

Put Everything To The Test

(1 Thessalonians 5:21)

- Introduction:
1. During 1800's the move westward. They lived by a code similar to those in the day of Judges (Judges 21:25).
 2. Right and wrong were subjective as well as penalties, consequently it was called the "Wild, Wild, West."
 3. Fast forward 100 years: America moved from this individualistic code of ethics and came much closer to a moral consensus.
 - a. Tather Knows Best.
 - b. The Donna Reed Show.
 - c. Leave it to Beaver.
 - d. Ozzie and Harriet.
 4. Fast forward not 100, but 50 years and we see we've come full circle.
 - a. America is every bit as wild today as it was in the Wild, Wild, West of the 1800's.
 - b. There's no moral consensus in America today.
 - c. Words like integrity and truth have given way to pragmatism and subjectivism.
 5. This isn't just true of our culture, but can happen to any culture.
 - a. Therefore, culture itself can not be trusted to provide us with a moral compass.
 - b. While culture shapes and reflects the values and beliefs of the people, it offers no assurances that those values and beliefs are correct.
 - c. Morality tends to ebb and flow in a culture - what was right 50 years ago is wrong today and what was wrong is now right.
 - d. (Isaiah 5:20).
 6. Therefore, we need to test all things (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

I. What Is Our Standard Of Measurement?

- A. To say we need to test all things is fine, but our culture says, "Test them by what?"
- B. There was a time when the Bible was the default answer to such a question, but we no longer can make that presupposition. We live in a time when pragmatism and hedonism have become accepted as standards of determining right and wrong.
- C. The following story illustrates where we are today. Ills. Of Holmes and Watson.
- D. We've tried to replace our tent with the tent of Pragmatism.
 1. If it works, it's right.
 2. But pragmatism fails to provide us with an objective stand for the purpose of life.
 3. How can one know what "works" and doesn't "work" if he doesn't know

- the purpose of life?
 - 4. If the purpose of life is selflessness or longevity would make a huge difference in deciding what “works.”
 - 5. Thus ironically, pragmatism doesn’t work.
 - E. We have also been offered the tent of Hedonism.
 - 1. What is good is what brings pleasure and what is evil is what bring pain.
 - 2. On the surface, it sounds like a very simply way to determine right from wrong.
 - 3. However, the pursuit of pleasure is not as simply as it sounds.
 - a. Pleasure for self or others?
 - b. Pleasure for one or many?
 - c. Short term pleasure or long term pleasure?
 - d. Quality of pleasure or quantity of pleasure?
 - 4. Hedonism has not standard by which to answer such questions.

III. How We Have Gotten Where We Are

- A. A. We Have Removed God From Our Thoughts.
 - 1. (Romans 1:28).
 - 2. Without God, there is no moral anchor...right and wrong, truth and error are as shifting as the sea.
 - 3. Ills. Abstinence based sex education course.
 - 4. Ills. Judge’s ruling on man who raped a little girl.
 - 5. We can learn much about a people in the way the treat the helpless.
 - a. (Jeremiah 22:3).
- B. Pleasure Has Become Our God.
 - 1. (Proverbs 21:17; Philippians 3:19).
 - 2. Hedonism is the philosophy that states that good and evil are determined by pleasure and pain.
 - 3. There is no more morally bankrupt philosophy that this.
 - 4. Hedonists aren’t just found among the “wild crowd,” but also in the church.
- C. We Have “Defined Down” Deviancy.
 - 1. We accept as normal today what at once was deemed repugnant.
 - 2. We employ euphemisms for sin to salve our guilty consciences.
 - a. Lie - Misinformation.
 - b. Fornication - Love.
 - c. Homosexuality - Gay.
 - d. Adultery - Affair.
 - e. Murder of babies - Choice.

II. What We Can Do To Return To God

- A. Good news is that there is hope.
- B. Whether our tent has been stolen or simply misplaced through neglect, we still have a compass that can lead us to safety and shelter.

- C. That compass is the word of God.
- D. (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
- E. (Matthew 28:18).
- F. Suffice it to say that the reality of Jesus' resurrection established through many many indisputable truths, validated his claims (Acts 1:3; 1 Cor. 15:3-8).
- G.. It's time we embrace the Christian lifestyle ourselves (Ephesians 4:1; Philippians 1:27; Colossians 1:10).
- H. We must proclaim the Christian lifestyle to others (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Timothy 2:2).
- I. We must pray for God's providential hand to work change, even at the expense of personal comfort (James 5:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:17).

- Conclusion:
1. If there was ever a time when we needed a moral compass, an uncompromising standard, it is now.
 2. It's time we quit hunkering down and emerge from our bunkers and engage our culture.
 3. It's time we leave the security of our buildings and take Jesus to the streets.
 4. It's time we unashamedly lift the truth and let its light shine so those who are groping in darkness can find their way to the light.
 5. It won't be easy. Those who love darkness will do their best to extinguish the light, but it's our only hope.
 6. May we call all men to test all things by the standard of God's word, and hold fast to that which is good.