

PAT ROBERTSON: An Undeniable Legacy

The founder of the Christian Broadcast Network, the Christian Coalition, Regent University, and the American Center for Law and Justice, Pat Robertson's impact on the church and the world cannot be understated.

A noted author as well as the host of *The 700 Club*, one of the longest-running and most popular religious television shows in history, Robertson's reach has grown exponentially in his long ministry.

"We started years ago with one small UHF television station, broadcasting to a relatively small market," Robertson told *Charisma*. "Since that time, we have become a worldwide ministry, broadcasting in about 59 different languages with production studios in Jakarta, Indonesia; Kiev, Ukraine; Hyderabad, India; and in Manila, Philippines. We have gone from television into the Internet, and now just the Arabic language website on the Internet has millions of unique visitors a year."

The true measure of an evangelist's reach, though, is in the fruit he bears, and Robertson's efforts have borne a tremendous harvest, one that continues to grow, half a century after he embarked on his bold vision for televangelism.

"Since we started records, we have received 98 million calls for prayer," he says. "According to surveys, our programs have led over 600 million people to faith in Jesus Christ. The cumulative audience of our television programs exceeds 300 million people during a year. Only the Lord Himself knows what impact this has all had but, to say the least, the numbers are dramatic."

Throughout his long ministerial career, he has seen plenty of

change, from the counterculture movement of the '60s and public prayer being evicted from schools to the current controversies of gay marriage, transgenderism, abortion and so on. But unfortunately, he feels, the church has not risen to the call of a culture in need of redemption.

"Over these 50 years, the church as such has become much, much less relevant," he says. "And in the culture, language, concepts, and practices that would have been undreamt of 50 years ago are now considered normalcy.

"Since we began, the United States Supreme Court has declared abortion-on-demand to be a constitutional right and over 55 million unborn babies have been slaughtered," he continued. "Schools used to open with prayer and Bible reading and now, because of Supreme Court decrees, religion has been virtually banned from the classrooms of America.

"When we first began, homosexuality was considered a serious pathology and homosexuals were shunned. In recent years, the Supreme Court has declared homosexuality a constitutionally protected practice, and our nation (was recently) forced to accept homosexual marriages. The culture has so coarsened that subjects that were seldom mentioned are now the favored subjects of Hollywood screenwriters."

It's not hopeless, he says, but the church has an uphill battle ahead in order to restore its own sanctity, something it must do in order to stand as the city on a hill it was designed to be. With secularism and the notion of relative truth on the rise even within the church's own walls, he believes the church's return to biblical teachings and the ways of God are paramount to its restoration as a relevant force within the culture today.

"The church is in danger of being engulfed by a tide of secularism in which the so-called 'elites' have rejected the fundamental principles which unified our society," he says.

“The challenge facing the church is to avoid the temptation to fight secularism and to instead remain true to its God-given mission of bearing witness throughout the world to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and the truth of the Holy Bible.”

It's a task Robertson and his ministries have been preparing for and undertaking, continuing to focus on the prize in the wake of the turbulent culture. One key way has been to train up leaders and laypeople alike in biblical truth, as well as how to teach and live out that truth.

“At present, our organization has the task of training and equipping millions of young Christians around the world in the teachings of Jesus Christ,” he says. “Along the way, it has been my privilege to found a major educational institution [Regent University] which by September of this year should have 9,000 students studying in 84 distinct disciplines. “The goal of this institution is to ‘train Christian leaders to change the world.’ I hope they are successful.” Through televangelism, equipping future leaders, and taking a stand in culture wars both within the church and in society at large, Robertson and his ministries are making a tremendous impact in the world today. And though this has been his life's work for a half-century already, his influence looks poised to continue changing the world for many years to come.—*Jeremy Burns*