

COUNTER CULTURE – PART 1

2 Timothy 3:1-5 This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

We live in a culture that is headed the wrong way. Paul was describing our day when he wrote to Timothy, and it's not a pretty picture. If you really want to live for God, you can only do it by living COUNTER CULTURE.

COUNTER CULTURE is a sociological term used to describe the values of a group that run counter to those of the social mainstream. COUNTER CULTURE describes a group whose behavior deviates from societal norms.

Our problem in the first part of the 21st Century is that we don't only have to oppose SECULAR culture, but much of what is called CHRISTIAN culture!

A Gallup poll declares that 94% of North Americans believe in God. But obviously they don't believe in God in the BIBLICAL sense of the word! And most North American Christians don't believe BIBLICALLY either!

James 2:19-20 Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?

The demons believe in God enough to TREMBLE. Many so-called "Christians" believe in God but don't FEAR Him. They want just enough God to keep them out of Hell, just enough God to get them into Heaven, but certainly not enough God to have any effect on their lives.

They have "Cafeteria Christianity" – they just pick the verses they like! They are merely CULTURAL CHRISTIANS. But wait! We have them around the Apostolic church as well. **They say they believe in God, but they live as though He doesn't exist.** They can quote the right doctrine all day long, but it doesn't affect their everyday lives. **They are APOSTOLIC ATHEISTS.**

Proverbs 9:10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding.

Psalm 36:1-2 (KJV) The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes. For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

Psalm 36:1-2 (NLT) Sin whispers to the wicked, deep within their hearts. They have no fear of God at all. In their blind conceit, they cannot see how wicked they really are.

Who are these wicked people? Surely not us! But wait a minute ...

Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

The ONLY thing that restrains wickedness in our lives is the FEAR OF THE LORD. The fear of the Lord is not "terror," but "reverent awe." In other words, the better you know the Lord, the MORE you will "fear" Him.

If you fear the Lord, you will serve Him without CONDITIONS.

Genesis 22:12 And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

"Now I Know" ~ by Joan Ewing

He left his father's land, boyhood dreams were in the past;
He held his son, God's promise, what more would his Friend ask?
"To yonder's mountain Abram, take the fire and take the wood."
So trusting still they climbed the hill, knowing what came would come for good.

When the altar was all finished and the wood was all in place,
He looked with love and sadness into his young son's face.
"God has asked this of me, Isaac, there's no less that I can do;
I have withheld nothing from Him – I never dreamed He'd ask for you."

And then the wind blew softly, God leaned close and whispered low,
"If I ever wondered how you loved Me, now I know."

I had left this world behind me and my dreams were in the past.
But I held a few choice treasures – what more would my Friend ask?
"Go to yonder's mountain, take the fire and take the wood."
So trusting still I climbed the hill, knowing what came would come for good.

When my altar was all finished and the wood was all in place,
I looked with fear and trembling into ... my own face!
"God, what are You asking? There's no less that I will do.
I'm yours for whatever – all I have belongs to You."

And then the wind blew softly, and my Best Friend whispered low,
"If I ever wondered how you loved Me, now I know."

The mansions were all finished and the gold was all in place.
I looked in awe and wonder into the Lamb's dear face.
And then I cast my crown before Him and I bowed myself down low.
If I had ever wondered how He loved me ... now I know.

Many people say, "God, if you'll FIX my life, I'll serve you." But quite often, God WRECKS your life in order to make you more like Him!

Isaiah 6:1-8 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke. Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

The greatest proof of the fear of the Lord is OBEDIENCE.

John 14:15 If ye love me, keep my commandments.

Luke 6:44-46 For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?

Are you becoming more obedient, or more disobedient? Are you living "counter culture" or are you living "conformed to culture"? Do you LIVE the truth, or do you just BELIEVE the truth?

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE AN APOSTOLIC ATHEIST? MONEY

Many so-called Christians set their priorities as though they were saying, "I BELIEVE in God, but I TRUST in money." They trust their money for happiness and for security. **Money is their "FUNCTIONAL SAVIOR."**

Luke 12:34 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Luke 16:13 No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.

MONEY IS THE #1 COMPETITOR AGAINST GOD FOR YOUR HEART!

Are you serving God and using money? Or serving money and using God?

If you really trust God, you become irrationally CONTENT.

1 Timothy 6:6-10 But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

If you really trust God, you become irrationally GENEROUS.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

We have the reputation of being a generous church, but what about YOU? Among consistent churchgoers in North America, 21% give NOTHING to their church, and 71% give LESS THAN 2% of their income to their church. Imagine what we could accomplish with 100% participation!

Malachi 3:8-11 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

2 Samuel 24:24 And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy it of thee at a price: neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the LORD my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshingfloor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver.

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU'RE AN APOSTOLIC ATHEIST? TIME

The statistics on churchgoers giving their TIME to their church are even more pathetic than the statistics on MONEY.

Isaiah 29:13 Wherefore the Lord said, Forasmuch as this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear toward me is taught by the precept of men:

Revelation 3:14-17 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked:

God says, "I'm not impressed by your WORDS. I'm looking at your DEEDS."

Imagine God looking down on the LIFESTYLE of many so-called Apostolic Christians today. The way they live makes God SICK. **They say they believe in God, but they live as though He doesn't exist.** They are just CULTURAL CHRISTIANS – quite literally, APOSTOLIC ATHEISTS.

Jeremiah 2:32 Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? yet my people have forgotten me days without number.

WHAT DOES A LUKEWARM CHRISTIAN ACT LIKE?

- They crave acceptance from PEOPLE rather than from God.
- They do just enough in church to alleviate their GUILT.
- They gauge their spirituality by COMPARING themselves to others.
- They rarely WITNESS about the Lord to others.
- They only GIVE when it doesn't hurt their standard of living.
- They want the BENEFITS of serving God but no responsibilities.
- They think more about life on earth than about ETERNITY.
- They only turn to God when they are in TROUBLE.
- They ignore any Scriptures that affect their personal LIFESTYLE.
- They are not very much different than the rest of the WORLD.

Ephesians 5:15-17 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.

Matthew 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

Revelation 3:19-20 As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.