

Becoming an Overcomer in Today's World

Contending with Changing Values

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I. Introductory Remarks.

In this series of messages we are dealing with what it means to be an overcomer in today's world. There are many issues that are relevant to the changing times in which we live. How do we as Christians contend with the changing values that our culture is going through?

This message focuses on the importance of adhering to and remaining firm to Biblical values and convictions in a world whose values are constantly changing. Because we live in a world whose values are constantly changing makes it a more difficult and complex world in which to live our lives in harmony with God's plan and purpose.

Chart: This chart gives you an example of how our cultural values have changed over the last 40 years. (See Chart)

These present day values are a fulfillment of the Apostle Paul's prophecy concerning the last days, where he said, "*Men shall be lovers of self, unholy, lovers of money and without self-control.*"

2 Timothy 3:1-3 *But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: ²For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, ³unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good,*

Aside from all of these areas, we are also living in an era when evil is being called good and good is being called evil. Sin is running rampant in our culture and society, which is why the values and morality of our culture are deteriorating before our eyes.

Isaiah 5:20 *Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!*

As an example of how much our values have changed, think back to the year 1939. That was the year *Gone with the Wind* was released, including

in its script a scandal-making, four letter word that raised the eyebrows of movie goers around the world. Has there been much of a change since 1939? Do four letter words still create scandals? What a joke!

In the last several years we have seen television shows such as Ophra, Geraldo, Jerry Springer and others parade just about every kind of perversion you can think of before our eyes. They have centered on personalities and adventures of subnormal and abnormal people – prostitutes, mistresses, criminals, the emotionally deranged, hate groups and other social derelicts. The sex adventures of urbanized cavemen and rapist, the loves of adulterers, fornicators, playboys and entertainment personalities are all paraded before the public to accept.

Porno shops are now in every major American city. Hard core X-rated films are now available on pay cable television as well as in hotels. We have reached an all-time low with “kiddie porn.” Even prime-time TV isn't exempt from intimate bedroom scenes, verbal explosions of profanity, and a rather frequent diet of so called humor regarding sexual intercourse, homosexuality, nudity, and various parts of the human anatomy. We've drifted a long way since 1939.

As we can see, our cultural values have changed over the years. They have been eroding steadily and will probably continue to do so. The question is – How do we as Christians contend with these changing values? How do we keep from becoming desensitized? How do we keep our values simple and Biblical in today's complex world? How do we overcome in a world that has gone awry?

II. Is Christianity Still The Champion of Godly Values?

We should ask ourselves this question – Is Christianity still the champion of purity and godly values or are we being swept along in the tide of cultural change as well?

Does Christianity still have the punch that it had twenty to twenty-five years ago in the realm of purity and values? It's not that Christianity has begun to lose its punch over the past 20-25 years; it's that more and more Christians (it seems) are now either compromising or opting for lower standards when confronted with the choice of living in a moral purity as set forth in the Scriptures.

- **The battle of choices is not new.**

Two sections of the New Testament, written in the first century describe the internal warfare quite vividly.

Romans 6:6 *knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.*

Romans 6:12-13 *Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. ¹³And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.*

Galatians 5:17 *For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish.*

Yes, Christianity is still the champion of purity and morality, but the challenges and attacks against purity and morality have never been greater, and this complicates the problem and makes it more complex for us.

III. How The Christian Contends With Changing Values.

1. We Must Believe the Values Given in God's Word are Still Relevant Today's Culture.

Psalms 119:89 *Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*

Psalms 119:105 *Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.*

2 Timothy 3:16 *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness,*

There are those who say, "The Bible and its values and standards are outdated. We live in a progressive culture, the Bible is no longer relevant to the society in which we live." The answer to that response is simple. As the writer of Ecclesiastes said, "There is nothing new under the sun."

There have been ancient cultures that have been just as corrupt as our culture. It was in the midst of some of these cultures that God's word came forth.

Ecclesiastes 1:9-10 *That which has been is what will be, That which is done is what will be done, And there is nothing new under the sun. ¹⁰Is there anything of which it may be said, "See, this is new"? It has already been in ancient times before us.*

As a people throughout the generations of time we have continuously moved through cycles. Nothing is new. Clothing styles are an example of this.

