

How To Handle Our Culture

Introduction. The recent Texas church shooting, the terrorist driving a truck through a crowd in New York City, and the Las Vegas massacre may seem shocking — but to anyone who has been paying attention, they should not.

Our culture is undergoing a hostile takeover. American society used to be governed by Judeo-Christian do-unto-others morals. But we have been pushed into a hedonistic YOLO (You Only Live Once) cultural morass. The result of this is a distinct lack of respect for human life, a pervasive, insidious obsession with self, and a movement away from God.

“Counter-culture” means a way of life and set of attitudes opposed to or at variance with the prevailing social norm. Two recent examples of counterculture would be the hippie subculture of the 1960s and the diversified Punk subculture of the 1980s.

I can remember as a kid that living counter-culturally meant leaving sports practice early for Wednesday night Bible study. Now we’re talking about having to protect our children from an easily available July 2017 edition of Teen Vogue teen fashion magazine that taught them how to be sodomized.

In a world like this, parents must increasingly say “no” — a lot. But if we’re not careful in how we execute our counter-cultural living, our children can start seeing us as complete alarmists and resent the gospel because of it. There are three ways we can prevent that from happening.

I. Focus More On The Beauty Of The Gospel Than On The Dangers Of The World

- A. In a world that seems to be going crazier by the day, it is easy to spend more time pointing out the darkness of culture than the light of the gospel. Now, do not get me wrong; we absolutely need to make our children aware of cultural dangers. But when we do not consistently point them back to the beauty of the godly worldview which renders our culture so ugly in the first place, our faith will become defined by what we are against more than what we are for.
- B. There are a lot of problems with that because persistent negativity breeds resentment. Show them the “glorious gospel” (2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Timothy 1:11). Teach them and let them see the beauty of godly traits (1 Corinthians 13:13; Philippians 4:8; cp. Matthew 23:23). Remind them of the tremendous examples of Joseph (Genesis 39:9) and Daniel (Daniel 1:8). And make sure these traits are actively demonstrated in you as you “adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things” (Titus 2:10).

II. Frame Your Life In Terms Of Christian Freedom Instead Of Worldly Limits

- A. I often see former Christians comment about the freedom they feel in “letting go of God.” The language they use to describe their deconversion says so much. They saw religion as a limiting approach to life and therefore felt freer after shedding their beliefs in God.
- B. But Christians are not free in our unconverted state at all — we are slaves to sin (Romans 6:18). When we trust and obey Jesus, we are given a new nature that is free from such bondage (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 4:23-24). The reality, therefore, is that only Christians are actually free (John 8:36).

- C. To embrace the feeling of freedom rather than limitation, our children need to understand 1) the definition of sin (1 John 3:4); 2) the reality of sin (Genesis 3:6-7); 3) why sin is such a big problem (Revelation 21:8); and, 4) why we should value being slaves to righteousness rather than to sin (John 10:10). Only then will they begin to understand that they're not missing out when they don't make worldly choices.

III. Cultivate The Skill Of Discernment Instead Of Focusing On Authoritative Parental Decisions

- A. In many cases, parents have a bigger perspective than children can possibly have given their limited life experiences. We have to make certain decisions on our children's behalves. But if we consistently present our "counter-cultural" lives as a series of decisions made by mom and dad (albeit for good reason), children will naturally resent what they feel has been forced upon them.
- B. When the message our children hear is an ongoing stream of don'ts without meaningful explanation — don't listen to this music, don't visit these sites, don't use this social media platform — they'll start to wonder if our level of concern about the world is warranted.
 - 1. Simply telling our children that a movie has violence or sexual content and they shouldn't watch it, for example, is hardly a meaningful explanation.
 - 2. Why is violence (cp. Matthew 7:12) or sexual content (cp. Matthew 5:27-30) a problem for Christians? How can that affect us spiritually? Where should we draw the line? These kinds of questions should regularly be discussed because this develops a biblical worldview in our children
- C. I've never been a big fan of telling children, "Because I said so" when they ask why they can't do some activity. To the degree we can, we should cultivate our children's skill of discernment by involving them in the thought process of our decision making (Matthew 6:22-24; Philippians 1:9; Hebrews 5:12-14). After all, the second they walk out our door as adults, "authoritative parental decisions" no longer apply.

Conclusion. The spirit of our time is revealing in our culture a subversive, resolute, and increasing hatred toward God and the gospel, and an irresistible temptation toward evil that betrays man's innate desire for power: a longing to be God. So keep your family's eyes on the beauty of the Lord and don't let the world suck the spiritual life out of you.