist through time. E.O. Wilson stated that the organism, your body, is simply DNA's way of making more DNA.(3)

Fourth, all behavior is therefore selfish, or at least pragmatic, at its most basic level. We love our children because love is an effective means of raising effective reproducers. Wilson spells out the combined result of these principles quite clearly in his book *On Human Nature* when he says that

*...no species, ours included, possesses a purpose beyond the imperatives created by its own genetic history (i.e., evolution)...we have no particular place to go. The species lacks any goal external to its own biological nature.(4)*

Wilson is saying that since humans have been shaped by evolution alone, they have no purpose beyond survival and reproduction. Even Wilson admits that this is an unappealing proposition.

## **Hope and Meaning**

Since sociobiologists claim that all behavior is ultimately selfish, that an organism's only goal or purpose is to survive and reproduce, and that it is species survival, not individual survival, that is ultimately required, personal worth and dignity quickly disappear. The responses of sociobiologists when they are confronted with this conclusion have always been curious to me. I distinctly remember posing a question about hope and purpose to a graduate seminar composed of biology students and faculty. I asked, "Let's suppose that I am dead and in the ground, and the decomposers are doing their thing. What difference does it make to me now whether I have reproduced or not?" My point was that if death is the end with a capital "E", who cares whether or not I have reproduced? After an awkward silence, one of the faculty answered, "Well,

I guess that it doesn't matter at all." In response, I asked, "Don't you see, we were just discussing how the only purpose in life is to survive and reproduce, but now you admit that this purpose is really an illusion. How do you go on with your life when you realize that it really doesn't matter what you do? That there is no point to any of it?" After an even longer silence, the same faculty member said, "Well, I suppose that those who will be selected for in the future will be those who know there is no purpose in life, but will live as if there is."

To say the least, I was stunned by the frankness of his response. He was basically saying that the human race will be forced to live with a lie—the illusion of hope and meaning. What was even more unsettling, however, was the fact that no one disagreed or offered even the most remote protest. Apart from myself, everyone there accepted evolution as a fact, so they were forced to accept this conclusion. (I would find out later that at least a couple of them didn't like it.)

A professor of philosophy at a university in Minnesota recently answered my challenge by saying that maybe there are two different kinds of hope and meaning: hope and meaning in small letters (meaning survival and reproduction) and Hope and Meaning in capital letters (meaning ultimate worth and significance). We all have hope and meaning in small letters, and maybe there just isn't any in capital letters. So what? But that was precisely my point. Hope and meaning in small letters is without significance unless Hope and Meaning in capital letters really exists.

### **Three Responses**

Over the years I have noted three responses of evolutionists to the stark realization that their worldview offers no hope or meaning in their lives. The first is strong disagreement with the conclusions of sociobiology without strong reasons for disagreeing. They don't like the result, but they find it

difficult to argue with the basic principles. As evolutionists, they agree with evolution, but they don't want to believe that a meaningless existence is the end result.

The second response is simple acceptance. These evolutionists agree that there is no purpose or meaning in life. They just have to accept it, as the professor in the story did. Their commitment to an evolutionary worldview is total. I find this attitude most prevalent among faculty and graduate students at secular institutions. There is an almost eerie fatalism that stoutly embraces the notion that one's dislike of a theory is not sufficient cause to raise questions about it, especially when it is based on "sound" evolutionary principles.

The third response is an existential leap for meaning and significance when both have been stripped away. This leap is aptly illustrated by evolutionist Robert Wallace at the end of his book, *The Genesis Factor*. He writes:

*I do not believe that man is simply a clever egotist, genetically driven to look after his own reproduction. He is that. But he is at least that. He is obviously much more. The evidence for this is simple and abundant. One need only hear the Canon in D Major by Johann Pachelbel to know that there are immeasurable depths to the human spirit...I am sorry for the person who has never broken into a silly dance of sheer exuberance under a starry sky: perhaps such a person will be more likely to interpret the message of this book more narrowly. The ones who will find it difficult to accept the narrow view are those who know more about the joy of being us. My biological training is at odds with something that I know and something that science will not be able to probe, perhaps because the time is now too short, perhaps because it is not measurable. I think our demise, if it occurs, will be a loss, a great loss, a great shame in some unknown equation.(5)*

What Wallace is saying in this passage is that something is missing, and it can't be found within the confines of the evolutionary worldview. So look wherever you can!

Some may argue that those who have trouble with the loss of hope and meaning are taking all this too seriously. I don't agree. On the contrary, I believe that they are being very consistent within their worldview. If everything has evolved, and there is nothing outside of mere biology to give meaning and significance to life, then we must live in despair, denial, or irrational hope.

Sociobiology is gaining in popularity because of the scientific community's strong commitment to evolution. If something follows logically from evolutionary theory, which I believe sociobiology does, then eventually all who consider themselves evolutionists will embrace it, whether it makes them comfortable or not. They will have no other rational choice.

## **The Second Paradox**

In reflecting on the notion that all human societies and moral systems should have characteristics that seem to have evolved, I am led to a second paradox for sociobiology. The first paradox was that, despite the loss of hope and meaning in the context of a completely naturalistic worldview, sociobiology has continued to grow in influence. The second paradox involves Christianity. Since Christianity is based on revelation, it should be antithetical to or unexplainable by sociobiology, at least in some crucial areas.

It is not unreasonable to expect that some aspects of Christian morality would be consistent with a sociobiological perspective, since Christians in small and large groups do work for the betterment of the group as a whole, and the argument could be made that the survival of individuals is thus increased. However, if Christianity's claim to be based

on revelation from a transcendent God is true, I would be surprised, indeed extremely disappointed and confused, if everything in Christianity's moral standards also made sense from a sociobiological perspective. What little I have seen in the way of an evaluation of Christianity from E.O. Wilson and other sociobiologists is a poor caricature of true Christianity.

