

This Subtle Mindset Is Actually Deadly Humanism

In today's world, entertainment rules the day. As author Neil Postman wrote in his book, we are "Amusing Ourselves to Death." Whether it is video gaming, television, Netflix, internet or sports—Americans love mindless escape, as we hang out in various worlds of non-reality, as often as possible.

Ratings, views, tweets and sales are the barometer of success in our media crazed-culture. Advertising dollars and high-value sponsorships flow toward enterprises that attract the largest audience and demonstrate an upward trend in ratings. Sadly, these influences can also affect how we conduct "business" in the spiritual arena. I am certainly not against the appropriate use of high-tech tools to advance the work of the gospel and the church. God can use various means of delivery via television, radio and internet when these are properly managed and biblically motivated. But we also must be honest in admitting that in many ways the culture has influenced the message more than our message has changed the culture.

Caught by Surprise

A few weeks ago, I was in a distant city with some downtime. I found a Christian music station and tuned in as I burned off some leisure moments. One of the station's tag lines caught my attention. They advertised, "We are not about judgment but compassion." This hit me a little funny, for reasons I will explain in a moment.

Minutes later, the on-air personality began to tell a personal story about someone blessing her with an act of kindness. She declared, "Here's a story to prove that all people are inherently good." By now, my theological antennae were at

high alert.

As I listened to the songs to follow, some were solid and doctrinally sound. Others were nice, emotional and inspiring. Yet, they reflected a twist that probably did more to cheer the listener than to communicate solid biblical truth.

Caveat and Concern

Let me quickly stipulate that Christian music stations have their place. I have good friends in Christian broadcasting and have provided devotional content and live interviews for many stations over the years. Certainly these outlets are a wholesome alternative for families. They provide inspiration and connection throughout the day, in a world that constantly bombards us with lies and worldly messaging. Yet, the only life-changing and lasting good news in our world today is the true gospel of Jesus Christ. We must take care to broadcast the unchanging New Testament hope of the gospel and guard ourselves from communicating popular notions that feel good but ultimately fail to clarify the truth that sets us free.

Yet, the danger is that ratings can sometimes eclipse the right message. It is safe to say that Christian radio personalities are not always hired because of their theological acumen but rather their spontaneous, on-air charisma. While very sincere in their desire to minister to listeners, the truth is, we must evaluate our messaging to be sure we are regularly featuring the biblical content that brings earthly and eternal hope to weary souls.

The Good News of the Gospel

So, what's the big deal? In truth, a gospel without judgement and only compassion is not the gospel. Rather, it is feel-good religion.

The real news that delivers us into true good news is that we are all under God's divine judgment because of our sin,

rebellion and depravity. God's solution through the finished work of Jesus on our behalf is ultimate good news. Jesus stated, "I came into this world for judgment, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may become blind" (John 9:39). His bold and consistent message of repentance was rooted in the truth of man's lost condition and condemnation of sin (Matt. 4:17, Luke 13:5, Luke 24:46-47). The message of the early church was repent and believe, an essential message for those under judgment of sin and in need of the mercy of a holy, loving and forgiving God (Mark 6:12, Act 2:38, 8:22, 20:21, 11:18, 17:30),

This is the true encouragement and real good news to broadcast to the world. Colossians 1:23 describes the "hope of the gospel." John Piper writes, "There is no sweeter message of hope in all the world than to hear God announce that when you get up in the morning miserable and depressed with a sense of guilt and estrangement before a holy God, you can go to bed that very night—this very night—with a quiet and peaceful heart knowing that every sin you have ever committed and ever will commit is forgiven and you are reconciled to the Almighty by the death of his Son. That's the free offer of the gospel.

So our message is truly about judgement and compassion. This is the gospel!

Inherently Good?

Mankind was created in the image of God and, as a result, is capable of doing good. But our nature is depraved and fallen. Because of Adam's sin, the divine image has been corrupted. Romans 5:12 says, "So then, just as sin entered the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all people because all sinned." Psalm 51:5 affirms that we are sinners from conception. Paul affirmed that there is NONE righteous and all have sinned. (Romans 3:10,23). The penalty of our sin is eternal separation from God. (Romans 6:23)

The truth of our sin and separation from a holy God is what makes the work of Christ essential, powerful and sufficient. That sinful man can be cleansed, forgiven and transformed is true, Christ-honoring and God-glorifying GOOD news. To declare that we are all “basically good” undermines the wonder of the true gospel.

Ultimate Hope, Lasting Encouragement

So, in a world of confusing media and watered-down messaging, may the Holy Spirit give us discernment to test all things (1 Thess. 5:21) and cling to the sound doctrine of the gospel. In this, God is rightly glorified and we are truly edified.

Quoting John Piper again, “The ultimate aim of the gospel is the display of God’s glory and the removal of every obstacle to our seeing it and savoring it as our highest treasure. ‘Behold Your God!’ is the most gracious command and the best gift of the gospel. If we do not see Him and savor Him as our greatest fortune, we have not obeyed or believed the gospel.” ²

In knowing, believing, obeying and defending the gospel, we find true hope and lasting encouragement. Anything less will be superficial and short-lived. Surely, our broken world and our difficult lives require nothing less, nothing else and nothing more than the living and clear gospel of Jesus Christ.
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