

COUNTER CULTURE – PART 2

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.

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!

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

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

You will either FEAR GOD (respect, honor, have a sense of awe) or you will FEAR MAN – there is no other option!

Proverbs 29:25 The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe.

A person who fears man will offend the One he cannot see in order not to offend the one he can see.

One of the places we put man's opinion above God's opinion is in our relationships. God created us for relationships, but we mess them up because (1) we don't put our relationship with Him first, and (2) we conduct our relationships according to man's rules instead of God's commandments.

THERE IS NO GOOD TIME TO PREACH A MESSAGE LIKE THIS ... because we are constantly counseling people about their relationships, and constantly thinking, "How do you not know this?!"

WHAT YOU DO NOW MATTERS! Your present will eventually become your past, and your past will eventually show up in your future.

Most "marriage problems" are really "two single problems that got married." People bring their individual issues (i.e. loneliness, sex problems, family issues, self-esteem issues) into the marriage and then blame their spouse!

THE RIGHT PERSON MYTH: If I could just be married to the right person, everything would be all right.

The truth? If you build your relationship on this foundation, someday when you're having problems you'll once again think you've met the "right person" elsewhere because you'll feel like you're married to the "wrong person."

THE RIGHT FEELING MYTH: "No one else has ever felt like this before."

The truth? Your relationship is a well-worn, predictable path. It is NOT unique. That's why it feels sometimes like the preacher is talking directly to YOU, when he's really just talking about humanity in general.

Our culture isn't against happy marriages, it just doesn't celebrate them. Why? Because **SUCCESSFUL RELATIONSHIPS ARE BORING!** Relationships DON'T work the way the media portrays them!

Culture teaches people who are DATING to put their relationship with God on the back burner in order to focus on their new relationship. BAD IDEA!

Dating is not about MARRYING the right person, but about BECOMING the right person. Are you who the person you are looking for is looking for?

Scripture gives little help on FINDING the right person, but is full of help on BECOMING the right person!

You need more than CHEMISTRY, you need RELATIONSHIP SKILLS. These don't appear suddenly or automatically when you get married! They must be worked on over time, in every relationship you have.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things.

PATIENT – never pressures the other person
KIND – is considerate of how the other person feels
NOT ENVIOUS – envy won't let you feel good if I don't feel good about me
NOT PRIDEFUL – competition and pride destroy intimacy
NOT UNSEEMLY – never creates regret by behaving indecently
NOT SELFISH – puts the happiness of the other person first

NOT ONE OF THESE TRAITS COMES NATURALLY TO HUMAN BEINGS!

“When I get married, I’ll ...” // THAT NEVER HAPPENS!

Because our culture bases relationships on “chemistry,” it tells us it is impossible to love one person for a lifetime. This is totally untrue, and totally against the way God created us. **Chemistry comes and goes in all relationships, but forgiveness keeps us together for a lifetime.**

1 Corinthians 13:11 When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.

Children believe that relationships work like this: “And they lived happily ever after.” But that is NOT REALITY. Relationships take WORK if you want them to WORK. So leave behind your childish ways, and GROW UP!

SINGLE PEOPLE: You need to practice these relationship skills on every date! They will not suddenly appear when you get married.

Our culture treats sexuality (and especially women) like a COMMODITY ... take me, use me, then trade me in. And this is exactly how it was in the first century when Christianity was born.

Our culture says “No one lives like you are preaching any more – this is the 21st century!” No one lived like this in the 1st century either, and that’s why Christianity made such a huge impact on the world and on history.

John 13:34-35 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

1 Peter 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

You can’t give HONOR to your spouse if you are hooked on erotic imagery. Looking at it actually changes your brain chemically and creates an ADDICTION. Looking at the FAKE always deadens your desire for the REAL. And no one has ever “turned this off” when they got married! Pornography says to your spouse: A REAL body isn’t good enough for me; ONE body isn’t good enough for me; YOUR body isn’t good enough for me. To be fair, you should tell your spouse (or potential spouse) that you feel this way, if you’re going to continue to use pornography.

Our culture has created such an “ideal” that women (or men) spend their entire marriage competing against something that isn’t even REAL!

SEX is not only PHYSICAL – it is connected to your SOUL. When you treat it casually, you hurt yourself at the deepest possible level. This is why ...

- Sexual abuse is so hard to shake
- Rape is do devastating
- Men with deepest sexual issues have distant fathers
- Deepest personal regrets are sexual

INTIMACY is to know fully and to be fully known. The SEXUAL part of you is both powerful and FRAGILE, and that’s why God says to PROTECT it and SAVE it until marriage. Then there will be no fear of COMPARISON or CRITICISM, and you can have real INTIMACY.

SEXUAL SIN kills intimacy, and creates an empty hole that you may spend a lifetime trying to fill. Young singles, you can skip all this hurt if you will just live your life according to God’s commandments!

1 Corinthians 6:15-20 Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid. What? know ye not that he which is joined to an harlot is one body? for two, saith he, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.

SEXUAL SIN is like no other sin – it is a sin against your own body, because it opens up appetites that will create a lifelong struggle against you in your own flesh! And it hurts you on the deepest possible level. Nothing else has such long-range consequences in your life.

Paul reaches back to Genesis to tell us that when you have sex with someone, part of you is permanently bonded with them. You will always have to deal with it – it WILL affect your marriage, even if you marry them! But if it’s with someone else it is especially problematic for your future, because YOU CAN’T “UN-ONE” ONE!

YOU ARE NOT YOUR OWN, so honor God with your sexuality. Sexual activity has PREDICTABLE OUTCOMES (consequences) BY DESIGN. (Like the consequences of bad nutrition, for example.)

ROMANCE is fueled by EXCLUSIVITY – I'm able to give ALL OF ME to ALL OF YOU. Look for the ONE, don't look for just ANYONE.

MARRIAGE wasn't designed to solve your problems! Good things in a relationship are made better by marriage, and bad things in a relationship are made worse by marriage.

The best marriages are created when one WHOLE person joins their life with another WHOLE person (not a "HOLE" person!).

MARRIAGE IS A COVENANT, NOT A CONTRACT. Contracts say, "I will if you will." Covenants say, "I will even if you won't." COVENANTS ARE NOT MADE TO BE BROKEN, SO PROCEED CAUTIOUSLY!

PRINCIPLES FOR SINGLES:

YOU HAVE TO PRE-DECIDE WHEN IT COMES TO SEXUALITY.

FOCUS ON BECOMING THE RIGHT PERSON, NOT FINDING THE RIGHT PERSON.

POSTPONE ANYTHING PHYSICAL AS LONG AS POSSIBLE.

IF YOU HAVE HAD PROBLEMS WITH YOUR SEXUALITY, TAKE A YEAR OFF FROM ANY DATING, AND SPEND IT RENEWING YOUR MIND.

GIVING UP SOMETHING NOW FOR SOMETHING BETTER LATER IS NOT A SACRIFICE, IT IS AN INVESTMENT.

DECIDE TO LIVE YOUR LIFE COUNTER CULTURE!

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.