



Morality Redefined

There is an epidemic facing our country when it comes to the area of morals. It is a fact that the growing trend all over the world is that of “statistical morality” where basic morality is being redefined with every new generation. The evidence showing “redefined morality” is overwhelming as found in Pew Research Center’s 2013 Global Attitudes survey” where they asked 40,117 individuals in 40 countries what they thought about 8 moral issues as shown in the chart below. These results were published in the article “What’s morally acceptable? It depends on where in the world you live.”¹

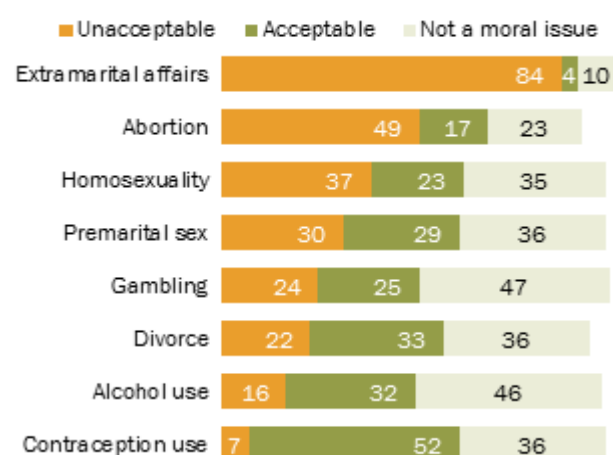
QUESTIONS

How has morality changed in our country over the last 50 years?

What impact does this changing morality have upon our current culture?

American Morality

% of Americans who say ____ is morally ...

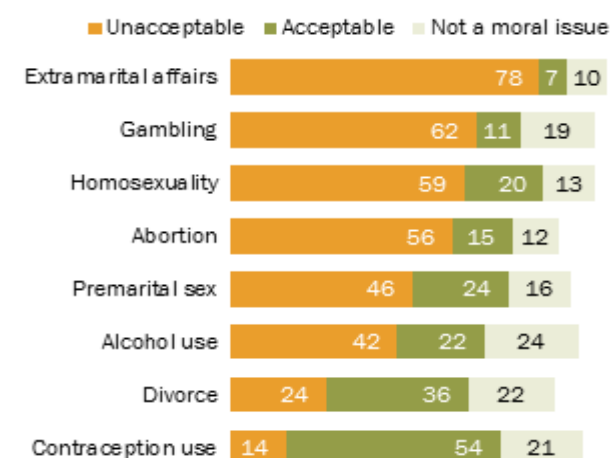


Source: Spring 2013 Global Attitudes survey. Q84a-h.

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Global Morality

% median across 40 countries who say ____ is morally ...



Source: Spring 2013 Global Attitudes survey. Q84a-h.

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¹ Pew Research Center, “Global Views on Morality.” Downloaded from

<http://www.pewglobal.org/2014/04/15/global-morality/>

² Pew Research Center, “What’s morally acceptable? It depends on where in the world you live.” April 15,

2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/15/whats-morally-acceptable-it-depends-on-where-you-live/>

Consider for a moment that these statistics reveal that the standard of morality changes depending upon the area of the world where you live. This has significant meaning for Christians and non-Christians alike as we observe that the world definition of morality is subjective and always changing based on “statistical morality” which is in direct opposition to Romans 12:2 as Paul states,

Romans 12:2 – Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

QUESTIONS

What do you think “statistical morality” means?

After looking at the video, do you think this is actually taking place in our culture?

How does statistical morality impact the church?

Statistical morality redefines morality on popular opinion of the day versus an absolute standard of right versus wrong. Dr. R.C. Sproul gives a good definition of “statistical morality” as he discusses the difference between ethics and morality in our current culture. Examine this video and respond,

<http://www.focusonthefamily.com/media/the-truth-project/dr-rc-sproul-statistical-morality>

Morality Maligned

Among previous generational worldviews, many individuals based their basic moral beliefs on the foundation of God’s Word yet today we observe that the trend is to base it on popular opinion as found in the chart shown on this page from the Pew Research Center’s article “Worldwide, Many See Belief in God as Essential to Morality”² published on March 13, 2014.

