



"The tragedy of much modern life is that the abandonment of the knowledge of God means that futility has taken over."

—Leon Morris

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Our Enervating Culture

Our culture is wearying. Not only is it non-stop and fast-paced, but it is also so full of contention and controversy that it is maddening, stressful, and frustrating. It says something about the way [God](#) made us that we can even stand it!

God accurately catches the essence of our time when He tells Daniel, "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase" ([Daniel 12:4](#)). The word picture is of a multitude of people scurrying around like ants, but unlike ants, their scurrying is erratic, futile, and unproductive. The New English Bible creatively renders this, "Many will be at their wits' end," suggesting both frustration and a kind of psychosis in the people as they struggle to keep up with and understand what is happening around them.

It is no wonder that many throw up their hands and give up trying to battle the culture. Some of these simply give in and go with the flow, while others check out altogether, finding a place out in the country, throwing out their televisions and having as little to do with the rest of us as possible. Many others, knowing they cannot escape to rural tranquility due to job or family commitments, do their best to withdraw privately from the exasperating culture.

Yet, there is no way to avoid it altogether. [Jesus](#) Himself admits this in [John 17:15](#), "I do not pray that You should take them out of [the world](#), but that You should keep them from the evil one." Christians have to live in the world, and we rely on the Father's protection against the worst that [Satan](#) and "this present evil age" ([Galatians 1:4](#)) can throw at us. In this sense, we have to learn to live with some of the unsavory aspects of society

because we are too weak to make any effective change in them.

The presidential race is a prime example of American culture gone berserk, and Christians have no chance of altering it for the better. The "apex" of American politics pits two wealthy, egotistical candidates of New England elite extraction against each other. Both candidates employ every dirty, political trick in the book to gain an advantage over the other. The lies, misinformation, spin, and defamation that flood from each campaign staff make the late Baghdad Bob look like a saint. And Americans are supposed to choose which of these two should be Chief Executive?

Perhaps this is overly cynical, but it does point out how our culture, with its 24-hour news cycle and information overload, obfuscates every important matter. Who can be trusted? Fox News? CNN? MSNBC? The 700 Club? The BBC? NPR? Reuters? *The New York Times*? *The Washington Post*? *The Christian Science Monitor*? *The Wall Street Journal*? WorldNetDaily? The Drudge Report? Who?

These news outlets will run contradictory stories about the candidates. Was John Kerry a military hero in Vietnam—or was he an uninspiring SWIFT boat captain who often disregarded orders and dishonestly won his Silver Star? Did George Bush exhaust all diplomatic solutions to the Saddam Hussein dilemma before committing America to war—ordid he, cowboy-style, plan to avenge his father's attempted assassination before he was even elected? We may have opinions about these matters, but do we really know the [truth](#)? Can we know the truth?

Modern thinkers would say, no, there is no such thing as absolute truth, and even facts about a situation or an issue are merely data to be manipulated by each observer. The truth is in the eye of the beholder. That is a terribly shifty basis on which to build a functioning and productive society. If a person cannot honestly ascertain whether a thing is true or false, it will not be long before he loses his grip on reality—which truth defines—and begins to behave in anti-social ways. We see this process already at work in our universities, where religious or conservative values are hostilely opposed, contrary to even the First Amendment rights academics so ardently cherish for themselves.

We are warned that things will only get worse as the end approaches ([Matthew 24:6](#), 8, 21; [II Timothy 3:1](#), 13). Society will continue to break down, violence and deception will increase, and [persecution](#) of those who live morally will intensify—not a positive outlook as we prepare for the [Kingdom of God](#). Christ, though, advises us, "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" ([Matthew 24:13](#)). If He says it can be done, we can do it!

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by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

After exploring the philosophical, economic, and social definitions of liberal, conservative, and moderate, Richard Ritenbaugh concludes that in the church we are none of these—we are "God-ists." The world considers us liberals because we are not bound by its religious orthodoxy. Conversely, we are conservative when following God's constitutional code, His holy standards, living by the spirit of the law rather than just by the letter. Ultimately, religion and politics do not mix at all because in weak men, political expediency trumps righteousness every time. Because we are set apart by God, we are not to become involved in the world's political, judicial, or military systems (John 18:36-37). Our term in office has not yet begun.

From the Archives: Featured Article

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by Charles Whitaker

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