I would like to offer a few suggestions for consideration. William Irons, in a discussion of theories of the evolution of moral systems, comments that nepotism is a very basic prediction of evolutionary theory.(6) Humans should be expected to be less competitive and more helpful towards relatives than towards non- relatives. He cites numerous studies to back up his claim that this prediction, more than any other sociobiological prediction, has been extensively confirmed.

To be sure, the New Testament holds to very high standards concerning the importance of the family. Church leaders are to be judged first by how they conduct and relate themselves to their families (1 Tim. 3:12; Tit 1:6). Yet Jesus makes it quite clear that if there is any conflict between devotion to Him and devotion to our family, the family comes second. He said,

*Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves his father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it. (Matt. 10:34-39).*

In other passages Jesus gives promises that if we give up our families and possessions for His sake, then we will receive abundantly more in this life and the next, along with persecutions (Mark 10:29,30). Jesus Himself preferred the company of those who do the will of God to His own mother and brothers (Matt. 12:46-50). The clear message is that, while our families are important, our relationship with the living God comes first, even if members of our family force us to choose between God and them. Sociobiology may respond by saying that perhaps the benefit to be gained by inclusion in the group will compensate for the family loss, but how can the loss of an individual's entire genetic contribution to the next generation be explained away by any evolutionary mechanism?

## **Common Ground**

So far I have concentrated my remarks in areas where a Christian worldview is in sharp contrast with the evolutionary worldview of the sociobiologists. Now I would like to explore an area of curious similarity.

While Christianity should not be completely explainable by sociobiology, there are certain aspects of Christian truth that are quite compatible with it. I have always been amazed by the curious similarity between the biblical description of the natural man or the desires of the flesh, and the nature of man according to evolutionary principles. Both perceive man as a selfish creature at heart, looking out for his own interests. It is not "natural" for a man to be concerned for the welfare of others unless there is something in it for him.

Sociobiology seems to be quite capable of predicting many of the characteristics of human behavior. Scripture, on the other hand, informs us that the natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit, that they are foolishness to him (1 Cor. 2:14). I have wondered if our sin nature is somehow enveloped by biology, or, to be more specific, genetics. Could it be

that some genetic connection to our sin nature at least partially explains why “there is none righteous, there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God” (Rom. 3:10,11)? Does a genetic transmission of a sin nature help explain why “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23)? Is this why salvation can only be through faith, that it is not of ourselves but is a gift of God, not a result of works (Eph. 2:8, 9)? Is this why the flesh continues to war in our bodies so that we do the thing which we do not want to do, why nothing good dwells in me, and why the members of my body wage war against the law of my mind (Rom. 7:14-25)?

If there is a genetic component to our sin nature, it seems reasonable to assume that only the Spirit of God can overcome the desires of the flesh and that this struggle will continue in the believer until he or she is changed, until we see God face to face (1 Cor. 13:12; 15:50-58).

I ask these questions not thinking that I have come upon some great truth or the answer to a long-standing mystery, but simply looking for some common ground between the truth of Scripture and the truth about human nature we may be discovering from the perspective of sociobiology. All truth is ultimately God’s truth. While I certainly do not embrace the worldview of the sociobiologist, I realize that there may be some truth that can be discovered by sociobiologists that can be truly captured to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

When I wrote that article for *Christianity Today* in 1981, I closed with this paragraph:

*To know what to support and what to oppose, Christians involved in the social and biological sciences must be effective students of sociobiology. The popularity of sociobiology has gone unnoticed for too long already. We need precise and careful study as well as a watchful eye if we are to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”(7)*

## Notes

1. Raymond G. Bohlin, "Sociobiology: Cloned from the Gene Cult," *Christianity Today*, 23 January (1981): 16-19.
2. Robert Wallace, *The Genesis Factor* (New York: Morrow and Co., 1979).
3. E. O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 3.
4. E.O. Wilson, *On Human Nature* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1978) 2-3.
5. Ibid., 217-218. Emphasis mine.
6. William Irons, "How Did Morality Evolve?" *Zygon* 26 (1991): 49-89.
7. Bohlin, "Sociobiology," 19.

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# The Epidemic of Sexually Transmitted Diseases – A Christian Solution

Written by Dr. Ray Bohlin

*Dr. Bohlin looks at data describing the huge increase in STDs in American, considers the causes of this increase, and proposes a Christian solution firmly rooted in a biblical worldview.*

## **An STD Epidemic**

Sexually Transmitted Diseases (or STDs) are at unprecedented and epidemic proportions. Thirty years of the sexual revolution is paying an ugly dividend. While a few STDs can be transmitted apart from sex acts, all are transmissible by the exchange of bodily fluids during intimate sexual contact. I want to discuss the severity of the problem as well as what must be done if we are to save a majority of the next generation from the shame, infertility, and sometimes death, that may result from STDs.

The information I am about to share is from data gathered by the Medical Institute for Sexual Health out of Austin, Texas.(1) All of these statistics are readily available from reputable medical and scientific journals.

Today, there are approximately 25 STDs. A few can be fatal. Many women are living in fear of what their future may hold as a result of STD infection. It is estimated that 1 in 5 Americans between the ages of 15 and 55 are currently infected with one or more STDs, and 12 million Americans are newly infected each year. That's nearly 5% of the entire population of the U.S. Of these new infections, 63% are in people less than 25 years old.