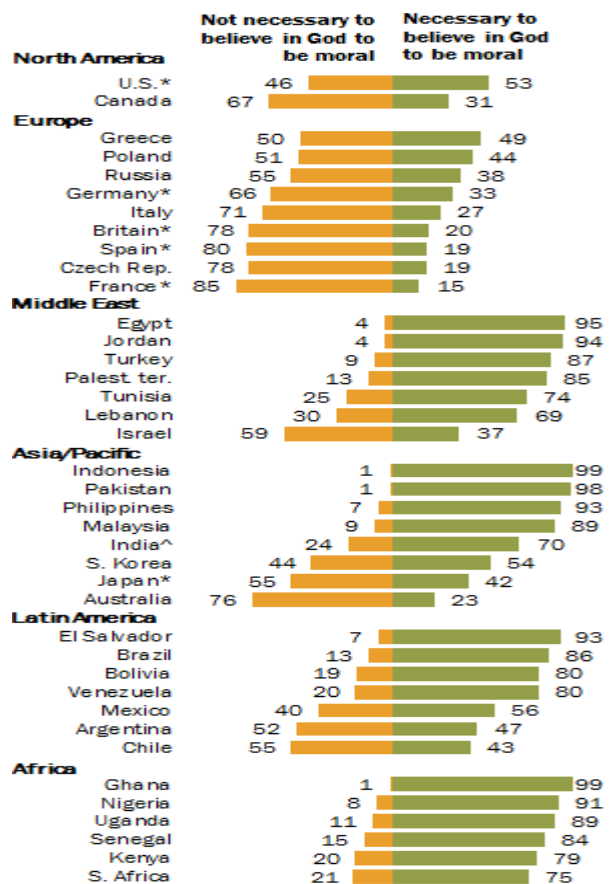
We observe that as morality is redefined then it is ultimately maligned. It changes from one generation to another as well as from one culture to another. With this basis then all morality becomes subjective with no absolute morality in sight. We also observe the with redefined morality then our culture moves away from the sanctity of life, marriage, ethics, sexuality, and absolute truth.

We are then left with the basic question, “What do we do about this type of situation?” The answer is found in the Word of God as we turn our attention to 1 Timothy 4,

1 Timothy 4:6-11 –⁶ If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed. ⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance. ¹⁰ For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who

Belief in God Essential to Morality?

% Who believe it is...



*Data from 2011. ^Data from Winter 2013.

Source: Spring 2013 Global Attitudes Survey, Q26.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

² Pew Research Center, “What’s morally acceptable? It depends on where in the world you live.” April 15, 2014. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/04/15/whats-morally-acceptable-it-depends-on-where-in-the-world-you-live/>

is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. ¹¹ Command and teach these things.

Three Lessons to Learn About Redefined Morality

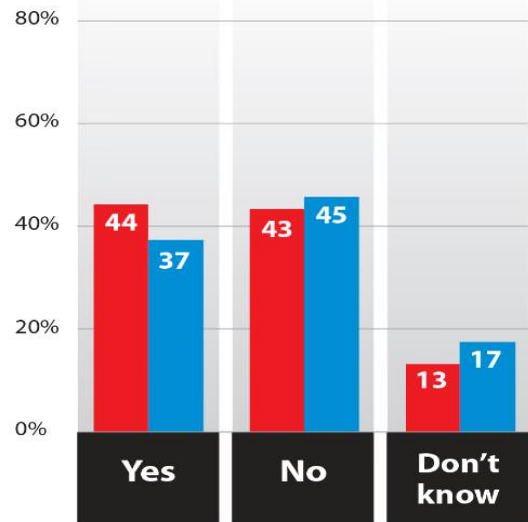
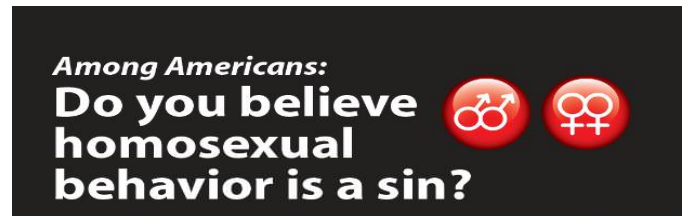
Lesson #1 – Morality is Defined by God Not Man...Know God's Truth

The Word of God teaches every Christian three lessons about redefined morality. The first lesson that we learn is discovered in 1 Timothy 4:6. It is within this verse that we examine the origin of Biblical morality and the importance of living according to the Word of God.

Our culture wants you to believe that morality is dependent on popular approval but this system ultimately fails every time. One major result of changing popular opinions among different generations is that they lead people to reject absolute truths and standards for all mankind. Consider the example of homosexuality as opinion has changed over the course of one year from 2011 to 2012 as found in the chart on this page.

