

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

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~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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A Better World

If there is one thing that people across the world could agree upon it is that this world could use some improvements. We have a lot of problems and areas where we could do some work.

We have troubles with crime, poverty, wars, contentions, anger, bitterness, vice, immorality, sinfulness in general, broken homes, broken schools, broken governments, broken churches, turmoil, fear, and anxiety about the future, etc.

Despite our many differences, we can all agree that the world we live in now could be better. So, the question is, "How can we make this world better?"

This is where all the disagreement begins. But God has given us the answer to that question in Proverbs.

**"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people."
Proverbs 14:34 (NKJV)**

Here we find the answer to how we can have a better world. This Proverb is not just true of our nation, it is true of any nation and every nation. It is true of former nations, current nations, and even future nations.

There is no doubt that all our lives, communities, states, nations, and world would be radically improved if everybody, or even the vast majority of people, would operate upon righteous Christian principles. Those who disagree with that statement are

those who are in bondage to sin and therefore dislike the idea of being accountable to the Creator.

This idea is certainly not new. It was one of the driving concepts behind the so-called social Gospel movement. The concept behind this movement had been around for centuries. However, it became an organized movement in the mid-nineteenth century and reached the height of its influence in the early twentieth century.

The idea was that as we preach the Gospel, we need to improve the lives of those who we are trying to reach. It taught that we ought to put our Christianity into practice in a very practical way to relieve the suffering of those who are oppressed in this world.

In 1896, Charles Monroe Sheldon published a book entitled, "*In His Steps*". The novel was designed to show how our society would be changed for the better if people simply conducted themselves the way that Jesus would if He was in their place.

In the book, a local minister challenged his congregation to ask themselves the question, "What would Jesus do?" before acting on anything. He instructed them to do this for a year. The book then detailed how their individual lives and community changed for the better.

This book has sold more than fifty million copies making it one of the

best sellers of all time. Its influence is still being felt even more than a century after it was first published.

In the 1990's it was quite common to see people wearing W.W.J.D. (What Would Jesus Do) bracelets as a reminder that they were to act in accordance with the answer to that question.

One of the most popular movies of all time is, "*It's a Wonderful Life*" from 1946. In this film, a man named George Bailey gets the opportunity to see what the world would be like if he had never lived.

In this fictional story, he comes to see that his entire town and the lives of countless individuals had been changed for the better by his presence and influence.

This was a character that admitted he was not a "praying man". Of course, this is a fictional man and a fictional story, but the message is clear. People of good character have an incalculable positive effect on the world around them.

What would our world be like if the vast majority of people lived by Christian principles? It would certainly look differently than our current world. It is hard for us to even imagine such a world in detail as we have grown too accustomed to the one in which we currently live.

While we can't even come close to exhausting the topic, let's consider a few ways that the world would be better.

First, there would be an absence of the works of the flesh. Instead, there would be an abundance of the fruit of the Spirit.

“16 I say then: **Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh...**19 **Now the works of the flesh are evident**, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 **But the fruit of the Spirit is** love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.” **Galatians 5:16, 19-23 (NKJV)**

In 1979, there was a very popular song that said, “*Love is the Answer*”. There have actually been lots of songs that have the basic message that if we could love one another our problems would be solved. This is actually a true statement when we understand Biblical love. Unfortunately, we often mistake other things for love. If the vast majority of people in our world had the Fruit of the Spirit, our world would be a much better place.

The list of the “works of the flesh” is long. Imagine a world where all these things are absent. Wouldn't that be a world where you would like to live rather than the world we have now?

Again, the only people who would answer in the negative are those who enjoy, love, or are even addicted to the things in that list. They are the ones who are in bondage to these sins.

Let's just consider how eliminating some of these vices would change our world for the better.

Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, and lewdness are all sins of a similar nature. They all have to do with lusts

of the flesh in general and sexual sins more specifically. How would our world be better without such sins?

Without adultery there would be much less divorce.

That means far fewer children growing up in broken homes without one of their natural parents. Divorce is always hard on everyone, but particularly the children. This is true regardless of the circumstances.

Even if the marriage is not broken after adultery, it is severely damaged. The same level of trust between partners is usually lost forever. Suspicions weaken the bond that was there originally.

Often this sin leads to other sins as well like lying, hatred, jealousy, and even murder.

Adultery can certainly lead to depression and suicide. It can make it difficult for those involved to ever trust anyone in any way. So much more could be said about the negative effects of this sin, families torn apart, finances ruined, dreams shattered, lives that can never be put back together again, etc.

Without fornication the problem of unwed mothers would be virtually eliminated.