This epidemic is a recent phenomenon. Some young people have parents who may have had multiple sexual partners with relative impunity. They may conclude that they too are safe from disease. However, most of these diseases were not around 20 to 30 years ago. Prior to 1960, there were only two significant sexually transmitted diseases: syphilis and gonorrhea. Both were easily treatable with antibiotics. In the sixties and seventies this relatively stable situation began to change. For example, in 1976, chlamydia first appeared in increasing numbers in the United States. Chlamydia, particularly dangerous to women, is now the most common STD in the country. Then in 1981, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV),

the virus which causes AIDS, was identified. By early 1993, between 1 and 2 million Americans were infected with AIDS, over 12 million were infected worldwide, and over 160,000 had died in the U.S. alone. Over 10% of the total U.S. population, 30 million people, are infected with herpes.

In 1985, human papilloma virus (HPV), began to increase. This virus will result in venereal warts and will often lead to deadly cancers. In 1990, penicillin resistant-strains of gonorrhea were present in all fifty states.

By 1992 syphilis was at a 40-year high. As of 1993, pelvic inflammatory disease (PID), which is almost always caused by gonorrhea or chlamydia, was affecting 1 million new women each year. This includes 16,000 to 20,000 teenagers. This complication causes pelvic pain and infertility and is the leading cause of hospitalization for women, apart from pregnancy, during the childbearing years.

Pelvic inflammatory disease can result in scarred fallopian tubes which block the passage of a fertilized egg. The fertilized egg, therefore, cannot pass on to the uterus and the growing embryo will cause the tube to rupture. By 1990, there was a 400% increase in tubal pregnancies, most of which were caused by STDs. Even worse is the fact that 80% of those infected with an STD don't know it and will unwittingly infect their next sexual partner.

## **The Medical Facts of STDs**

Syphilis is a terrible infection. In its first stage, the infected individual may be lulled into thinking there is little wrong since the small sore will disappear in 2 to 8 weeks. The second and third stages are progressively worse and can eventually lead to brain, heart, and blood vessel damage if not diagnosed and treated. The saddest part is that syphilis is 100% curable with penicillin, yet there is now more syphilis than since the late 1940s, and it is spreading

rapidly.

Chlamydia, a disease which only became common in the mid-1970s, infects 20 to 40% of some sexually active groups including teenagers. In men, chlamydia is usually less serious; with females, however, the infection can be devastating. An acute chlamydia infection in women will result in pain, fever, and damage to female organs. A silent infection can damage a woman's fallopian tubes without her ever knowing it. A single chlamydia infection can result in a 25% chance of infertility. With a second infection, the chance of infertility rises to 50%. This is double the risk of gonorrhea.

The human papilloma virus, or HPV, is an extremely common STD. One study reported that at the University of California, Berkeley, 46% of the sexually active coeds were infected with HPV. Another study reported that 38% of the sexually active females between the ages of 13 and 21 were infected. HPV is the major cause of venereal warts; it can be an extremely difficult problem to treat and may require expensive procedures such as laser surgery.

The human papilloma virus can result in precancer or cancer of the genitalia. By causing cancer of the cervix, this virus is killing more women in this country than AIDS, or over 4,600 women in 1991. HPV can also result in painful intercourse for years after infection even though other visible signs of disease have disappeared.

And of course there is the human immunodeficiency virus, or HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. The first few cases of AIDS were only discovered in 1981; now, in the U.S. alone, there are between 1 and 2 million infected with this disease. As far as we know, all of these people will die in the next ten years. As of early 1993, 160,000 had already died.

A 1991 study at the University of Texas at Austin showed that

1 in 100 students who had blood drawn for any reason at the university health center was HIV infected. While the progress of the disease is slow for many people, all who have the virus will be infected for the rest of their life. There is no cure, and many researchers are beginning to despair of ever coming up with a cure or even a vaccine (as was eventually done with polio). In 1992, 1 in 75 men was infected with HIV and 1 in 700 women. But the number of women with AIDS is growing. In the early years of the epidemic less than 2% of the AIDS cases were women. Now the percentage is 12%.

## **Teenagers Face a Greater Risk from STDs**

Teenagers are particularly susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases or STDs. This fact is alarming since more teens are sexually active today than ever before. An entire generation is at risk and the saddest part about it is that most of them are unaware of the dangers they face. Our teenagers must be given the correct information to help them realize that saving themselves sexually until marriage is the only way to stay healthy.

The medical reasons for teens' high susceptibility to STDs specifically relates to females. The cervix of a teenage girl has a lining which produces mucus that is a great growth medium for viruses and bacteria. As a girl reaches her 20s or has a baby, this lining is replaced with a tougher, more resistant lining. Also during the first two years of menstruation, 50% of the periods occur without ovulation. This will produce a more liquid mucus which also grows bacteria and viruses very well. A 15-year-old girl has a 1-in-8 chance of developing pelvic inflammatory disease simply by having sex, whereas a 24-year-old woman has only a 1-in-80 chance in that situation.

Teenagers do not always respond to antibiotic treatment for pelvic inflammatory disease, and occasionally such teenage girls require a hysterectomy. Teenage infertility is also an

increasing problem. In 1965, only 3.6% of the married couples between ages 20 and 24 were infertile; by 1982, that figure had nearly tripled to 10.6%. The infertility rate is surely higher than that now with the alarming spread of chlamydia.

Teenagers are also more susceptible to human papilloma virus, HPV. Rates of HPV infection in teenagers can be as high as 40%, whereas in the adult population, the rate is less than 15%. Teenagers are also more likely than adults to develop precancerous growths as a result of HPV infection, and they are more likely to develop pelvic inflammatory disease.

Apart from the increased risk from STDs in teens, teenage pregnancy is also at unprecedented levels, over 1 million pregnancies, and 400,000 abortions in 1985. Abortion is not a healthy procedure for anyone to undergo, especially a teenager. It is far better to have not gotten pregnant. Oral contraceptives are not as effective with teenagers, mainly because teens are more apt to forget to take the pill. Over a one-year period, as many as 9 to 18% of teenage girls using oral contraceptives become pregnant.