As we look to 1 Timothy 4:6 then we observe that there is a standard for morality as found in the Word of God not in the philosophy of man,

1 Timothy 4:6 – If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed.



Results from:

■ Sept. 2011 ■ Nov. 2012

Methodology:

Online surveys representing the adult population of the United States. 2,144 completed surveys Sept. 23-26, 2011 and 1,191 completed surveys Nov. 14-16, 2012.

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The phrase “**a good servant of Christ Jesus**” is very important and it serves as one of the central underlying themes of the entire letter of 1 Timothy.

- **Good** is also translated “noble,” “admirable,” or “excellent.” It is used in 3:1 to describe the ministry, and here to identify the man in that ministry. It takes a noble man to do the noble work.
- **Servant** is not here used in the technical sense of the office of deacon, but in its more general usage (cf.. 1 Cor. 4:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:6) of anyone who serves in any ministry on Christ’s behalf.

QUESTIONS

What does it mean for morality to be defined by God not man?

How does this impact the way you live in the culture?

Each of us as Christians are called to use our gifts to serve the Lord our God and give Him glory. Peter describes this principle in different words as he states,

1 Peter 4:10-11 – ¹⁰ As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: ¹¹ whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything

God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Paul had encouraged Timothy to use his gift of teaching to teach other Christians the nature and content of God's truth in order to be able to discern the difference between false teachings and truth. This is why he declares,

- **Put these things before the brothers** – This phrase is a mild verb, meaning “to remind, to suggest, or lay before.” The verb does not have the idea of commanding people or forcing obedience. Rather, it refers to gentle, humble persuasion
- **These things** are those signs of false teachers and redefined morality as presented by Paul as a warning in 4:1–5. Timothy is to warn of the danger of all features of unbiblical, demonic doctrine purveyed by false teachers.

Q U E S T I O N S

How is this principle still relevant today?

How does a Christian gain discernment to identify redefined morality?

We must reclaim the redefined morality within the church today. If there is any hope of our culture returning to the Lord then the church must set the standard of Righteousness from the pulpit to the pew.

The failure to think biblically and theologically has cost the church dearly. It has allowed the infiltration of all sorts of error. That, in turn, has led to the church's becoming confused and weak. Convictionless preaching, consisting of watered down teaching, platitudes, and weak theology has replaced doctrinally strong expositional preaching.³

It is to that expert study of Scripture that Paul called Timothy. The translation **being trained** carries the idea of continually being **nourished** in two important manners,

- First, through the words of faith which carry the idea of God's inspired Word Christians must read the Word, study it, meditate on it, and master its contents. Only then can he be “approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15).
- Second, through good sound doctrine which is referring to the proper interpretation of the Word of God not human systems of theological or philosophical speculations. Exegetical theology must be the foundation of biblical and systematic theology.

Lesson #2 – Redefined Morality Creates Deceived Disciples...Apply God's Truth

The second lesson that we examine is found in the warning and commission of Paul to Timothy in the midst of a culture that is redefining morality. This lesson is found in 1 Timothy 4:7-9,

1 Timothy 4:7-9 –⁷ Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather train yourself for godliness; ⁸ for while bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. ⁹ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance.

We must first understand the definitions of some key terms being used in these verses.

- **Have nothing to do with** – This is a strong word, meaning “reject,” or “put away” (cf.. 2 Tim. 2:23; Titus 3:10).

³ John F. MacArthur Jr., *1 Timothy*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995), 157.

- **Irreverent** – This is a word that describes what is radically separate from what is holy. It refers to anything that contradicts the Word of God.
- **Myths** – This word refers to the opposite of biblical truth (cf.. 2 Tim. 4:4).

The mind is a precious thing, and God expects those in leadership to have a pure mind, one saturated with His Word. There is no place for foolish, silly myths that are in reality the doctrines of demons.

The Solution

Paul gives Timothy a solution and commission to responding a world saturated with “Redefined Morality.” He relates the importance of “training yourself with godliness.”

- **Train** – This word is from *gumnazō*, from which our English words “gymnasium” and “gymnastics” derive. It means “to train,” or “to exercise.” The word speaks of the rigorous, strenuous, self-sacrificing training an athlete undergoes.

Every Greek city had its gymnasium, and Ephesus was no exception. Youths customarily spent much of their time from ages sixteen to eighteen in physical training. That was vital, since life in those days involved much physical activity. There was a great emphasis on physical training and the glory of winning athletic events.