Widows and widowers would still exist, but the vast majority of single parent households are the result of fornication or adultery. Unwed mothers and their children are far more likely to be in poverty. That means more people on welfare which costs society as a whole. But the economic expense is far from the biggest cost.

The impact of children growing up without a father is devastating to society. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, (as reported at <https://www.liveabout.com/fatherless-children-in-america-statistics-1270392>), children from fatherless homes account for:

63% of youth suicides.

90% of homeless and runaway youth.

85% of children with behavioral disorders.

71% of high school dropouts.

70% of juveniles in state institutions.

75% of adolescents in substance abuse centers.

75% of rapists motivated by misplaced anger.

These statistics are just the tip of the iceberg.

This a problem that cuts across geographical, economic, political, and even racial lines. Even Barak Obama acknowledged the devastating effects of fatherless children on our society. In a 2008 fatherhood speech, he said the following:

“We know the statistics — that children who grow up without a father are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime; nine times more likely to drop out of schools and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. They are more likely to have behavioral problems or run away from home or become teenage parents themselves. And the foundations of our community are weaker because of it.”

Without fornication, most abortion would be virtually eliminated. If people lived by Christian principles, the remainder of abortions would be eliminated simply because murder is a work of the flesh. Nevertheless, most abortions are undoubtedly the result of fornication.

Without fornication, all sexually transmitted diseases would no longer be problems. That includes things like gonorrhea, syphilis, herpes, and even AIDS. Imagine how much lower our health insurance costs would be if all the treatment for these diseases could be eliminated.

How would our world be better without drunkenness?

There are more than a hundred thousand alcohol related deaths in the U.S. each year. Nearly one-third of all suicides are alcohol related. Studies have shown that over 40 percent of all fatal automobile accidents are alcohol related. Alcohol is a factor in an estimated 49 percent of murders, 52 percent of rapes and sexual assaults, 68 percent of manslaughters, 48 percent of robberies, 62 percent of

assaults, and 49 percent of other violent crimes.

Regarding the economic costs, consider the following statistics from <https://www.verywellmind.com/impact-on-society-63268>:

- According to the Centers for Disease Control the cost of excessive drinking in the U.S. is \$249 billion annually. Many of the largest costs cannot be measured like loss of workplace productivity, thus this number is surely underestimated.
- An estimated \$28 billion is spent each year on alcohol-related healthcare.
- The estimated annual cost to the justice system due to alcohol related violence is \$25 billion.

We tried to eliminate these problems with prohibition, but it did not work very well because that didn't change hearts. But if we could get people to put away the works of the flesh because our Lord told us to, not because the government told us to, our world would be radically changed for the better.

Second, the cost and difficulty of governing our states and nation would be greatly diminished. Even some politicians realize the positive influence that people of character can have on our society. You can see this in any number of the books they write to help them get elected. I will give you just one example below:

In his 2008 book, "Do the Right Thing", Mike Huckabee discusses a study he commissioned, as governor of Arkansas, to find out how character affected society as a whole, and government in particular. He said, "If we fail to govern ourselves, we force others in our society to band together to govern us instead."

The study contrasted two hypothetical people. The first was a college graduate that received only a "bare-bones" salary and only received cost of living adjustments to their salary

with no actual pay raises. The other was a high school dropout that became addicted to drugs, was unemployed, and ended up in prison.

The first individual would have paid over a quarter of a million dollars just in state and local taxes over their lifetime. This does not even include any federal taxes.

The second would have cost the state over a million and a half dollars over their lifetime.

Mr. Huckabee went on to say the following:

"An oft-quoted African proverb claims, 'It takes a village to raise a child.' It might be more accurate to say that if it takes the whole village, the cost is going to be unbearable. It would be better if a mom and a dad did that job and that a child was raised by parents with virtues rather than by the village...Government costs are high because our behavioral standards have become so low...Building better schools, parks, jobs, health care systems, and roads starts with building better people."

He also gave some startling facts and statistics including the following:

"In my home state of Arkansas, it costs more money to incarcerate someone in state prison for a year than it does to send that same person to college or university in our state with paid full tuition, room and board, and books."

Children born out of wedlock are 700 percent more likely to be poor than those born in stable two-parent homes.

Eighty-eight percent of unwed mothers without a high school diploma will end up in poverty, but only 8 percent of those with a high school diploma, who marry, and have their first child after the age of twenty will end up in poverty.

...the cost per child per year [of keeping a juvenile in custody] could range from \$40,000 to \$80,000...If

every child were obedient and responsible, living in a stable and nurturing home, the state could have saved more than \$80 million a year...Add the cost of the criminal courts – a staggering \$75 million a year – and pretty soon we're talking real money."

