

WHERE ARE WE HEADING? (PART 3)

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In two previous articles, we have examined some of the clear and convincing evidence that our nation is currently heading in the wrong spiritual direction. There have been major changes in the last 50 years, but those changes are becoming more rapid as each year passes. The world as a whole, including our own country, is accelerating further away from God with each passing day. What happens to a society when bedrock values, such as the sanctity of life and of marriage and the family, are destroyed? We have specifically examined issues such as abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia, to illustrate the eroding value for human life. We have also looked at the issues of divorce and homosexuality to see what is happening to marriage and family. In this final installment, we take a look at the decreasing marriage rate, increasing illegitimacy rate, and a few other issues that point out the wrong direction in which we are heading. That is *where* we are heading, and the rise of unbelief is the reason *why*.

Cohabitation and illegitimacy

The word “fornication” is a general term for any type of sexual immorality. It would not be good for Christians to oppose one kind of fornication while either condoning or turning a blind eye towards another. For example, heterosexual fornication is sinful, as is homosexual fornication (1 Cor 6:9-20; 10:8; 1 Thes 4:3). The respect for the institution of marriage has eroded so much that fewer and fewer people are even bothering with getting married at all. Consequently, fornication is now widely accepted as a lifestyle. Parallel with the climb in our nation’s divorce rate is the decline in the marriage rate. Today, the U.S. marriage rate is 51%, which is nearly a 20% decrease since 1960. In 1960, 45% of all Americans between the ages of 18-24 were married, while in 2010 it was 9%. Between 1960 and 2010, the percentage of married Americans between the ages of 25-34 dropped from 82% to 44%. This is much more than an issue of people getting married *later* in their lives. For example, the number of Americans who have *ever* been married has fallen from 85% to 72% since 1960. Many couples are now “cohabiting,” the modern term for what used to be called “shacking up” or “living in sin.” That is, they are living in fornication. In 2002, 14.3% of Americans aged 15-44 were cohabiting, a number which rose to 23.4% by 2010. In a 2010 survey, about 40% of people agreed that “*marriage is becoming obsolete.*” Homosexuals seem to be the only ones clamoring to get married these days! It is only natural that a decreasing marriage rate would be associated with an increase in childbirths to unwed parents. First births to cohabiting women increased from 9% in 1985 to 27% in 2010, and increased by 83% from 2002 to 2010. Nowadays, the *majority* of births to American women under the age of 30 occur outside of marriage. In 1960, only 5% of births to American women of all ages were – to again use an old term that showed some regard for moral standards – “illegitimate” (i.e. outside of marriage). By 2009 that number reached 41%!

And such like

When cataloging the “works of the flesh” in Galatians 5:19-21, the phrase “and such like” is used at the end of the list. Similarly, we could examine many more

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(continued)

issues to illustrate the rapid decline of our nation. For example, a relatively new lifestyle on the rise is that of so-called “open marriages,” wherein couples regularly engage in adulterous relationships. To mention every debauched lifestyle in our modern world would violate Ephesians 5:12: “*For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.*” What about the “standards” of modesty in our culture? As we see in Malachi 3:6, God’s standards do not change! Therefore, immodest clothing is sinful in any culture or time (1 Tim 2:9-10; 1 Pet 3:3-4). Unfortunately, obscenity and pornography is all around us today: in books, magazines, television, movies, Internet, billboards, etc. And it is not just what our eyes are tempted with. Blasphemous, obscene, and coarse language is heard everywhere these days, but must not be among God’s people (Eph 4:29; 5:3-4; 1 John 4:5-6). The sale and recreational use of marijuana was recently legalized in Washington and Colorado. On and on it goes.

The rise of unbelief

All the statistics and facts that we have reviewed in this series of articles agree with what we can all testify to from the sight of our own eyes. It is more than just the fact that the wickedness of this nation and the world as a whole is growing by the day, but it is the *speed* of the descent that is so astonishing. What is the *reason* this is happening so fast? Here are some more statistics. Religious “nones” is a term describing atheists, agnostics, and those who believe in “nothing in particular.” Today, 6% of Americans are self-described atheists or agnostics. Twice as many more fall into the category of those who believe in nothing in particular (of whom two-thirds profess “some belief in God”). Thus, as of October 2012, religious “nones” now make up 19.6% of the American population, a total of *46 million people!* That percentage has essentially doubled in only twenty years. In 1992, 10% of Americans were religious “nones,” a number that increased to 15% by 2007. You can see that it has only taken 5 years to increase the number of unbelievers the same percentage as in the previous 15 years. This again demonstrates not only the direction we are heading, but how fast. Without going into the details at this time, the decline in morality and basic belief in Deity coincides with the rise of the philosophy of secular humanism. It predominates what is taught in public schools, what is presented in the media, and just about everything else. Where will it end? In Luke 18:8, Jesus asked a chilling question: “*Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?*” Proverbs 14:34 says, “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*” Our people no longer have any shame or seem capable of blushing (Jer 6:15; 8:12). Like Lot, any righteous person should be vexed daily to see the increase in wickedness such as we are witnessing in our nation these days (2 Pet 2:4-9). Jesus warns us to “remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:32). Instead of being vexed with the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah as her husband was, she loved where she lived. Demas also loved this present world, and departed from God (2 Tim 4:10). May we always remember to “*have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them*” (Eph 5:11)!