As Greek culture emphasized dedicated training of the body, Paul urged Timothy to **discipline** himself **for the purpose of godliness**. The present tense of the verb indicates that was to be Timothy’s constant pursuit. Timothy was to train his inner man for **godliness**.

- **Godliness** – This word expresses the reality of reverence, piety, and true spiritual virtue. It was a word much used by the philosophers of Paul’s day to define it as “right conduct in regard to the gods.”
- **Godliness** is a right attitude and response toward the true Creator God; a preoccupation from the heart with holy and sacred realities. It is respect for what is due to God, and is thus the highest of all virtues.

Q U E S T I O N S

How can you train yourself for “godliness”?

Why does the world need more Christians that are diligently training themselves in godliness?

Spiritual self-discipline is the key to godly living. In 1 Corinthians 9 Paul writes,

1 Corinthians 9:24–27 – Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. Unlike bodily discipline, godliness is profitable for the soul as well as the body. Its positive effects are also not limited to this life, because it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. Cultivating godliness will bring benefits in the present life (cf.. Prov. 3:7–8), but it will primarily bring blessedness for all eternity.

We understand that many in our culture are looking for answers and many Christians cannot or will not respond with God’s truth due to a variety of reasons. Consider that today’s Millennials are ready for answers and they are looking to you for insight into the Word of God as found in the Barna study on the next page.

Lesson #3 – Redefined Morality Results in Chaos and Ruin...Teach God's Truth

The final lesson that we examine reveals the results of redefined morality as found in the philosophy of man compared to living your life according to God's standard as shown in verses 10-11.

1 Timothy 4:10-11 – ¹⁰For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe. ¹¹Command and teach these things.

The ultimate question that we encounter when facing the issue of taking a stand for Biblical morality is simple, "Why would I want to take this stand and risk unpopularity, persecution, ridicule, and much more?" Paul gives us two answers in verses 10-11 as he states, "For to this end we toil and strive..."

- First, we take our stand because we have our hope set on the living God and not the things of this world.

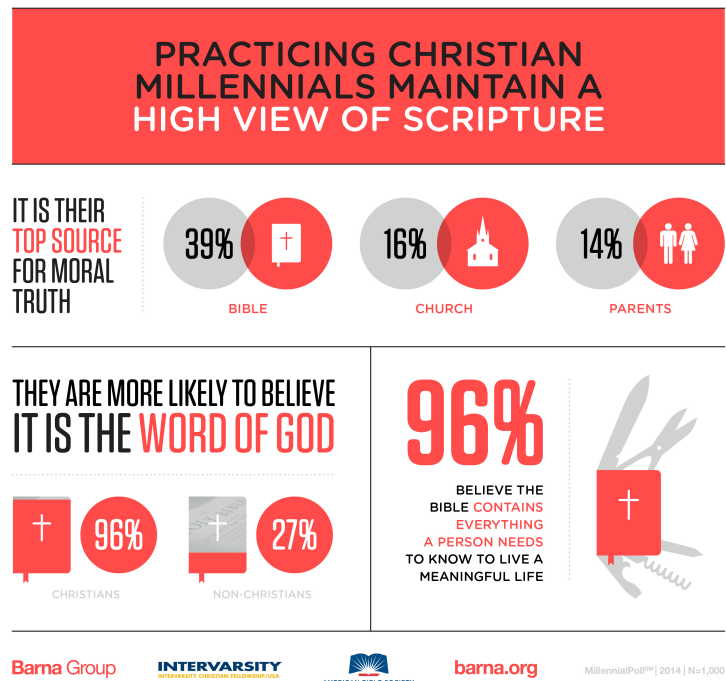
Romans 5:2-5 – ²Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. ³Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 15:4 – For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

