

It Is Written

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"I Don't Want My Kids to be Different"

By Greg Gwin

Although most Christians wouldn't say it in so many words, many parents seem to be very concerned about things that might make their kids look 'different.' They are concerned about raising their children in strict, disciplined ways that might make them stand out in contrast to others. They mistakenly feel a need to have their kids 'blend in' with kids at school, etc.

Well, let's see about that . . .

- Statistics indicate that 13% of teens in America have had sex before their 15th birthday, and 70% have had intercourse before they reach 20 (1). 'But, I don't want my kids to be different.' Really!?! Are you sure about that?
- 6.5% of 8th graders, 17% of 10th graders, and 23% percent of 12th graders used marijuana in the past month, while 3.6% of 8th graders, 14.5% of 10th graders, and 28% of 12th graders reported getting drunk in the past month (2). But you say, 'I don't want my kids to be different.' Are you kidding!?!
- 35% of teenage boys and 26% of teenage girls admit to shoplifting. 83% say they have lied to their parents about something significant, and 64% admitted to cheating on tests (3). Yet, you're still worried about your kids being 'different'? How can that be?!?

Why are parents so worried about their children being viewed as 'normal' in such a wicked, immoral world? Now is the time to be teaching them, training them, and helping them to realize that pleasing God will require a way of life that is truly 'different' – even 'weird' – by the norms of the ungodly society that surrounds us. If you don't instruct them in their youth to "come out from among them and be separate" (II Corinthians 6:17), don't be surprised if they reach adulthood without a true and sacrificial love for God. Think!

Notes:

1. Guttmacher Institute
2. National Institute on Drug Abuse
3. Josephson Institute

What Happens When We Are Canceled?

By Greg Chandler

If you do not stay up to date on pop-culture slang, you may be unfamiliar with the terms "woke" and "cancel culture." Though definitions vary, the primary meaning of "woke" involves maintaining social awareness and the primary idea behind "cancel culture" is to silence anyone whose opinions are not considered woke; thus, they are deemed unfit for public consumption or consideration. Recent months have seen a plethora of people in the public eye scorned and mocked for having opinions at variance with the woke crowd. While this may seem a rather new concept to a nation whose Constitution enshrines the idea of freedom of speech, it is a concept well-known to those who seek to follow the New Testament as their model for both church and individual decisions and behavior. Primitivists, just as their 1st-century Christian counterparts, are aware of what it means to be canceled.

In its earliest days, it did not take long for some to try and cancel Christianity. Jewish leaders who had overseen the death of Jesus were troubled by reports of His return from the grave. Even worse, the ragtag group of men who He trained for three years continued His teachings. To cancel them, the Jewish elite gave a solemn warning: "And when they had brought them [the apostles], they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us'" (Acts 5:27-28). These men seemed socially unaware; they continued speaking things considered heretical to these "faithful" leaders. However, the apostles refused to be canceled. In reply, Peter and the rest stated, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Resistance had its price; these men faced imprisonment, torture, exile, and death for their refusal to be silenced. For the 2,000+ years since these faithful men stood their ground against popular culture, the people of God have faced challenges as the Gospel passed through seasons of favor and disfavor.

As bedrock commands and principles of the New Testament continue their fall from societal favor, 21st-century Primitivists can expect the same actions against them as occurred so long ago. As pressure mounts, there will likely be a significant decline in the number of churches that stay true to commands not considered "woke." There has already been a softening in attitudes toward homosexuality, despite the seriousness with which Paul discusses the topic in his letter to the Romans (see Romans 1:18ff). As well, churches that stay true to commands concerning women's roles in public assemblies (I Corinthians 14:34) will continue to lessen as pressure is applied to conform to societal norms. Rising issues such as transgenderism will likely bring about the abandonment of principles most churches once considered bedrock. In other words, churches that intend to stay true to the New Testament pattern had better prepare to stand when others fall.

As "wokeness" makes its way into the halls of power, churches must also come to the realization that some measure of persecution will follow. This may be as benign as governmental taxation of weekly contributions or as severe as locking up those who publicly support biblical principles over government mandates. The lives of saints over the past 2,000 years attest to what can happen when a child of God refuses to bow in worship to the emperor.

With these sobering thoughts in mind, what are Bible-believing, New Testament following Christians supposed to do? Consider the following:

Do Not Lose Your Joy! If any Christian faced canceling, it was Paul. Despised by both Jewish and Roman leaders, he never lost sight of what is found in Jesus. His short letter to the Philippians testifies of this as he wrote of his joy despite the persecutions received for refusing to be "woke."

Pray. As Paul surveyed the political scene of his day, he issued the following command: "I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (I Timothy 2:1-2). God is more powerful than any king, president, congress, or court; He can make a way for His people.

Stick Together. Knowing that persecution was near, Peter instructed his readers to stand firm against the devil. He wrote: "Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world" (I Peter 5:9). As societal and governmental pressure mounts, Christians must lean on one another for strength. Considering this, it may be time to revisit disagreements that have separated Christians and renew efforts to mend fellowship without compromise of faith or conscience. The strength drawn from one another will aid each believer in times of hard testing.

Do Not Give Up. After all the attempted canceling of the apostle Paul, he could still write, "Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day" (II Timothy 4:8). If Paul could stand firm, so can we. It requires eyes fixed on eternity and an unwillingness to quit no matter how difficult things may become for a season.

God may answer the prayers of His people and offer more years of the relative peace and freedom they have enjoyed. However, the wise will not be taken off-guard if this peace is ended by a time of testing. Whatever the future holds, Christians can know for certain they are safe in God's hands. God will never cancel His faithful.