Our teenagers are at great risk. In a society that has abandoned God's design for healthy meaningful sexual expression within marriage, our children need to be told the truth about the dangers of STDs.

## **Is "Safe Sex" Really the Answer?**

I must now take a hard look at the message of "safe sex" which is being taught to teens at school and through the media across the country.

Some people believe that if teens can be taught how to use contraception and condoms effectively, that rates of pregnancy and STD infection will be reduced dramatically. But the statistics and common sense tell us otherwise. At Rutgers University, the rates of infection of students with STD varied

little with the form of contraception used. For example, 35 to 44% of the sexually active students were infected with one or more STDs whether they used no contraceptive, oral contraceptive, the diaphragm, or condoms. It is significant to note that condoms, the hero of the "safe sex" message, provided virtually no protection from STDs.

Will condoms prevent HIV infection, the virus that causes AIDS? While it is better than nothing, the bottom line is that condoms cannot be trusted. A study from Florida looked at couples where one individual was HIV positive and the other was negative. They used condoms as protection during intercourse. Obviously these couples would be highly motivated to use the condoms properly, yet after 18 months, 17% of the previously uninfected partners were now HIV positive. That is a one-in-six chance, the same as in Russian roulette. Not good odds!

Condoms do not even provide 100% protection for the purpose for which they were designed: prevention of pregnancy. One study from the School of Medicine Family Planning Clinic at the University of Pennsylvania reported that 25% of patients using condoms as birth control conceived over a one-year period. Other studies indicate that the rate of accidental pregnancy from condom-protected intercourse is around 15% with married couples and 36% for unmarried couples.

Condoms are inherently untrustworthy. The FDA allows one in 250 to be defective. Condoms are often stored and shipped at unsafe temperatures which weakens the integrity of the latex rubber causing breaks and ruptures. Condoms will break 8% of the time and slip off 7% of the time. There are just so many pitfalls in condom use that you just can't expect immature teenagers to use them properly. And even if they do, they are still at risk.

Studies are beginning to show that school-based sex education that includes condom use as the central message does not work.

A study in a major pediatric journal concluded that “the available evidence indicates that there is little or no effect from school-based sex-education on sexual activity, contraception, or teenage pregnancy.”(2) This study evaluated programs that emphasized condoms. Over \$3 billion dollars has been spent on sex- education programs emphasizing condoms with little or no effect! In addition, programs that emphasize condoms tend to give a false sense of security to sexually active students and make those students who are not having sex feel abnormal. Hardly the desired result!

The list of damages from unmarried adolescent sexual activity is long indeed. Apart from the threat to physical health and fertility, there is damage to family relationships, self-confidence and emotional health, spiritual health, and future economic opportunities due to unplanned pregnancy. Condom-based sex-education does not work.

## **Saving Sex for Marriage is the Common Sense Solution.**

I have been discussing the epidemic of sexually transmitted diseases that is running rampant in this country and around the world. Diseases such as chlamydia, human papilloma virus, herpes, hepatitis B, trichomonas, pelvic inflammatory disease, and AIDS have joined syphilis and gonorrhea in just the last 30 years. There is no question that the fruits of the sexual revolution, or sexual convulsion as one author put it, have been devastating. I have also shown how our teenagers are at a greater risk for sexually transmitted diseases than are adults and that sex-education based on condom use is ineffective and misleading. There is only one message that offers health, hope, and joy to today’s teenagers. We need to teach single people to save intercourse for marriage.

Sex is a wonderful gift, but if uncontrolled, it has a great capacity for evil as well as good. Our bodies were not made to

have multiple sex partners. Almost all risk of STD and out of wedlock pregnancy can be avoided by saving intercourse for marriage. And it can be done.

Statistics show clearly that in schools that teach a sex education program that emphasizes saving intercourse for marriage, the teen pregnancy rate drops dramatically in as little as one year. In San Marcos, California, a high school used a federally funded program ("Teen Aid") which emphasizes saving intercourse until marriage. Before using the program there were 147 pregnancies out of 600 girls. Within two years, the number of pregnancies plummeted to 20 out of 600 girls.(3) In Jessup, Georgia, upon instituting the "Sex Respect" program, the number of pregnancies out of 340 female students dropped from 17 to 13 to 11 to 3 in successive years.

Delaying intercourse until teens are older is not a naive proposal. Over 50% of the females and 40% of the males ages 15 to 19 have not had intercourse. While not a majority, they are living proof that teens can control their sexual desires. Current condom-based sex-education programs basically teach teenagers that they cannot control their sexual desires, and that they must use condoms to protect themselves. It is not a big leap from teenagers being unable to control their sexual desires to being unable to control their hate, greed, anger, and prejudice. This is not the right message for our teenagers! Teenagers are willing to discipline themselves for things they want and desire and are convinced are beneficial. Girls get up early for drill team practice. Boys train in the off-season with weights to get stronger for athletic competition. Our teens can also be disciplined in their sexual lives if they have the right information to make logical choices. Saving sex for marriage is the common sense solution. In fact, it is the only solution. We don't hesitate to tell our kids not to use drugs, and most don't. We tell our kids it's unhealthy to smoke, and most do not. We tell our kids not to use marijuana, and most do not.

It is normal and healthy not to have sex until marriage. Sexually transmitted diseases are so common that it is not an exaggeration to say that most people who regularly have sex outside of marriage will contract a sexually transmitted disease. Not only is saving sex for marriage the only real hope for sexual health, it is God's design. God has said that our sexuality is to blossom within the confines of a mutually faithful monogamous relationship. What we are seeing today is the natural consequence of disobedience. We need to reeducate our kids not just in what is best, but in what is right.

