

"RELEVANCE"

Sunday, April 17, 2016

OBJECTIONS

By: Allen Coleman

[AUDIO - Focus Group]

I. INTRODUCTION

1. *Time Magazine*

- (1) Disclaimer for kids under 13 yo.
- (2) The year was 1992. It was before Amazon...before eBay.
 - (i) A man named Richard Gordon, founded Electronic Credit Card Systems for access to the vastly popular BBS's.
 - (ii) Little did he know...that he was leap the internet forward, in doing so. That credit cards would be the key to leaping the internet forward...just not in the anticipate way.
 - (iii) Because the ability to do so, would seed the creation of what would become the internet largest commodity for years to come.
 - (iv) A \$100 Billion industry...pornography.
- (3) When pornography was limited to physical forms of media, specifically magazines like Playboy and Penthouse...it largely Christian objection, the church, which was relevant to the growing problem and was able to, in some regard, keep a lid on the problem.
 - (i) Would could see how it hurt the wives and children who discovered the magazines around the house, as it was largely men...specifically husbands and fathers...who were the leading the consumers of pornography.
 - (ii) But when access became digital, and therefore unlimited, it became for a very long time, a largely secret and unwinnable battle.
 - (iii) The moral revolution in our country would leap forward...and what was once indulged by a few, became accessed by nearly all men everywhere. 10 years old is the age of first access, today.
- (4) And the culture then did what the culture always does when opens a box it shouldn't have. When so many have looked it and indulged...it could no longer say..."this is wrong".
- (5) Voices like the church became, irrelevant and drowned out by cries of "it's not hurting anybody".

2. *Learning The Hard Way*

- (1) 25 years later...what have we learned?



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- (i) "Porn has terrible effects on what young women believe they are supposed to look like, particularly during sex," said Leslie Bell, a psychotherapist and author.
 - (ii) Men have found that sex with their spouses has become untenable. Most men have to imagine or use pornography in order to to engage physically with their wives because they have become so condition by it.
 - (iii) Pornography has been indisputable linked to depression, men losing their jobs, their families and their money in order to feed their addiction.
 - (iv) And finally, young men, who mistakenly think this is what sex must be like, are rudely awakened to the reality that sex cannot be separated from something called "intimacy".
- (2) **Time Magazine Cover**
- (i) Why did we have to learn the hard way? That it does hurt us and others when we attempt to simplify sex to something physical, rather than spiritual.
 - (ii) The Bible has been telling us these things for thousands of years. Did it all of a sudden just become relevant again?
 - (iii) Or has it always been relevant...and it is us that has been the problem, all along?

3. *If only "Christianity = Love Others - Love God"*

- (1) People love horizontal imperatives of the Christian Gospel. It is the vertical moral imperatives that many wish Christianity could just let go of.
- (2) But time and time again, we have learned that these imperatives are not only relevant, but urgent with regard to their adherence, so we might prevent pain and preserve good.
- (3) But we're doing ok, aren't we? Our moral decisions aren't hurting anyone? In fact, in many cases, they make us happy. What does Christianity know anyways!
 - (i) It is...ancillary, antiquated, out-of-date, and out-of-fashion. Totally out-of-step with times and wholly unable to provide relevant instruction to the modern man or woman.
 - (ii) But what if that's exactly who Christianity is most relevant to? And to ignore this, loved ones, would result in the same life-taking results experienced by the children of the 80's and 90's with pornography.



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II. CULTURAL DEFICIENCY

1. *Learning from Israel*

(1) What pornography has taught is, is that we have a cultural deficiency.

[**JUDGES 17:6** - *In those days there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes.*]

(2) There was no authority in Israel.

[**PROVERBS 29:18** - *Where there is no prophetic vision the people cast off restraint...*]

(3) Casting off restraint = moral revolution | restraint = pejorative?

(i) Some restraints are both necessary and good. Imagine if the civil laws that govern us were no longer there. Think of the atrocities men and women already commit. Now imagine if there were no consequences for those atrocities = 'cast of restraint'

(4) When a culture has no objective, binding moral authority...then everyone does what they think is right.

(5) And when everyone is right...no one can be wrong; when no one is wrong...any attempt at correction is labeled as irrelevant.

(6) Relevance is redefined what is advocated and celebrated.

2. *Redefining Relevance*

(1) For example, if the discussion is about sex...and Christianity has a vision for sex...you can't just say it is not relevant to the discussion.

(i) Are you talking about sex. Are we? Then we're relevant to the discussion!

(2) But because we do not advocate for your position...because we don't celebrate your self-determination...suddenly, we're irrelevant.

(3) Love ones, you can't redefine relevance that way.

(i) Actual value (but disagrees, irrelevant) vs perceived value (in agreement, relevant)

3. *The Necessity of True Relevance*

(1) We need true relevance. And true relevance begins with conviction.

