

The World We Live In

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Introduction.

- A. Every once in a while, I encounter a news item that really makes me sit up and take notice, and this past Tuesday, I ran into such an article. It was about a demographic shift in the population of the U.S. Here's what it said: for the first time in history, there were more American households that involved the unmarried than those that involved the married. Last year, there were 55.2 million households that involved married couples, and 55.8 million that did not. Here's the breakdown on the unmarried households: About 14 million of them were headed by single women, about 5 million of them were headed by single men, and about 36.7 million were headed by cohabiting couples, two people who are sleeping together but are unmarried. None of this includes single people who live by themselves; only households of two people or more are families.
- B. This is a big shift. Even five years ago, there were millions more married households than unmarried. Five years from now, the numbers of the married will have dwindled even further. Essentially, America is changing from a nation that values marriage to a nation that does not. This trend may interest us for political or historical reasons, but it is even more significant for spiritual reasons, both for its own sake and for what it tells us about the challenges Christians in this country will be facing throughout the 21st century. Let's spend some time looking at this collection of data, then, to see what it tells us about the world we live in.

I. Four Observations.

- A. First of all, when we look at these numbers, they tell us that in today's world, **MOST FAMILIES ARE THE RESULT OF SIN**. In other words, most of the familial relationships in the United States today are the consequence of someone, somewhere, sinning. For example, whenever you have two people living together and sleeping together who aren't married, it is obvious that the "family" they have formed is the result of a sinful relationship. Both parties are at fault. However, even one party's sin is often enough to lead to the one-parent households that are becoming more and more common. Here's the way this works: Let's say that Joe and Jane are married, and they have a two-year-old daughter, Julie. Joe decides that he doesn't want to live up to his responsibilities as a husband and father, so he runs off with another woman and leaves Jane and Julie behind. Jane hasn't done anything wrong; Julie hasn't done anything wrong. Nevertheless, because of Joe's sin, Jane is left as one of the 14 million women who heads her own family. Her participation in that category is not the result of her own sin, but it is the result of someone else's sin.
- B. Now, these statistics don't perfectly answer the questions we have as Christians, but they do make one thing clear. For the first time in American history, it has become commonplace for people to make the most important decisions of their lives not according to what God wants, but according to what they want. Fifty or a hundred years ago, no respectable American would ever have thought to live with a partner to whom he was not married. Today, "shacking up" no longer raises a cultural eyebrow, and all sorts of other sins are just another part of the American tapestry. The behavior that causes these things is both acceptable and common.
- C. Sadly, another story of cultural decline gives us the perfect summary for the culture in which we live. Consider the words of Judges 21:25. Just as it was true in ancient Israel, so it has become true today that everyone does what is right in his own eyes. The laws of God no longer constrain the behavior of our nation.
- D. Second, when we look at this demographic phenomenon, it also tells us that **OUR CULTURE PROMOTES EVIL**. This must be true, simply because massive changes in the morality of a population don't just appear out of nowhere. Something is causing people to think that it's OK to move in with your boyfriend. Something is causing fifteen-year-old girls to think that it's fine to sleep with the first boy who makes eyes at them. This influence comes from two things: ignorance of God's word, and a culture that has become morally corrupt.
- E. Let's begin by looking at ignorance of God's word. A recent Newsweek survey concluded that only 2% of American believers felt their strongest spiritual connection by reading a sacred text. Basically, in today's America, reading the Bible has become passé. Most of our fellow citizens, and sadly, all too many Christians, believe that the Bible is boring, strait-laced, and inapplicable. The result: a vacuum of spiritual ignorance.
- F. We see a similar vacuum, and its result, described in 2 Kings 21:8-9. God here has told the Israelites that they would be blessed forever if only they would obeyed, but the Israelites refused to listen. However, this didn't mean that they ended up serving nobody. Instead, they were led astray by the evil King Manasseh to worship false gods. Brethren, if this nation won't listen to God either, it also isn't going to end up serving nobody. However, we aren't led astray by our kings. We are led astray by our entertainment. Sometimes, we sing a song entitled "The World's Bible," which talks about how Christians need to recognize the influence for good they can have on others. Sadly, though, the Bible of most of today's world isn't Christians. The world's Bible today is filled with things like "Brokeback Mountain" and Top 40 radio and MTV, because those things are where most Americans get their moral instruction. They don't go to church on Sunday morning, but they

faithfully watch "Desperate Housewives" every Sunday night. Is it surprising, then, when we see people in the world living like "Desperate Housewives?" The principle is simple: garbage in, garbage out.

