



"The generation that knows only itself is destined to remain forever adolescent. (Sign in university library)"

—Anonymous

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## **Something Is Wrong**

I recently experienced another birthday (making me as old as Jack Benny always claimed to be - really!), and in looking back at the last nearly four decades, I was struck with how different [the world](#) is today. By the time I became aware of current events and circumstances, American culture had already moved past its peak, sliding down what appears from this angle to have been a precipitous slope - and it has not yet reached bottom. However, the consequences of our cultural descent are becoming evident; we see them in our newspapers and news programs with discouraging regularity.

Perhaps most appalling is the number of pundits and persons of influence who not only apologize for the pollution of our popular culture, but also support and applaud it for its "edginess," "realism," and "honesty." These champions of the tawdry, tacky, and inferior continually urge the American people, particularly those who produce such garbage, to take cultural change even farther - not just being satisfied with living on the cutting-edge or even the bleeding-edge, but to hurtle recklessly past the edge altogether into the realm of the untried and unimagined. With the hubris that comes from money, power, and boredom, Americans are trying to outdo the ancient Romans for spectacle and perversion.

In addition, Americans of all ages have forgotten or were never taught to apply the principle of cause-and-effect - every action produces a consequence. This is partly due to the fact that Americans tend to have short attention spans, historically speaking. For too many, "just a few years ago" is ancient history, and, they whine, who needs to be bothered by all that worthless information, since it has no relevance today? The obvious result is that Americans tend to ignore the lessons of history and fail to see that past actions have produced penalties that we are only now just observing. We are reaping what was sowed in past decades ([Galatians 6:7](#)).

As an exercise, then, the following list will give us a push toward finding solutions to our culture's downward spiral by making us face up to the consequences and work backward to the cause.

### **Something is wrong when . . .**

. . . the most popular television shows and movies make fun of others' misfortunes. Human nature always wants to laugh at the foibles of weak people, but today it has moved on to utter exploitation of the unfortunate. We do this because it makes us feel better about ourselves by comparison, yet in reality, it exposes an attitude of contempt and pride. It is a product of individualism taken to an extreme - to the point of disdainful unconcern for fellow man.

. . . homosexuals comprise only 1-3% of the American population, yet they hold a disproportionate share of positions of power in government, education, and entertainment, influencing the course of American life. While this hints at grand conspiracy, such a thing would not have happened except the majority had simply capitulated to all - or nearly all - of their strategically brazen demands. This capitulation has been marketed as enlightened tolerance, but it is really abject fear: fear of retribution, fear of disease, fear of losing their own cherished rights to practice their personal perversities.

. . . young girls and women of all ages seem to take delight in exposing themselves in public. It used to be that women upheld decency standards far longer than men, but today's women appear to be leading the pack in matters of peddling flesh. Today, it is no longer just a matter of high hemlines and deep-cut necklines, but of leaving virtually nothing to the imagination. This public undressing of American women stems, paradoxically, from the over-emphasis on self-esteem in homes and classrooms across the nation. Because this indoctrination has been done at the expense of teaching propriety, standards, and [self-discipline](#), it has produced the opposite of its intended effect.

. . . an increasing number of young men refuse to grow up and take on the responsibilities of adulthood. Sowing one's wild oats used to be over by the time a man graduated from college, but today it drags on into the thirties. Such "old adolescents" live for parties, sports, women, drugs - good times, by their reckoning - and abhor the thought of becoming contributing members of society. This avoidance of maturity has its source in a failure to instill discipline and proper ambition in boys, allowing them to play all the time.

. . . more than a million mothers agree to let a doctor kill their unborn babies each year. The obvious catalyst of this ongoing tragedy is *Roe v. Wade* in 1973, but overturning this colossally and criminally idiotic Supreme Court decision is a red herring. It should be done, but the underlying causes are more fundamental and moral. At its base is a diminished respect for life and a hyper-selfishness akin to extreme narcissism.

These examples are just a handful of things that are wrong with our society. They are happening for a reason, and with a little thought, we can trace them back to their causes. Ultimately, they all go back to forsaking the universally applicable principles of God's Word. As [Jesus](#) says, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them" ([John 13:17](#)).

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

## **From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

### **[Parenting \(Part 1\): Principles](#)**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

As the Columbine massacre at Littleton, Colorado, revealed, the parenting practices of our people leave a great deal to be desired. Because of our upsidedown emphasis on the youth culture and its characteristic selfishness or self-centeredness, the family is crumbling and deteriorating. Play and work are at the top of our priorities while God and family have moved to the bottom. God, as an active hands- on parent, has placed parenting on the top of His priority list. If we neglect parenting, we place our salvation in peril. Parents have a God- mandated responsibility to train up godly offspring, nurturing them in righteous behavior and basic life skills, spending ample quality time with them. The church is only as strong as its constituent families. The whole purpose of God is family.

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## **From the Archives: Featured Article**

### **[Our Reputation, Our Character](#)**

by Staff

What is the difference between reputation and character? Which is more important? Ultimately, our character should be the foundation of our reputation.

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