## Notes

1. Medical Institute for Sexual Health, P.O. Box 4919, Austin, TX 78765.

2. I.W. Stout, et al., *Pediatrics*, 1989, 83:376-79.

3. Joe S. McIlhaney, Jr., *Safe Sex* (Grand Rapids, Michigan; Baker Book House, 1991), p. 86.

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# The New Age Movement

*Former Probe staffer Dr. Robert Pyne provides an orthodox Christian perspective on the concepts underpinning the New Age philosophy.*

The New Age Movement. You've probably heard the phrase, and chances are you've heard it applied to everything from cartoon shows to environmental protection groups. Today we have "new age" radio stations, "new age" bookstores, and even "new age" churches, but a great deal of confusion remains about the New Age Movement. To begin with, the New Age Movement is not a

conspiracy or a cult. It is a loose collection of very diverse people and groups. It is a religious trend, not a religious organization. Its broadness makes it rather difficult to define, but there are several beliefs that are distinctively "New Age."

One of these beliefs is monism, the idea that all of reality is essentially one. You and I usually recognize differences between ourselves and between different objects in our world, but the monist sees everything as a single organic whole. From the monistic perspective, we are all part of one another; and, if God exists, we are all part of God.

Monism sounds very much like Eastern pantheism, and this similarity has caused many observers to describe the New Age Movement as the invasion of Eastern mysticism into Western culture. In fact, the New Age Movement has its historical roots in European philosophy. What we're seeing is not the adoption of Eastern religion, but the bankruptcy of our own culture.

Let me explain. For centuries Christian theologians maintained that there were three sources of truth: revelation, tradition, and reason. One by one, the philosophers discarded revelation, ignored tradition, and concluded that reason was inadequate. The situation thus became a little scary. There weren't any sources of authority left!

Humans don't function very well without some source of authority, some source of hope. With no other place to turn, Western philosophers began to place their hopes in irrational ideas like monism, believing that the problems and inconsistencies of life were more apparent than real and that these problems could be resolved at some deep level that we really can't comprehend. These ideas provided the real foundation for the New Age Movement. It came about because Western philosophy had run out of answers.

All of that is simply to say this: The New Age Movement teaches some things that don't make much sense. Its teachings violate Scripture, tradition, and reason. Its proponents are people who are desperately looking for hope and security in a world that seems very confusing. They have bought into the idea that we have no sure source of authority, and they are attempting to find answers in experience and in irrational ideals.

## **Monism and Pantheism**

One of the most distinctive beliefs of the New Age Movement is monism, the belief that all of reality is essentially one. From this perspective, everything that exists is part of a single organic whole. There are no real differences between people, between objects, or between people and objects.

Monism seems very odd to most of us because our experience points to distinctions between ourselves and other people or between persons and objects. The New Age Movement, however, perceives logic and reason as limitations. Its adherents see commonly observed distinctions as illusions, and they believe we are led astray by what we would call "common sense." For the New Age follower, we are all one with one another and, for that matter, with everything. When individuals come to the belief that they are one with the universe, a kind of conversion takes place. Shirley MacLaine's experience in an Andean mineral bath illustrates the point. She writes,

Slowly, slowly, I became the water . . . . I was the air, the water, the darkness, the walls, the bubbles, the candle, the wet rocks under the water, and even the sound of the rushing river outside.

Shirley MacLaine came to the conclusion that she was not herself a distinct entity, but that she was instead completely identified with all that surrounded her. This belief that everything is essentially one leads New Age followers to

believe in pantheism, the idea that all is God. The unity of all reality tells them that everything is divine, including themselves. If all is one, then there are no distinctions, and all is God. Again, Shirley MacLaine writes, "I am God, because all energy is plugged into the same source. We are all individualized reflections of the God source. God is in us and we are God."

From a New Age perspective, this concept is the key to unlocking one's true potential, for to realize that you are God is to realize that you have no finite limitations. But there's a problem with this claim. If God does not have limited knowledge or abilities, why would we have to grow in knowledge if we are God? Why would we even have to come to the conclusion that we are divine? If we are unlimited, why are we so limited that we do not always realize we are unlimited?

In addition, if all is essentially one, no real difference exists between good and evil. With no legitimate distinction between good and evil, New Age religious activity becomes an exercise in futility. What you do or don't do doesn't matter at all!

Finally, New Age pantheism stands in sharp contrast to the biblical doctrine of creation. Genesis 1 tells us that, in the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. God is not the same as His creation, but is utterly distinct from it as the Creator. Our place is not to ascend to His throne, but to bow down before it.

## **The Political Agenda of the New Age Movement**

A consequence of New Age monism is a strong emphasis on the unity of our planet. This belief that everything is one was reinforced when astronauts photographed the Earth from outer space. The pictures didn't look anything like our rapidly changing political maps. The barriers we had erected between

nations were invisible, as were the wars taking place at the time. Only what we had in common was visible: a single planet and a fragile ecosystem. Peter Russell writes,

[This] picture has become a spiritual symbol for our times. It stands for the growing awareness that we and the planet are all part of a single system, that we can no longer divorce ourselves from the whole.

These pictures of the Earth from outer space are on New Age posters, bumper stickers, and T-shirts to remind us that we are all essentially one. We see this same idea in popular music as well—the Grammy award-winning song “From a Distance” emphasizes the idea that when one stands back and looks at our planet “from a distance,” there is harmony, peace, and hope. There is global oneness.

This emphasis on globalism reflects the New Age desire to see the essential oneness of all reality manifested in our experience. The followers of the New Age want humanity to function as a “superorganism,” similar to a school of fish or a flock of birds, reacting to danger within a fraction of a second and behaving in such cooperation that we seem to have a common brain. Peter Russell writes,

No longer will we perceive ourselves as isolated individuals; we will know ourselves to be part of a rapidly integrating global network, the nerve cells of an awakened global brain.

This vision doesn't stop with the Earth, for New Age followers believe that our world will network with other planets, then other galaxies, until the entire universe is in complete harmony as a single organism.