(2) We recognize, at least in part, even in pop culture, conviction to be at least somewhat admirable.



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- (i) With bio-pics featuring the lives of athletes such as Jackie Robinson, Olympians Jesse Owens and Louis Zamperini.
- (3) Christians have historically been, and ought to continually be, people of conviction.
 - (i) I would contend, it is not the presence of Christian conviction that has made us irrelevant, but the loss of conviction.

[JUDE 3 - ...**contend** for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.]

- (4) I think it's safe to say, the villainization, and therefore the loss of, personal, moral conviction has been the defining hallmark of the last 50 years.
- (5) Think about it. How does conviction fit into the culture's view of relevance?
 - (i) Well, as we already established, it can't...because conviction is the antithesis of the non-Christian worldview, which is self-determination.
 - (ii) Under that worldview, I'm only allowed to express convictions that advocate and celebrate your own.
 - (iii) But what if your view, is not in your self-interest? And it is your own self-determination that is the problem?

[JER. 17:9-10 - *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."*]

- (iv) As was the case with pornography.
- (6) In the Bible, cultures that persisted in their own self-determination and branded God irrelevant, met their logical end: destruction.
 - (i) Following the example of Sodom:

[IS. 17:10-11 - *For you have forgotten the God of your salvation and have not remembered the Rock of your refuge; therefore, though you plant pleasant plants...though you make them grow on the day that you plant them...yet the harvest will flee away in a day of grief and incurable pain.*]



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III. BIBLICAL SUFFICIENCY

1. *The Bible Is Timeless*

(1) The doctrine of Biblical sufficiency can be summarized as follows:

[**2 TI. 3:16-17** - *All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for **every** good work.*]

[**2 TI. 4:2-5** - *...preach the word; be ready **in season and out of season**; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.*]

(2) "Out of season" = timeless

(3) Christianity is always relevant, even when, and perhaps most when...it is out-of-step with the itching ears of the culture.

(4) When Christianity is out-of-step, then the culture is getting closer to being out-of-time. Because self-determination leads to self-destruction.

(i) Maybe not destruction in the "Sodom, raining fire from heaven" sense.

(ii) But maybe destruction in the "years of pornography" sense.

(iii) So our message, then, when it seems to be the most marginalized, is perhaps when it is most relevant.

(iv) Which makes Christianity not just timeless, but timely.

2. *The Bible Is Timely*

(1) "in season" = timely

(2) So whether in or out of season, our responsibility remains the same:

(i) Preach the Gospel

(ii) Don't apologize for the gospel, because it seems irrelevant to the cultural tide. There is no power in that.

[**RO. 1:16** - *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...*]

(iii) Certainly don't alter the gospel, so as to make it seemingly relevant. There is no power in that.



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[GA. 1:6-7; 11-12 - *I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel...there are some who trouble you and want to distort the gospel of Christ...For I would have you know...the gospel that was preached by me is not man's gospel. For I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ.*]

3. *The Church Can Be Neither*

- (1) I have been part of two movements and, subsequently two churches, whose ambitions for relevance were mis-placed.
- (2) I became a Christian when the church-growth movement was on its way out and the emergent movement was on its way in.
 - (i) Emergent Church - altering the Gospel - and the parameters set forth in Scripture.
 - (ii) Church growth - apologizing for the gospel - topical preaching designed around people's felt needs.
- (3) But Christianity is and has always been the proclamation of not what we ***think*** we need, but what we ***actually*** need.
- (4) Abandoned Series - when we abandon that ideal.



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IV. CONCLUSION

1. *Trying To Make The Gospel Relevant*

- (1) What people need, is not for you **to** advocate...but what they need is **an** advocate:

[1 JN. 2:1 - *My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*]

2. *The Gospel Is Still Relevant*

- (1) I don't know why you will stay here. That's all we got. We're not trying to **be** relevant. We're contending the we **are** relevant.

- (2) Story: Last night I **Picture of Faith**

- (3) Parenting? Preach the Gospel. It takes self-interested fathers and makes them less concerned with their comfort, more concerned with their children's.

- (4) Marriage? Preach the Gospel. It takes self-centered husbands and wives, and makes them less concerned with their needs and more concerned with the others.

- (5) Money? Preach the Gospel. It takes selfish people and makes them generous.

- (6) Angry people? Preach the Gospel that fills them with joy.

- (7) Sex? Preach the Gospel that invests intimacy.

- (8) Pain? Preach the Gospel that brings healing.

- (9) Yes, the gospel is the timeless and timely truth that God saves sinners from their self-determination. In so doing, makes them selflessly dependent, through Christ, in a holy God who directs their desires, thoughts and steps.

(10) For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is timeless and timely. It is relevant...for it is the power of salvation to all who come through Christ.

- (11) Because we don't need **to** advocate...we need **an** advocate.

