

A Year-End YouTube Update: Progress and Regress

A couple of weeks ago, I was leaving a local Wal-Mart when I was stopped by the very enthusiastic young woman ringing the Salvation Army Bell. "I know you!" she exclaimed. "You're the YouTuber! They shut down all your videos!"

I thanked her for interest, then I explained to her that YouTube had demonetized, not shut down, many of our videos. And I told her that in recent days, they had been approving some videos on controversial topics. "We're making some progress," I said with a smile.

Well, it appears that my optimism was premature. For every three steps forward, there are two (and sometimes three) steps backward. Not only so, but the customer service I have received from YouTube has been beyond ridiculously bad. You could call it friendly but insultingly worthless. In short, utterly inane.

Even so, my point in writing here is not to complain but to update, since others are fighting similar battles and have frequently referenced the unfair treatment my own organization has received from YouTube.

As for the reason for my short-lived optimism, in the last couple of months, we had a number of videos approved after being flagged as "Not suitable for most advertisers." (I'll put them in categories for convenience sake).

1) Videos dealing with homosexuality: Testimony: Jackie Hill Perry on Being Saved out of a Homosexual Lifestyle; Mainstreaming Gay on Prime-Time TV

2) Videos dealing with sexual ethics: Why Mike Pence's Sexual Ethics Make Good Christian Sense; The Death of Manson; and

Biblical Sexual Ethics Make Sense

3) Videos dealing with abortion: A Feminist Atheist and a Nun Agree on Abortion; Dr. Brown Sets the Record Straight on Pastor Carl Lentz and Abortion

4) Videos dealing with conservative politics: Judge Roy Moore's Vision for America

5) Videos critiquing the secular media: Don Lemon, There's a Reason We Pray

6) Videos about Israel and the Jewish people: Is Donald Trump Fulfilling Biblical Prophecy About Jerusalem?; Martin Luther and the Jews; Has Christianity "Replaced" Judaism?

7) Other spiritually based videos: An 11-Year-Old Caller Wants to Be Sure He Is Saved; A Time to Mourn (reflections after the Texas church massacre)

Now, you might be wondering why many of these were flagged, and you'd have good reason. Most of them violate none of YouTube's guidelines, and that remains a big part of the problem. Why flag these at all?

Still, the fact that YouTube approved these videos after manual review, especially those dealing with homosexuality, abortion and Israel, was positive and seemed like a step in the right direction.

And then, suddenly, one video after another was being flagged again. Are you ready to see what is getting flagged by YouTube's attention? Let's start with these: Dr. Brown Answers Your Questions; Answers to Your Questions; You've Got Questions, We've Got Answers; Dr. Brown Answers Your Questions Live on Black Friday; Dr. Brown Takes Your Calls and Responds to Some Critics.

Oh yes! How totally controversial and offensive. Dr. Brown answers your questions! What were we thinking by even posting

such provocative stuff?

And how about these terribly ugly videos? Are There Things God Can't Do? What Is a "Biblical Worldview"? Does God Promise to Deliver Us from Suffering? Who Are the 144,000 in the Book of Revelation? What Do Jewish Millennials Believe? Does God Predestine People to Hell?

Surely millions of viewers were offended by the fact we even asked such questions. Shame on us for poor judgment.

And then these real barn-burners when it comes to controversy: What Is the Tree of Life Bible? Part 1; What Is the Tree of Life Bible? Part 2

And then there were these downright nasty videos that surely deserved to be flagged: It's Chanukah on the Line of Fire!; What Is the Importance of Chanukah?

Good for YouTube in being so vigilant as to catch these.

And the YouTube censors were surely at their best when they flagged these two: An Interview With Eric Metaxas; and Miracles: An Interview With Professor Craig Keener.

What was I thinking when I interviewed *New York Times* best-seller Eric and award-winning New Testament scholar Craig?

And if YouTube was flagging innocuous videos like these, you can be sure they flagged all these (this is just in the last two months): Is Jerusalem the Capital of "Palestine"? Is the U.N. Fulfilling Prophecy? The U.N. Vote, Jerusalem, and Your Jewish Calls; Removing the Veil of Silence From Post-Holocaust Germany; Confronting Contemporary Anti-Semitism; Refuting Myths About Israel and the Hebrew Language; Trump, Roy Moore, Fake News, Jerusalem, Anti-Semitism, and More; Is There Such a Thing as Ex-Gay?; Responding to the Alabama Elections and a Special Interview; Pragmatic and Moral Reasons to Vote for Roy Moore; Accusations Against Judge Moore; Dr. Brown Speaking at

the Historic Love Life Charlotte Rally; Developing a Culture of Life; An Historic Event in the Pro-Life Movement; Freedom of Conscience Under Attack: The Masterpiece Cake Case; How to Advance a Gospel-Based Revolution; 10 Theses for a New Reformation and an Interview on the Chronological Gospel; Leaving Mormonism: An Interview with Lynn Wilder; Donald Trump, Matt Lauer, and Sexual Scandals; Responding to Matt Lauer's Fall; Nancy Pelosi's Double Standards; The Pastor Preached on Heaven One Sunday Before the Massacre; Other "gods", Aliens, Nephilim and the Paranormal.

Yes, all these have been flagged by YouTube since Nov. 1 (quite a few of them, quite out of the blue). Would you agree with me that this is a lot? A whole lot?

And while we've been waiting for these (and *many* other) videos to be reviewed, these three videos have been officially confirmed as not being suitable for all advertisers: Dr. Brown Challenges a Muslim Leader to a Formal Debate on Religious Extremism; Charles Manson: The Making of a Monster; and Responding to the Church Massacre in Texas.

Could someone please watch this last video, in which we give a sensitive, biblically based response to the Texas church massacre, sharing hope in the midst of suffering, and tell me how this violates YouTube guidelines? It certainly does not.

Unfortunately, on a practical level, the moment one of your videos is flagged, you no longer receive any income for it. And once you request a manual review, unless it's viewed 1,000 times in a 7-day period, it will not be reviewed.

And since we post so many videos and have about 36,000 subscribers (as opposed to, say, 1 million subscribers), a number of these videos will not meet this threshold, and so will never be reviewed. That means that there is the ongoing loss of important income that we would have immediately reinvested in our nonprofit ministry to help us produce more

quality videos.

I do remain hopeful that with enough pressure from enough people, YouTube will make a course correction and do the right thing. And if you're not a subscriber to our channel, I encourage you to join us today.

But with or without YouTube, we are determined to get our message out. No one can silence us.