From this perspective, the interests of humanity are subordinated to those of the Earth as a whole. The important thing is not whether we ourselves survive, or even whether or not our Earth survives, but whether or not this evolutionary

process continues to go forward. Particularly in light of the fact that many people become a part of the New Age Movement because they desire a positive message of hope, their expectation is ultimately a very sad and impersonal one. The individual is lost in the whole process, like a drop of water blending into a cosmic ocean.

## **Achieving Oneness**

While all New Age followers look forward to global and universal oneness, they do not all agree on the means by which they expect that oneness to be achieved. Some focus on humanity's technological potential for harmony, emphasizing advances in telecommunications and the sciences. Others pay more attention to the somewhat mystical idea that all things share the same essential energy. If we can tap into that energy we can use it to our advantage. Just as Luke Skywalker used "the Force" in the Star Wars movies to levitate objects and win battles, many New Age adherents believe they can control events around them through visualization and meditation. This belief goes far beyond using one's perceived powers for personal gain. Their commitment to global and universal harmony causes New Age followers to focus their attention on transforming the world. Here their belief that we share the same essential energy means that we can share the same consciousness.

One of the best illustrations of this concept is in the New Age fable of the "One-Hundredth Monkey." As the story goes, a group of scientists taught an island monkey to wash his food in the water before he ate. Several other monkeys eventually mimicked his behavior, and before long nearly a hundred of the monkeys on that island had learned this same lesson. At that point, however, a strange thing happened. When the one-hundredth monkey began to wash his food, suddenly all of the monkeys of that species began doing the same thing, even those who had no contact with the monkeys in the experiment. The

idea is that the one-hundredth monkey was enough to push this practice “over the edge” into a kind of cosmic consciousness.

New Age followers use this fable as a way of illustrating what they believe we can achieve with the human race. They maintain that they need only to reach this “critical mass” of enlightened individuals in order for their enlightenment to become the common consciousness of all humanity. The Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, for example, has said that if just 1 percent of the population were to practice the technique of Transcendental Meditation, the “Age of Enlightenment” could dawn.

This critical mass is what New Age followers were trying to achieve with the event they called the “Harmonic Convergence.” The Harmonic Convergence provided an opportunity for New Age adherents to channel their collective powers toward the common goal of world peace and harmony. The attempt to achieve this critical mass is also why so many cars have bumper stickers that read “Visualize World Peace.” The proponents of the New Age believe that world peace will actually be realized if enough people visualize it.

## **Witnessing to the New Age Follower**

It is absolutely essential that Christians be sensitive to the philosophical perspective of New Age followers. We have seen that the New Age Movement reflects our culture’s rejection of revelation, tradition, and reason as authentic sources of truth. New Age followers will be completely turned off if we use reason with them to show them the error of their beliefs. From their point of view, such dependence on logic and reason does nothing more than demonstrate a profound lack of enlightenment on our part. In the same way, an appeal to the truth of Scripture or to the teachings of your church will seem rigid and insensitive. I’m not saying that we must avoid Scripture or logic; I’m simply saying that we need to be extremely cautious in the way we minister to the New Age

follower.

Since the New Age Movement values experience so highly, it may well be that your personal testimony is the most helpful thing you can communicate to adherents of the New Age. They will usually dismiss your logic and your books, but their own beliefs prevent them from dismissing your experience. By demonstrating the reality of your Christianity and the transformation that the gospel has brought into your life, you appeal to them on their own terms.

Naturally, there's something a little disconcerting about a testimonial approach. It means that you must have a more consistent testimony than their peers in the New Age. New Age seminars, for example, provide a great deal of personal support for those in attendance. Visitors feel welcome, they feel loved, and they want to come back just because the people are so friendly and attentive. Do we treat visitors that way in our churches? Do we treat our New Age friends with love and respect even though we disagree with their theology? If we give them rejection instead of encouragement, we're driving them deeper into the New Age.

The greatest thing we can offer New Age followers is a secure sense of hope. I believe hope is what they are looking for in the New Age Movement, but their thirst won't be satisfied there. The New Age hope is insecure and impersonal, and the individual is ultimately not valued at all. Compare that "hope" to the promise of the Savior that nothing can separate us from His love, that nobody will ever snatch us from the hand of the Father, that one day He will wipe away every tear from our eyes (Rom. 8:31-39; John 10:27-29; Rev. 21:4). What a difference! We need to demonstrate the reality of our hope and be prepared to explain how we have been made to feel so secure (1 Pet. 3:15).

The New Age Movement is very diverse, and it blends in easily with many other religions. One thing that it does not take in

very well, however, is the cross of Jesus Christ. Your New Age friends will have a very difficult time accepting the idea that salvation can only come through Jesus Christ. That concept stands against everything they believe. Understand that they will probably not embrace the gospel quickly, but speak the truth in love. Through your words and through your lifestyle point them to Christ, who is our hope.

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## The Decline of a Nation – History and Christian Values

*Kerby Anderson considers factors which may lead to the decline of this nation's position as the only world super-power. He points out the relationship between moral and spiritual decline and the decline of society in general. We need to return to godly principles if we are to avoid a descent into irrelevance and depravity.*

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



Doomsayers for many years have been predicting the decline and fall of this country. And while many of these short-term predictions have proved inaccurate, there is some truth to the prevailing belief that this nation will fall like every great nation before it. Apart from revival and reformation, this nation is destined to decline.

The problem with many of these doomsayers is that while their prognosis is right, their diagnosis is wrong. Yes, the future is bleak. But our problem is not ultimately political, economic, or social, as these doomsayers would have us

believe. The decline of this nation (just as the decline of every other nation) is due to spiritual factors. The political, economic, and social problems we encounter are the symptoms of the spiritual deterioration of a nation.