- G. On the basis of this information, we can also make a couple of predictions about the way things are headed. The first of these is that **BIBLICAL VALUES WILL BECOME LESS AND LESS POPULAR**. This is just human nature. People look favorably on what they practice, and they look with disfavor on what they don't practice. All of the political-correctness folks who talk about how important it is to accept "alternative lifestyles" and "sexual liberation" aren't actually any more open and tolerant than your average member of the Ku Klux Klan. They too accept those who are like them and speak against those who are not—people like us. As the immoral grow more numerous, they will also grow more vocal and more hostile. As Christians become more unusual, they will also become more hated. Look what Jesus says in John 15:19-20. This trend has already become obvious in some places. In all those commercials for cell-phone companies and credit cards, who is always the family idiot? Who is always the one who makes dumb decisions, without whom the family would actually be better off? That's right—it's Dad, precisely the figure that all too many families ARE without. The assault on Christianity is already underway, but in the years and decades ahead, it will only get worse.
- H. In addition to this, it is also reasonable to predict that **PEOPLE WILL NEED GOD'S WORD MORE AND MORE**. Look at what happened as a result of the evil of Israel in Judges 6:2-3, 6. The people of Israel went their own way, suffered the consequences of their actions, and then realized that God was the one who could help them. Now, I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet. I'm not going to tell you that God is going to use some foreign power to overthrow the U.S., although God has certainly done so to other wicked nations in the past. I'm not going to tell you that it won't happen, either. I will tell you, though, that evil has consequences, not just because of the actions of God, but because of the nature of evil. For example, we know that it is not an easy thing to properly raise children. Even two godly, committed parents may well struggle. When two parents are not participating in this effort for whatever reason, that struggle becomes immeasurably more difficult. It is hard for two to raise a child, but it is very hard for one to raise a child.
- I. Now, along those lines, how many of you have ever heard the term "baby-daddy?" I hadn't run across it until a couple of years ago. Basically, a baby-daddy is the father of a woman's child, who no longer has any other connection to the woman. He's not her husband, he's not her boyfriend, and he may never have been her husband or her boyfriend. He's just the other contributor of genetic material to Junior. He's the baby-daddy. Now, if Baby is lucky, the baby-daddy might send a child-support check in the mail every month; if Baby's not lucky, the baby-daddy doesn't even do that much. Think of it as least-effort parenthood. I'm not going to draw any conclusions from this. I'm just going to ask you: What happens in this country when the baby-daddy replaces the father, as he is already doing? Let's remember that evil always has consequences.

II. Four Reactions.

- A. All of this is quite sobering to think about, but when we consider it in the light of God's word, we see four ways that we ought to react. First, we ought to resolve to **SEEK THE LORD**. Look at what Solomon says in Proverbs 3:5-6. God is the one who knows how we should live, not we ourselves. We should never lean on our own understanding, even when the majority does. Just because most people do something does not make it wise. Just because most people do something does not make it right. Indeed, when the majority chooses to disobey God, it is neither wise nor right. Let us work to please God rather than ourselves.
- B. Second, we must also determine to **REJECT THE WORLD**. Consider what Peter writes in 1 Peter 1:15-16. This passage tells us that we must have lives that are turned toward God in everything, particularly in what we allow to teach us. We don't become immune to sin simply because we're Christians. If we allow ourselves to live in the presence of evil, we will absorb it and be affected by it just like anyone else. If we let our Bibles gather dust and turn to the world's Bible instead, and allow the ungodly entertainment of our day to teach us how to be unrighteous, then unrighteousness will surely appear in our lives and in the lives of our children. Garbage in; garbage out. We need to turn away from the corrupt and embrace only the pure and good.
- C. Third, now, but especially in the years to come, we need to **KEEP THE FAITH**. In 2 Timothy 4:3-5, Paul warns Timothy that he's going to have to face difficult times in his service to God. This warning applies to us with equal force. As this nation continues to move steadily away from God, our steadfast adherence to God's word will bring us into increasing conflict with the non-Christians around us. Indeed, we well may face conflict within the church because some so-called brethren choose to keep step with the world rather than keeping step with the Lord. That's what happened to Timothy, and it can happen to us. The times are changing, but we cannot allow our commitment to change. We must remain faithful to our duty as children of God.
- D. Finally, though, we must learn to **REDEEM THE TIME**. As Paul says in Ephesians 5:15-16, when the times are evil, it becomes even more important for us to do good. There are people around us now who need the Lord, and in times to come, there will be even more, more who need to be rescued not just spiritually, but also physically. The world's lifestyle just does not work, and that will become more and more obvious as time passes. Let us be ready to help those who see the futility of their lives and look for a way out.

Conclusion. If you want a way out of the world today, you need only come to the Lord to receive His help.