

EVALUATING OUR SURVIVAL QUOTIENT

A few contradictory items have come across my desk recently. They have brought a keener understanding on how the morality of a culture relates to the survival of that culture. In the midst of this, the most simple truth came along to carry the day. It is the illustration from Jesus about the wise man who built his house upon the rock, versus the foolish man who built his house upon the sand. Both appeared to be legitimate structures—until the flood test came and washed the one away, leaving the other standing as the survivor. These structures can be compared to cultures in our world.

The simple difference? The non-surviving culture seeks to build without moral bounds, whereas the surviving culture limits its moral options to what the Bible describes as “doing the will of God.” As quaint as that may sound, it turns out to be the only sufficient engine for cultural survival (at least in a wholesome way), and in its Biblical context, for a personal relationship with God. This means, then, that Biblical morality, with its unchanging, controlling moral code, is the catalyst of an enduring culture.

One of the items that came my way (*Summit Ministries*, the journal, January 2011), was from a 1934 study by Oxford anthropologist J. D. Unwin. After studying 86 human civilizations, Unwin concluded that the principal factor in all-around cultural well-being is “absolute monogamy.” This is what today would be considered a narrow, restrictive moral code. Sexual relationships are limited to the context of one-man, one-woman marriage for life. Divorce/remarriage, adultery, and fornication, are unacceptable.

From the other side, came a double negative. *On Gay Rights, Keep Fighting or Adapt?* Tom Krattenmaker, writing for *USA TODAY* (February 14, 2011), has already declared the winner. Gay rights, he claims, will prevail, as a matter of “civil rights.” He calls for a “peaceful” end to the controversy. How? If you are against homosexuality, feel free to continue believing what you believe. But keep the objections to yourself. Krattenmaker baits his argument with the words “mean” and “hate” (as descriptive with those of us who disagree), giving a good clue as to what could happen down the road against those inclined to resist his advice. By the way, even true civil rights don’t always win. Civil rights lost on the abortion issue.

The second example is offered by the Obama administration. According to a front page article (*Obama: Law Against Gay Marriage Is Illegal*) of the Pioneer Press (St. Paul, MN, February 24, 2011), the Justice Department will no longer defend the Defense of Marriage Act, passed by Congress in 1996. (This law bars federal recognition of same-sex marriages, and was doubtless intended to restrain strong-arm tactics by the courts).

So what is the difference between the two sides of the question? America needs men of integrity, men who find fulfillment in doing the right thing, over the “fun” thing. These are men who keep marriage vows, assuring that they are trustworthy. They perform faithfully on the job, and happily take home the rewards of their labors to first benefit their wives and children. These are not distracted from the most important things by bleachers, bars, or brothels. These are men who received their job descriptions from God, not from society. These did not start on the surface mode of being honorable men. Rather, it is their personal morality that defines them—from the inside out.

When it comes down to the survival quotient of western civilization, where will such men come from?

One would think that with the magnitude of national and worldwide cultural troubles, there would be a conscious effort and desire for a return to moral soundness. But for some reason, in kind of a last-gasp moral degradation, the opposite is true. Biblical morality is mocked and maligned. In fact, western civilization is actively warning people away from the surviving moral structure, to join the crowds rushing for “security” into the already collapsing building.

What’s missing here is the accurate assessment of the *survival quotient*. We miss the obvious signs of our impending cultural doom, and our inability to stop the process short of changing what we are doing wrong. Anthropologist Margaret Mead pointed out ground zero of civilization in a remarkable statement, when she described the “central problem of every society”—that is, to “define appropriate roles for the men.”

The surface manifestations of men’s problems are all over the map. From foreign dictators, now forced to choke on their own excesses, to powerful CEOs, those who run the economy into the ground, to the powerfully entrenched entitlement mentality that deludes most of our male population and defies budget cutting, to the losers in circuit court who are admonished yet again to abstain from drugs and alcohol, to further their education, to do job searches (they are rarely employed), and to pay child support. All this points to the fact that sexual excesses and economic greed ultimately yield lonely misery and poverty.

In contrast, true happiness, security, and cultural survival is rooted in moral restraint. (At the end of the day the reward goes with having done the right thing, rather than the selfish thing or the cheating thing.) Our survival depends on motivations of the kind that will carry us higher than passions of the moment, or the “right” to one’s own body (translate that into refusing reproductive responsibility), or the “right” to a government check.

We need not be surprised then, that civilizations are not maintained apart from aggressive spiritual commitments in what the Bible describes as “losing” our lives now in order to ultimately save them through the Cross, for the long term. This is a concept that a dying culture deems foolish. But without recognition and surrender to the God over us, the best of human ideals cannot be maintained, with the very aspirations themselves finally being scorned.

Finally, men are not choosing a job description. What they are doing, either consciously or otherwise, is to embrace or reject the Biblical moral code. This code will, in turn, assign their appropriate place, their purpose, and their *survival quotient* in the culture. (The single greatest threat to the world today is the lack of *survival quotient* value in her men.)

The man’s place in the culture cannot be defined nor taught through public education nor through the courts. In the very act of rejecting God over the past few generations, the public sector has shed its moral authority and with it, its potential value in teaching the survival quotient. This is a culture that now cheats its way defiantly around the marriage/ reproductive requirements, and stamps its counter values into the educational, ethical, economic, and political realms. It has also turned to sharpening its teeth against the morality it once embraced.

The public sector was once the backup and support system for the only place where the role of men could be effectively defined and taught—fathers exemplifying responsibility and moral leadership, and passing on the same to their children, who would in turn teach their children. This is the context and the fruit of “absolute monogamy,” as practiced in the fear of God.

~Lester Troyer