

David Letterman and the Death of the Talk Show

David Letterman hosted his 6,028th late-night talk-show last night. (For insight on his faith, see Nick Pitts's article, "The Faith of the mysterious David Letterman"). CBS CEO Leslie Moonves said of the television icon, "David's influence was phenomenal. Whenever there was something important going on in America, you turned on David Letterman. He was the conscience of America, he was a bit of a social commentator, he was our local curmudgeon."

Tom Brokaw said of him, "You have to be on your toes. He's very smart and very well-read. He makes me think." One of his producers called him "the best talk-show host ever." That's what makes his retirement so significant; he is arguably the last of the real talk-show hosts. Others do what could be called "comedy/variety," with musical numbers, games with guests and social media campaigns. Letterman's trademark was conversation—often funny, sometimes pointed, on occasion profound.

We need more conversation these days, not less.

Thomas Friedman's latest article in *The New York Times* catalogues some of the seismic shifts going on in our world today. Among them: a recent study concluded that 47 percent of U.S. jobs are at high risk of being taken by software and smart machines over the next 20 years. Geopolitics are dominated not by East-West or capitalist-communist rivalries, but by the World of Order versus the World of Disorder. For instance, more than 50 million people are now displaced worldwide, the largest number since World War II. Israel's government has started sending letters to 45,000 Sudanese and Eritrean refugees, notifying them that they have 30 days to accept \$3,500 in cash and a one-way ticket home or to an

unnamed third country, or face prison.

Friedman nominates this statement by columnist Tom Goodwin for “best lead paragraph on a news article so far this year”: “Uber, the world’s largest taxi company, owns no vehicles. Facebook, the world’s most popular media owner, creates no content. Alibaba, the most valuable retailer, has no inventory. And Airbnb, the world’s largest accommodation provider, owns no real estate. Something interesting is happening.”

Indeed.

We clearly need more conversation about the crucial issues of our time. But even more than we need to be talking with each other, we need to be talking with our Lord. His wisdom has never been more essential than it is today. His Spirit’s guidance has never been more needed. And his word has never been more relevant.

Spiritual solitude is the key to social significance. Henri Nouwen: “Solitude is very different from a ‘time-out’ from our busy lives. Solitude is the very ground from which community grows. Whenever we pray alone, study, read, write or simply spend time away from the places where we interact with each other directly, we are potentially opened for a deeper intimacy with each other.”

What cultural issues are especially urgent for you? Have you sought the mind of Christ about them (1 Cor. 2:16)? When we know Christ, we can then make Him known. And a world desperate for help and hope will find His wisdom in ours.

Jim Denison, Ph.D., is founder of the Denison Forum on Truth and Culture, a non-sectarian “think tank” designed to engage contemporary issues with biblical truth. Join over 100,000 who read Dr. Denison’s daily Cultural Commentary: . For more information on the Denison Forum, visit . To connect with Dr. Denison in social media, visit or