Our values and morals are molded by our belief system. If our belief system begins to decay, so will our morals. This is what has happened in our culture. As Christians we must come to a firm belief and adherence to God's word and its relevancy for our lives.

For Christianity to retain its role as "the champion of purity," the Christian is expected to be above reproach. The same is as true today as it was in the first century.

Philippians 2:15-16 *that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁵ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.*

2. We Must Determine Values that are Not so Black and White.

There are many areas in which our societal values have simply become immoral and evil according to God's Word, but there are other areas in which values have simply shifted to more self serving and pleasing. As Christians we are often able to discern when something is outright wrong and evil and is being promoted as good, but what about values that have become more self gratifying? How do we discern and make right choices when society's values are constantly shifting and changing?

3. We Must Consider The Consequences.

Living right morally means living in ways that bring good things to people. Is my decision going to hurt them or help them? What really matters morally is whether we are adding to the goodness of people's lives.

Philippians 2:3-4 *Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.*

4. We must choose to live in the beneficial realm of God's grace rather than the permissible.

1 Corinthians 10:23-24 (NLT) *You say, "I am allowed to do anything"--but not everything is helpful. You say, "I am allowed to do anything" – but not everything is beneficial. ²⁴Don't think only of your own good. Think of other Christians and what is best for them.*

5. Knowing and practicing God's Word gives us discernment.

Hebrews 5:13-14 (NLT) *And a person who is living on milk isn't very far along in the Christian life and doesn't know much about doing what is right. ¹⁴Solid food is for those who are mature, who have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong and then do what is right.*

The more we adhere to and practice God's Word in our lives, the more discernment we develop to discern the appropriate response in the many different situations that come up in our lives.

Discernment is often simply being awake and having a nose for what is going on beneath the surface, and having a sense for the more fitting response to it. This is what makes for a class act on the moral stage.

But like everything else, discernment takes practice; it doesn't come easy. It is a gift, and like all personal gifts it comes only with exercise. It is not a gut reaction; it comes with using our eyes, our ears, our minds, our imaginations, our empathy and, yes, our intuition.

Discernment can be one of the most essential tools that we have when it comes to making good value judgments. What we have to be careful about is editing out the segments of reality that will cost us something. We have

a tendency to whittle and chisel reality into nice shapes that fit our needs. We abridge our consciousness to protect ourselves.

- Our founding fathers declared that all people were created equal, but they screened out of their own consciousness the reality of thousands of black people living without freedom before their eyes.
- German citizens refused to discern the reality of Jewish people disappearing from their neighborhoods and villages, and thus refused to know that the Holocaust was happening just around the corner.
- A suburban mother refused to see the clear signs that her son is taking drugs; it would be too painful to let the reality inside her consciousness.

Because of our sensitivity to pain we distort the reality around us and we cannot give genuine responses to what is really going on around us and as a result we make the wrong moral decisions.

6. Do My Decisions Support My Commitments.

When responsible people make a *decision*, they ask themselves, “*How will it impact my significant commitments?*” Sometimes the answer is clear, definite, certain. Can selling military secrets to the enemy ever support your commitment to your country? Can having an affair with someone else’s spouse ever support your commitment to your own marriage? Can telling your friend’s secrets to a third party ever support your commitment to your friendship? Will you undermine your commitment to your family if you take on an extra job?

IV. Concluding Remarks.

As we can see, we are living in an era in which our values are constantly changing. But God’s Word never changes nor do His values. If we purpose to live our lives in accordance with His Word we will escape the corruption that is in this world. Christianity is still the champion of godly values.

Psalms 119:89 *Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.*

The following sources were used to develop this message:

Strengthening Your Grip by Charles Swindoll

Choices, Making Decisions in a Complex World by Lewis B. Smedes.

Changing Values

A Contrast of Values

1950's	1990's
Saving	Spending
Delayed gratification	Instant Gratification
Ozzie and Harriet	Latchkey Kids
Certainty	Ambivalence
Orthodoxy	Skepticism
Investing	Leveraging
Neighborhood	Lifestyle
Middle Class	Under Class
Export	Import
Public Virtue	Personal Well-Being
Mom & Dad	Nanny and Day Care
Press Conference	Photo Opportunity
Achievement	Fame
Knowledge	Credential
Duty	Divorce
"We"	"Me"