

Pastor's Ponderings

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“Caving to the Culture”

by

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“You are the light of the world—like a city on a mountain, glowing in the night for all to see. ¹⁵Don't hide your light under a basket! Instead, put it on a stand and let it shine for all. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Matthew 5:14-16 NLT

The footnote for verse 16 in my New King James Version study bible says, “The believer does not have inherent light; rather we have reflective light. As we behold the glory of the Lord; we reflect it. Therefore, we need to make sure that nothing comes between us and the Lord's light.”

What could come between a believer and the Lord's light, you might ask? In a word, sin. If I allow something that may be culturally or socially acceptable, but is something God calls sin to come between me and God, it is still sin. Just because the majority of our culture says something is good, or OK, or even legal does not make it acceptable in God's sight. Just because something is culturally acceptable does not mean that I can “cave to cultural influences and pressures.” On the contrary, the bible is replete with example after example of God expecting His people to be different and take a stand against unacceptable, ungodly, and reprehensible behavior. God expects you and I to be different and live different.

I was listening to a TV preacher the other day. I do not know where he got his information but I think you'll agree with me that he is real close to right on the mark. Here are a couple of the questions he asked. “Did you know that the statistics for divorce are virtually the same for church goers and non church goers alike?” “Did you know that one out of every five abortions in this country are

performed on women who profess to be evangelical Christian women?” “Did you know that the average Christian gives 2.3 per cent of his or her income to the church?”

I believe, in the last two decades, our denomination (The United Methodist Church) has spent more time addressing the homosexual issue at annual, jurisdictional, and general conferences than any other single issue. Maybe, more time has been spent on this issue than all others combined. Of course I have no way of knowing for sure but it sure seems like it to me.

When you think about these things for even a minute or two you realize we are not being much different from the society in which we live. We are not letting our light shine. I believe it is because we have let all these “issues” come between us and God. Wouldn't you agree with me, that when you focus on an issue you tend not to focus on God?

Jesus said in his prayer for his disciples in John 17:14-17, ***“I have given them your word. And the world hates them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not. ¹⁵I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. ¹⁶They are not part of this world any more than I am. ¹⁷Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth.”***

Jesus asks God to keep us in the world to make a difference in the world. Our job is to transform the world. We can't and won't do that if we “cave to the culture.” We'll just end up being like the world. That's not what God called us to be or do.

Jesus perfectly reflected the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3), and as a Christian, I am to reflect Christ to others.

It wasn't that long ago when the church was the driving influence in the culture. Now, I fear, the culture is the driving influence in the church. We can be a relevant influence in our culture again. Pray. Go to worship. Attend bible study. Serve in a ministry. Be on a mission for God. Give your tithe. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. Let your light shine. People will see the reflection and they will praise our heavenly Father.