Of course, this is just the tip of the iceberg. So many issues of character never show up in the state budget. Many of them can never be measured by monetary or other means. But you can begin to see how everyone in society is affected by sin in general.

Perhaps we could "defund the police", at least to some extent, if the vast majority of our citizens lived by Christian principles. Laws are made for lawbreakers. People who possess the Fruit of the Spirit are not breaking laws. There is no need for laws against the Fruit of the Spirit. Certainly, we could spend far less on enforcing the laws if everyone followed the Golden Rule.

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 7:12 (NKJV)

The very reason that we need police is because of those who fail to live by Christian principles. The more who live without Christian principles, the more police we need and the more money it costs.

Huckabee even points out that freedom itself is ultimately at stake when we discuss morals. He says correctly that, "Freedom can't exist in a moral vacuum...without clear boundaries of right and wrong, the very concept of liberty breaks down...Having a moral code that is objective and consistent is necessary for such a system [of government] to work. Should each person have the ability to define his or her own 'code,' order completely falls apart."

I think this is exactly what we are seeing in our society today. Instead of believing that the truth will make us free as Jesus said, we have believed the lie that, "my truth will make me

free". The result is that order is completely falling apart. Unfortunately, we see it on the news nearly every evening.

"And you shall know the truth, and **the truth shall make you free.**" **John 8:32 (NKJV)**

We have valued freedom in this country from the beginning. However, there has been a shift in my lifetime in our thinking about both the basis and nature of that freedom.

The Declaration of Independence begins with an appeal to "self-evident truths" and "unalienable rights" "endowed" to us by our "Creator". Clearly the signers of this document saw truth established by our Creator as the basis for our freedom.

Further, the preamble to the Constitution states that its purpose is to, "...establish justice, insure domestic tranquility...promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity". That is what the Constitution was intended to accomplish.

The framers of the Constitution saw liberty as something that went hand-in-hand with justice, domestic tranquility, and the general welfare.

Today, too many see freedom as the lack of any restraint on their behavior whatsoever. They want complete freedom from any rules, morality, judgment of others, consequences for their actions, etc.

They seek license, not liberty. They see the basis of that freedom as their own desires and lusts rather than something endowed by their Creator or based upon any kind of objective, universal truth. They speak about "their truth" and "your truth" rather than "the truth".

In thinking about freedom this shift has resulted in a loss of life, a forfeiting of true freedom, an impediment to the pursuit of happiness, injustice, less domestic tranquility, a degeneration of the

general welfare, and a removal of the blessing of liberty from ourselves and our posterity. It is very much like the time of the judges in Israel.

"In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes." **Judges 21:25**

Finally, if the vast majority of people lived according to Christian principles, they would "go the extra mile".

"38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 "And **whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.** 42 "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away." **Matthew 5:38-42 (NKJV)**

In the context, Jesus goes on to say that we need to be perfect like the Father in loving even our enemies. Love really is the answer if we understand Godly love. That is the fruit of the Spirit, Christian principles.

I remember one evening, some years ago, listening to Reggie Thomas preach at a camp in New York about what people who go the extra mile are like. He described how it made the workplace, home, and life in general so much more pleasant.

His sermon made you want to work for a boss that went the extra mile, have a spouse that went the extra mile, make friends who went the extra mile, and be a person who went the extra mile. That is what Jesus has called us to do.

People who go the extra mile are not looking for what they can get. They are looking for what they can give.

They are not trying to cheat or take advantage of anybody. They want to help everybody they can.

They are not trying to get by with the least effort they can. They want to do

all they are able to do. They are a great benefit to all of society.

Such people are not given to violence or revenge. Instead, they are quick to forgive and willing to overlook a fault. They are peace-loving people who would rather be wronged than to be in conflict with others. They diffuse quarrels by giving more than is asked or expected.

Just think how the business world would be changed if this were the attitude of most of the people in our world.

Civil disputes would be all but eliminated. This would greatly reduce the cost of insurance for most businesses.

With the "go the extra mile" attitude, these same businesses would reduce the cost of their goods and services as a result of their costs going down.

Customers would never have to worry whether they were being treated fairly or not.

A great number of lawyers would probably have to find more productive employment.

Business could be done with a handshake because you could trust the other party to keep their word.

We have only scratched the surface of how much better our world would be if the majority of people lived by Christian principles.

While we cannot force others to live with this kind of character, we can develop that kind of character in ourselves.

If we want to live in that kind of world, we need to start by being that kind of people. There is no reason that you cannot start today.