

Is The World Getting Better?

Introduction. While on vacation I saw an article from Forbes entitled “Why The World Is Getting Better And Why Hardly Anyone Knows It” written by Steve Denning.

Denning wrote, “Terrorism, nuclear weapons, economic stagnation, social unrest, autocratic leaders, structural unemployment, deskilling, growing hopelessness, the opioid epidemic, increasing inequality, xenophobia, economic migrations, recessions, financial bubbles and crashes, depressions — the list goes on.”

Denning then cites a survey in which the question was asked, “All things considered, do you think the world is getting better or worse?” Over 18,000 adults in 8 countries were surveyed. Only 6% in the United States thought the world was getting better. The best number was 10% in Sweden. And the worst was only 3% in both Australia and France.

“And yet the facts show otherwise,” Denning asserts. “In a powerful study entitled ‘The short history of global living conditions and why it matters that we know it’ by Max Roser, an economist at the University of Oxford and the founder of Our World in Data, we learn that on virtually all of the key dimensions of human material well-being — poverty, literacy, health, freedom, population, and education — the world is an extraordinarily better place than it was just a couple of centuries ago.”

The article is both interesting and compelling in making its case. Three observations are worth considering.

I. Too Many People Are Influenced By Negative News

- A. A 24/7 diet of cable news and social media, regardless of your favorite network or website, is mentally, emotionally, and spiritually unhealthy. It can be depressing, discouraging, and demoralizing.
- B. By contrast, in the midst of the corrupt culture of Rome, the apostle Paul encourages Christians in Philippians 4:8. In fact, the Bible has many optimistic passages (Joshua 1:9; Psalm 56:4; 71:5; 91:2; Hebrews 13:6; 1 John 5:14).
- C. Our attitudes, actions, and feelings are shaped by what we think about. In fact, thoughts lead to the formation of character (Proverbs 4:23; 23:7). Therefore, it is vitally important to be influenced by good, wholesome, positive virtues (Luke 6:45). I love the phrase in Jeremiah 4:14: “Wash thine heart from wickedness.”

II. Missing From The Consideration is The Most Important Component

- A. The answer to the question, “Is the world a better place?” depends on the criteria by which you assess it. Missing from the 6 areas that “proves” the world is a better place is the most important component — spiritual values.
- B. One might argue that we are worse off than we were 50 years ago.
 1. The acceptance of same-sex marriage, along with homosexuality, abortion, out-of-wedlock births, a divorce rate pushing 50%, drug abuse, addiction to pornography, sexuality transmitted disease, the changing roles of women in the family and society, and a culture that is coarse and crass, all point to a world that is going the wrong direction.
 2. But these changes are themselves subject to change. For example, the number of high-school-age teens who are having sex, becoming pregnant,