Just as there are spiritual principles that influence the life of an individual, so there are political-spiritual principles that govern the life of a nation. And though we may feel that these are obscure and difficult to discern, in reality they are visible to anyone willing to look at the record of history.

Our problem is that we don't really learn from history. George Santayana said that "those who forget the past are condemned to repeat it." The philosopher Hegel said, "What experience and history teach us is this: that people and government never have learned anything from history or acted on principles deduced from it." Or as Winston Churchill said, "The one thing we have learned from history is that we don't learn from history."

The refrains that are often heard are: "It can't happen here," or "Our country is different." But the reality is that nations are born and die just like individuals. Their longevity may exceed the average person's lifespan. But the reality is that nations also die.

History has shown that the average age of the great civilizations is around two hundred years. Countries like Great Britain exceed the average while other countries like the United States are just now reaching the average age.

Each of the great civilizations in the world passed through a series of stages from their birth to their decline to their death. Historians have listed these in ten stages.

The first stage moves from bondage to spiritual faith. The second from spiritual faith to great courage. The third stage moves from great courage to liberty. The fourth stage moves

from liberty to abundance. The fifth stage moves from abundance to selfishness. The sixth stage moves from selfishness to complacency. The seventh stage moves from complacency to apathy. The eighth stage moves from apathy to moral decay. The ninth stage moves from moral decay to dependence. And the tenth and last stage moves from dependence to bondage.

These are the ten stages through which the great civilizations have gone. Notice the progression from bondage to liberty back to bondage. The first generation throws off the shackles of bondage only to have a later generation through apathy and indifference allow itself to once again be enslaved.

This is the direction this and every other country is headed. The book of Judges shows that the nation of Israel passed through these same stages. And this country will do the same unless revival and reformation break out and reverse the inexorable decline of this nation.

## **The Cycle of Nations**

In his book *The End of Christendom*, Malcolm Muggeridge makes this powerful observation. He says:

I conclude that civilizations, like every other human creation, wax and wane. By the nature of the case there can never be a lasting civilization anymore than there can be a lasting spring or lasting happiness in an individual life or a lasting stability in a society. It's in the nature of man and of all that he constructs to perish, and it must ever be so. The world is full of the debris of past civilizations and others are known to have existed which have not left any debris behind them but have just disappeared.

He goes on to say that

...whatever their ideology may be, from the Garden of Eden onwards such dreams of lasting felicity have cropped up and

no doubt always will. But the realization is impossible for the simple reason that a fallen creature like man though capable of conceiving perfection and aspiring after it, is in himself and in his works forever imperfect. Thus he is fated to exist in the no man's land between the perfection he can conceive and the imperfection that characterizes his own nature and everything he does.

Nations rise and nations fall. Every nation has followed this progression from bondage to bondage. The nations of this century will be no different. But let us not accept the Marxist notion that these are fixed and intractable laws of history. Christians can point to unusual times when revival has redirected the inexorable decline of a civilization. In the Old Testament, Jonah saw revival postpone God's judgment of Nineveh. In the sixteenth century, Martin Luther and John Calvin saw a Protestant Reformation transform Europe. And even in the history of the United States the First and Second Great Awakenings changed individuals and our society.

But apart from God's intervention, nations will decline and eventually pass off the scene. Much of the Old Testament records the history of the nation of Israel. It passed through these same stages and so will every country in the world.

As Christians we must recognize that nations will rise and fall just as individuals will be born and die. Our civilization will not last indefinitely, but will eventually pass off the scene. Only God's Word endures forever. We should not put our trust in the things of this world for they are destined for destruction. Instead, we should put our faith in God and His word.

## **The Decline of the Family**

Nations most often fall from within, and this fall is usually due to a decline in the moral and spiritual values in the family. As families go, so goes a nation.

This has been the main premise of thinkers from British historian J. D. Unwin to Russian sociologist Pitirim Sorokin who have studied civilizations that have collapsed. In his book *Our Dance Has Turned to Death*, Carl Wilson identifies the common pattern of family decline in ancient Greece and the Roman Empire. Notice how these seven stages parallel what is happening in our nation today. In the first stage, men ceased to lead their families in worship. Spiritual and moral development became secondary. Their view of God became naturalistic, mathematical, and mechanical.

In the second stage, men selfishly neglected care of their wives and children to pursue material wealth, political and military power, and cultural development. Material values began to dominate thought, and the man began to exalt his own role as an individual. The third stage involved a change in men's sexual values. Men who were preoccupied with business or war either neglected their wives sexually or became involved with lower-class women or with homosexuality. Ultimately, a double standard of morality developed. The fourth stage affected women. The role of women at home and with children lost value and status. Women were neglected and their roles devalued. Soon they revolted to gain access to material wealth and also freedom for sex outside marriage. Women also began to minimize having sex relations to conceive children, and the emphasis became sex for pleasure. Marriage laws were changed to make divorce easy.

In the fifth stage, husbands and wives competed against each other for money, home leadership, and the affection of their children. This resulted in hostility and frustration and possible homosexuality in the children. Many marriages ended in separation and divorce.

Many children were unwanted, aborted, abandoned, molested, and undisciplined. The more undisciplined children became, the more social pressure there was not to have children. The breakdown of the home produced anarchy.

In the sixth stage, selfish individualism grew and carried over into society, fragmenting it into smaller and smaller group loyalties. The nation was thus weakened by internal conflict. The decrease in the birthrate produced an older population that had less ability to defend itself and less will to do so, making the nation more vulnerable to its enemies.

Finally, unbelief in God became more complete, parental authority diminished, and ethical and moral principles disappeared, affecting the economy and government. Thus, by internal weakness and fragmentation the societies came apart. There was no way to save them except by a dictator who arose from within or by barbarians who invaded from without.