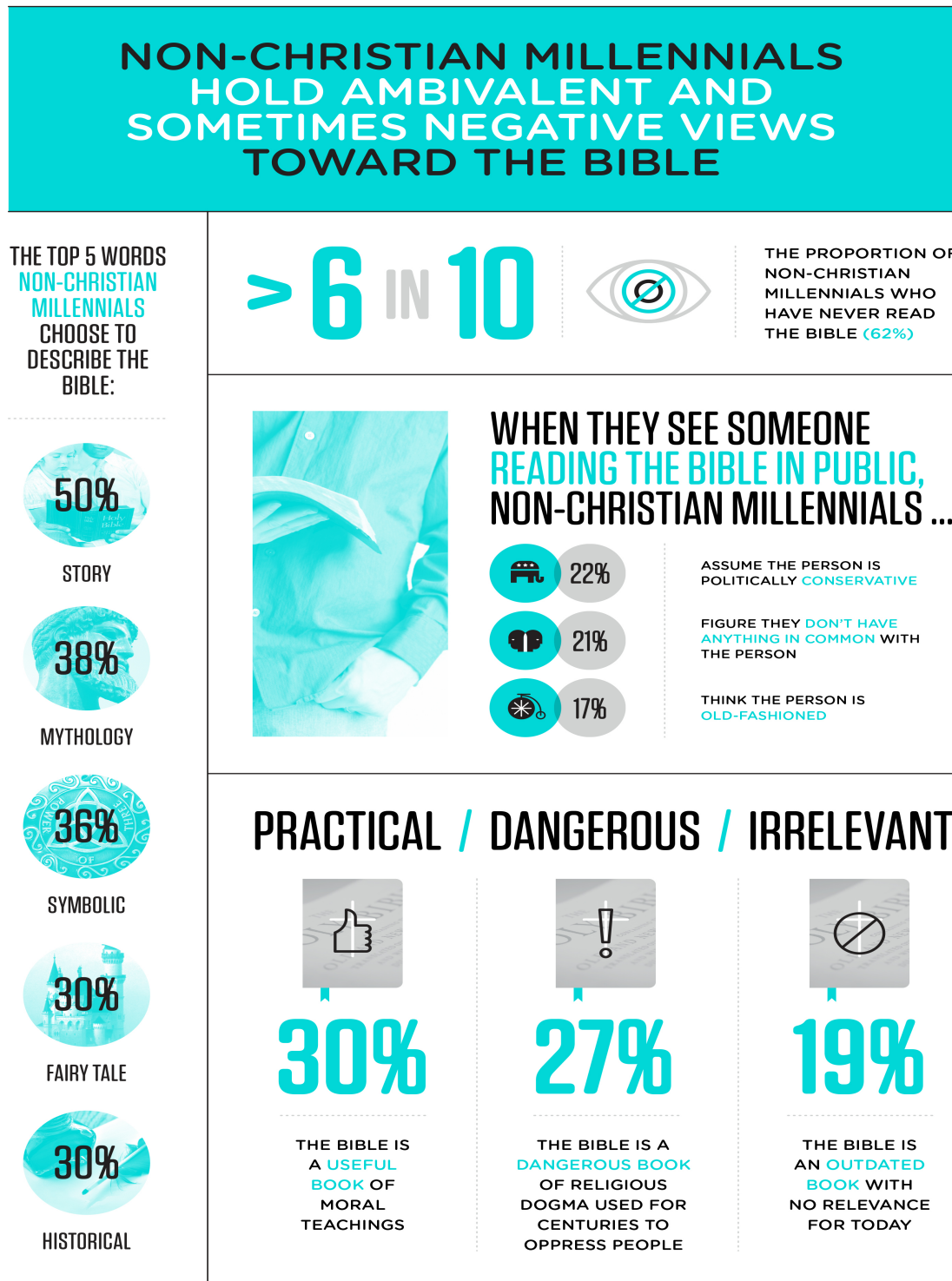
- Second, we take our stand because we serve a mighty God who is mighty to save and the Savior of all people. As our Savior, then this means that He is also our Lord and we seek to serve Him as servants that seek to give Him glory and bring others to know Him as Savior.

Philippians 2:9-11 – ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Paul ends this section of the verse with the commission for Timothy, all preachers, and all Christians to teach Biblical truths even in the face of criticism because it is essential in order for people to hear the Good News so they can come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ and turn from the false



teachings of the day. This must be done because even with all of the positive Millennial impressions of the Word of God we also observe that there are many negative impressions as found in the Barna article, "Millennials and the Bible: 3 Surprising Insights"⁴ as found on this page.



Conclusion

We have shown the evidence that our country is at a “Crossroads” when it comes to morality, leadership, and social justice. Now is the time for the country to turn back to the Lord in order to experience His blessings once again. Be a voice of truth to a dying culture and choose this day to honor Him with the life you live.

Future Lessons

The lesson plan equips each individual with the Biblical elements and support needed to answer the cultural questions of the day. Upcoming lessons can be downloaded as a digital “PDF” copy at

<http://www.timlueking.com/free-resources.html>

