

Can We Have Values and Virtues in a Post-Christian Culture?

In response to the revelations of newly enabled #MeToo victims and advocates, highly-paid and award-winning actor Matt Damon believes we must acknowledge a “spectrum of behavior” in our current national discussion about sexual misconduct.

Apparently, that is why Hollywood celebrities can praise the “sexual revolution,” ignited by Hugh Hefner, while at the same time decrying the sexual harassment and predatory practices of Harvey Weinstein.

Judeo-Christian values are not mere opinions, which change with the times, so we can be on the “right side of history.” Rather, these historically recognized values and virtues are biblically based and not quickly modified.

Personal preferences can help guide our liberties and lifestyles, but the common values of our culture should come from immutable “thus says the Lord” passages of Scripture. Our personal beliefs, norms and practices should flow from there, whether supported by public laws and regulations or not.

If we have devolved, as a culture, to where we are now living in a “post-Christian” era, we need to first seek repentance and reformation in the House of God. The Bible says the last days will be characterized by professing believers who have “itching ears” and only want to hear affirmation of their selfish standards and sinful lifestyles (2 Tim. 4:3).

Spiritual shepherds need to prophetically exhort us and teach us Scripture’s holy expectations. Only then can spiritual renewal begin in our places of worship and homes (1 Pet. 4:17-18)—which will, again, transform our culture, for the

good of all.

One positive place to begin may be to pro-actively seek to re-create a culture of marriage in our families and churches, for others to see its godly effects and good benefits.

For instance, I believe we need to find and affirm contributing factors to modern, God-centered, biblical marriages and families. Then, having recognized these factors, we need to see that they are enhanced and celebrated in our churches.

Consider these seven areas of focus:

1. Elementary-aged children are especially open to the love of God and many make their lifetime commitment to Jesus during these years. Children from single-parent homes need our special love and effort so they can find Jesus to be their constant companion and friend. Also, those in blended families often face emotional challenges and scars. How can our teaching times and mentoring efforts help them learn and experience biblical values and views?

2. Teens in our churches face changing emotions and raging hormones. How can our families and churches positively help, so their self-esteem and sexual standards will conform to their commitment to Christ? Young adolescents will often make lifelong decisions, the ripples of which can never be known until we all get to heaven. Churches must give time and treasure to help mold their lives and futures for the Kingdom.

3. College-age and young adults are often idealists and personally challenged about greed and consumerism, while others are content to watch videos about it on their iGadgets. These 18- to 29-year-old disciples of Jesus need to be taught about spiritual gifts, to enable them to serve and lead in the Body of Christ. Prolonged adolescence needs to be challenged and kingdom-usefulness encouraged.

Also, in this critical age-range, they need to be taught biblical principles about mate selection and about becoming the kind of person that is someone else's "answer to prayer."

4. Pre-marrieds face our culture's expectation that they will live together before marriage. Add to that their natural sexual drives and even committed Christians often succumb to what the Bible plainly condemns as "fornication" (Heb. 13:4). I believe this is often accentuated by delayed commitment, long engagements, and prolonged adolescence.

My wife and I used to teach, along with several other elder-couples, in a series of classes which were required for all getting married, at our church. Couples from other churches often attended, as well, since (like many churches) their church had no pre-married classes available, to help in this critical period. While each couple was different, we tended to counsel for a long relationship, but a short engagement. The sexual tension is just too great, for many couples (1 Cor. 7:9).

On the other hand, the clarity of biblical teachings and confrontation with personal imperfections caused many to "dis-engage" during the series of classes. I often relayed this pithy advice: "I'd rather be single, wishing I were married, than to be married, wishing I were single."

5. Weddings are to be more than elaborate, bank-breaking, cultural events. They are to be the place of public commitment of a man and a woman to a lifelong, covenantal relationship with God. Weddings, ultimately, are to serve us as an earthly expression of the Bride of Christ and our heavenly Bridegroom (Rev. 19:5-9). Because it is a serious matter, the minister warns, "What God has joined together, let no one separate."

Malachi 2:16 declares that God hates divorce. These are harsh words, but divorce harshly affects not just the husband and wife, but any children who may come from the relationship, as

well as both of their extended families—for generations!

As pastors and congregants, we must do all we can to re-establish a “culture of marriage” that will encourage, celebrate and protect marriages, along with the generations which follow after them.

6. Newlyweds need to practically learn how to love, respect and admire each other. This takes time, commitment and effort! In the Old Testament (Deut. 24:5), the newlywed man was exempted from going to war for the first year, so he and his bride could establish their home properly.

A modern “honeymoon season” can be enhanced by fellowship and relationships with other newlyweds in their local church, who are learning the same lessons! But after that first year or so, newlyweds need to find places to serve others in their local church.

This maturing and selfless service may be the time to volunteer in children’s ministry areas, to gain a sense of holding, handling and relating to babies, toddlers and preschoolers!

7. Married couples need relationships with other believing couples to help mold their attitudes and actions, as they learn to establish a loving, safe and godly environment in their homes.

As their families grow, church couples can benefit from specialized classes, seasonal events and spiritual retreats. Some churches even have family camps, where family members can experience faith and fun together, as they bond with each other and blend with other families in a growing culture of marriage.

Many believe that the rise and fall of individuals, families, businesses and governments can all be traced to the success or failure of marriage in a society. The accelerated acceptance,

by many, of the liberal agenda to “fundamentally transform” our American culture from its Judeo-Christian foundations to a fully secular, sexualized and anti-religious society is both alarming and alerting.

We must respond to this “post-Christian” crisis by committing to recreate a God-centered culture of marriage—one family and one church at a time!