Although this is an ancient pattern of decline found in Greece and Rome, it is relevant today. Families are the foundation of a nation. When the family crumbles, the nation falls because nations are built upon family units. They are the true driving social force. A nation will not be strong unless the family is strong. That was true in the ancient world and it is true today.

Social commentator Michael Novak, writing on the importance of the family, said:

One unforgettable law has been learned through all the disasters and injustices of the last thousand years: If things go well with the family, life is worth living; when the family falters, life falls apart.

## **The Decline of Values**

There are many factors in the decline of a nation. Certainly a major one is the breakdown of the family. But another potent but less perceptible force is the power of ideas.

False ideas are bringing about the decline of western culture. Carl F. H. Henry, in his book *Twilight of a Great*

*Civilization*, says:

There is a new barbarism. This barbarism has embraced a new pagan mentality . . . not simply rejecting the legacy of the West, but embracing a new pagan mentality where there is no fixed truth.

Today we live in a world where biblical absolutes are ignored, and unless we return to these biblical truths, our nation will continue to decline.

To understand how we have arrived at this appalling situation, we need to go back a century and look at the influence of five intellectual leaders who still profoundly affect the modern world. The first person is Charles Darwin (1809-1882). In 1859 he published *The Origin of Species* and later published *The Descent of Man*. His writings blurred the distinction between humans and animals since he taught that we are merely part of an evolutionary progression from lower forms of life. Darwinism, as it came to be called, not only affected the field of biology, but became the foundation for the fields of anthropology, sociology, and psychology.

The second person is Karl Marx (1818-1883). He and Friedrich Engels published the *Communist Manifesto* around 1850, and Marx devoted his life to writing about the demise of capitalism and coming of communism. He understood the importance of ideas. Marx once wrote: "Give me twenty-six lead soldiers and I will conquer the world." (So did Benjamin Franklin.) The twenty-six lead soldiers are the keys on a typewriter. The pervasive influence of communism in the world today is testimony to the truthfulness of his statement.

The third person is Julius Wellhausen (1844-1918). Although he may not be as well known as the other two men mentioned, his influence was just as profound. He was a German Bible scholar whose theory on the dating of the Pentateuch completely transformed Old Testament studies.

Wellhausen argued that the early books of the Bible were not put together by Moses but were gathered together many centuries later by several different men called redactors who wove various strands together. He and his disciples established an anti-supernatural approach to the scriptures which is influential in most denominational seminaries today.

The fourth person is Sigmund Freud (1856-1939). He merely took the logical implications of what Darwin was doing in biology and applied them to what today is known as psychology and psychiatry. Freud argued that humans are basically autonomous and therefore do not need to know God. Instead, we need to know and understand ourselves since our problems stem from those secret things that have evolved in our lives from our past.

A fifth person is John Dewey (1859-1952). He is the founder of modern education and published his first work, *The School and Society*, in 1899. John Dewey was also one of the co-signers of the *Humanist Manifesto* in 1933.

Dewey, like Darwin and Freud, believed that humans are autonomous. They don't need to have an authority above them but can evolve their own system of education. Thus the very foundation of modern education is anti-supernatural.

Ideas have consequences, and false ideas can bring down a nation. The theories of these five men are having devastating consequences in our nation and world. Unless we return to biblical absolutes, our nation will continue its decline.

## **Spiritual Decline**

The decline and fall of nations is usually due to internal factors rather than external threats. Even though some may have fallen to barbarians, their demise ultimately came because of moral and spiritual weakness which manifested itself as military weakness. Historians have listed the stages

in the decline of a nation. These should not be too surprising to any student of the Old Testament. The stages of decline parallel the stages through which the nation of Israel passed.

But neither should they surprise a student of the New Testament. In the opening chapter of the Apostle Paul's letter to the church in Rome, he traces a similar progression. In fact, Romans 1 shows the decline of a civilization from a societal perspective. Looking at the Hellenistic world of his time, he reflects on the progression of sin in a nation.

The first stage is when people turn from God to idolatry. Although God has revealed Himself in nature to all men so that they are without excuse, they nevertheless worship the creation instead of the Creator. This is idolatry. In the past, this took the form of actual idol worship. In our day, it takes the form of the worship of money or the worship of self. In either case, it is idolatry. A further example of this is a general lack of thankfulness. Although they have prospered by God, they are ungrateful. And when they are no longer looking to God for wisdom and guidance, they become vain and futile and empty in their imaginations. They no longer honor God, so their foolish hearts become darkened. In professing to be wise, they have become fools.

The second stage is when men and women exchange their natural use of sex for unnatural uses. Here the Apostle Paul says those four sobering words, "God gave them over." In a society where lust-driven sensuality and sexual perversion dominate, God gives them over to their degrading passions and unnatural desires. The third stage is anarchy. Once a society has rejected God's revelation, it is on its own. Moral and social anarchy is the natural result. At this point God has given the sinners over to a depraved mind and so they do things which are not proper. This results in a society which is without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful.

The final stage is judgment. God's judgment rightly falls upon

those who practice idolatry and immorality. Certainly an eternal judgment awaits those who are guilty, but a social judgment occurs when God gives a nation over to its sinful practices.

Notice that this progression is not unique to the Hellenistic world the Apostle Paul was living in. The progression from idolatry to sexual perversion to anarchy to judgment is found throughout history.

In the times of Noah and Lot, there was the idolatry of greed, there was sexual perversion and promiscuity, there was anarchy and violence, and finally there was judgment. Throughout the history of the nation of Israel there was idolatry, sexual perversion, anarchy (in which each person did what was right in his own eyes), and finally judgment.

This progression happened throughout the Bible and to Greece, to Persia, to Babylon, and to Rome. And if it happened to these nations, then it can happen today. Unless we return to God's principles, decline and destruction are inevitable.

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