

Christian Boycotts: Unbiblical Judgment or Judicious Stewardship?

It seems to me that boycotts have lost some of their standing on the stage of contemporary culture. Perhaps their impact has faded in recent years. I have no data to back that up, but you just don't often hear of boycotts any more.

Through the three decades that I've been on the AFA staff, we have often been roundly ridiculed and royally roasted for boycotts we initiated. But the truth is, they were often an effective means of getting a company's attention. They still are on occasion. And AFA still employs the tactic occasionally when corporate entities refuse to communicate or demonstrate any concern regarding the faith and family issues that we hold dear.

Many of our detractors charged that boycotting was not a good Christian witness. But for me, it has always seemed a simple matter of good stewardship. Where should I spend the money with which God has blessed me? I recently had occasion to look up a column I wrote in AFA Journal in 2009, and I believe the principles are still solid. AFA initiated a 2008 boycott of PepsiCo because the company had made a \$500,000 contribution to the Human Rights Campaign, possibly the nation's most influential radical pro-homosexual activist group.

Fortunately, Pepsi changed its practices, and AFA ended the boycott in February 2010. But it's a war that's landed us where we are now, with same-sex marriage being debated by the nation's highest court. I think there should have been a lot more boycotting going on to support moral values of all sorts, including natural marriage. Here's what I thought then (and I still think it now):

A few days ago, I received an email from a Christian lady who believes boycotts are not a valid means of defending moral values. Specifically, she disagrees with the AFA boycott of PepsiCo, in part because she has relatives working for Pepsi, and she fears they might lose their jobs. She agrees that a homosexual lifestyle is wrong, but thinks a boycott hurts innocent people; thus we should never “judge” others.

She suggested that boycotting is judgmental self-righteousness; we call it judicious, in other words, wise stewardship. Still, she raised a concern that deserves an answer, and I was grateful for the honest spirit of her email. We appreciate hearing from our constituents, and we do not take your thoughts lightly. You help keep us alert and accountable.

So I began to reflect on the countless times I’ve considered her position over my 25 years at AFA. In my response to her concern, I cited a number of principles that I believe stand the test of time, principles that AFA has been observing for decades.

First of all, it is never AFA’s objective that a company go out of business. Rather, we hope the company will change corporate policy to reflect the moral foundations of our culture. Whether we are boycotting a corporation that sells pornography, a network that disparages our Christian faith, or a company that celebrates and supports a life-threatening and aberrant lifestyle, it is our first hope that the corporate entity will right its course and uphold moral standards.

Second, we are persuaded that the radical homosexual agenda, as much as any other issue of our time, poses a grave threat to our survival as a nation and as a moral and civilized people. We are not judging other persons or their inherent value in God’s eyes. We are simply holding a biblical spotlight on poor corporate decisions that support an agenda bent on destroying the biblical foundation upon which our

nation was built.

Third, how and where we Christians spend the financial resources God gives us is a matter of stewardship. That's a no-brainer in my book. To pose a valid parallel, should I purchase my daily paper or news magazines at the adult bookstore because my cousin works there or because I don't want the clerk to lose her job? Should I choose Pepsi over Coca-Cola because my brother is employed by Pepsi?

Fourth, a company's employees may, indeed, suffer when the company takes a stand to support sexual perversion and immoral lifestyles. But that is the company's responsibility, not the fault of consumers. One cannot rationally blame decent citizens who wish to stand against sexual perversion if they opt not to support a company that chooses that path.

Finally, any loss PepsiCo experiences will almost certainly result in a gain for other soft drink companies—where, of course, other people's relatives are employed. In short, PepsiCo has made a choice to support perversion and immorality. Other companies choose differently.

God's people have a choice as well—give God's money to PepsiCo, or spend it elsewhere. A boycott is nothing more, nothing less, than judicious stewardship of the resources God has placed in our care.

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