

**THE SOWER  
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**WHOSE VALUES?**

In the heat of political campaigning, candidates will always make charges and counter-charges, belittling each other. Such has always been, and I'm sure will never cease. Without naming names, or even party-affiliation (we must be non-partisan) one comment, and its critical response, caught my attention. A few years ago one candidate caught thunder from both sides of the political aisle when he said, "I think most people know exactly what New York values are. Everyone understands that the values in New York City are especially liberal or pro-abortion or pro-gay marriage. Focus is around money and the media."

This candidate may or may not have erred in associating his opponent with "New York values," but the response is noteworthy—not only from his opponent, but from the media, and especially from New Yorkers. This candidate was being judgmental of a value-system. That seems to have become politically incorrect—unless the judgment is against Judeo-Christian values. Let us not think, though, that the values the candidate

referred to are exclusively the city of New York's. Our values as a nation have evolved from a respect for the laws of God into a mentality wherein all values are equal—especially if they run counter to traditional and Biblical values. New York may indeed be a trail-blazer for deviant values, but she is not alone. The leaven of godlessness in our more populous cities soon spreads throughout the nation. "A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6).

The sole values that deserve acceptance by Christians are those that are established upon a sure foundation—the word of God. What Jesus said regarding "whosoever" in Matthew 7:24-25 could conceivably be applied to any society or nation, as well as individuals: To be directed by Christ's teachings is to build upon a solid foundation; to ignore His teachings is, as it were, to build upon sand. That society or nation that adheres to biblical truth will stand, but great will be the fall of those who cast God's word aside. The widespread acceptance of the killing of unborn infants and sexual deviancy leaves a people open to God's judgment. That which is relevant for

“doctrine (teaching), reproof and correction” of any sustainable society still must be “Scripture”—God’s word, The Bible.

Considering this fact, Christians must bear responsibility in this regard. Jesus said of His people that they would be the “salt of the earth” and “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:13-16), but the salt has “lost its savor”, and the light has too

often been “put under a bushel,” as carnal impurity has permeated the salt, and materialism and compromise have obscured the light of Christ that should be evident to the world in the lives of true believers.

It comes down to this: Whose values are seen in your life? The worlds? Or Christ’s?  
--Ron

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## TWO SERMONS—DIFFERENT REACTIONS

We will guard our hearts, no matter what happens. We will rationalize or pretend whatever is necessary to bring our lives into some kind of equilibrium. It is the human way. While we hear with our ears, we interpret the data through our hearts and minds. That is the real battlefield in terms of the gospel.

We find an excellent example in Acts where two familiar messages evoked diametrically opposed reactions. The initial gospel sermon used the life of Christ, the reign of David and the authority of the prophet as its foundation. Peter charged the Jews with killing Christ (Acts 2:36). Yet, the listeners asked what they had to do to correct their sin (Acts 2:36-37). Accordingly, 3000 were immersed into Christ (Acts 2:38-41). Their hearts allowed their ears to listen with a view to something larger than themselves.

Meanwhile, the same basic message brought a quite different reaction. Stephen, a powerful man of God, stood to address the Jews in Acts 7. In a lengthy discourse, he appeals to prophecy and Old Testament characters to prove his teaching. Stephen’s message takes a dramatic turn between 7:50 and 7:51. Clearly he was reacting to something in the crowd, and in 7:52-53 they take him; by force and execute him.

It seems the crowd in Acts 2 was comprised of more of the common man, while Jewish leaders in Acts 7 took charge since it became the impetus for widespread persecutions (Acts 8:1-3). Both sermons charged the Jews with murder, but only one brought out their bloodlust. Notice that in both passages they were “cut “cut to the heart” (Acts 2:36; 7:54). In Acts 2 they accepted Peter’s charges and repented. (cf. 2 Samuel 2:1-7). In Acts 7 they put their sense of power and financial gain over the message. They heard the gospel through filters that distorted the good news.

Each of us must humbly see the larger picture and listen to God's Word with a view to heaven. Some who evangelize ask a question, "If I could show you something in the Bible that is different from what you believe, would you change?" If the answer is no, there is no reason to spend any time on them. We must be willing to repent and be transformed by the power of the Word (Romans 12:1-2). How we listen is the first step.

-Richard Mansel, *Forthright Magazine*

## **TWO BUILDERS**

The builder built a temple; he wrought it with grace and skill.

Pillars, walls, and arches—fashioned to his will.

Men said they saw its beauty: "It will never know decay.

Great is thy skill, O builder, thy fame shall live for aye.

The parent built a temple with loving tender care,

Planning each arch with patience, laying each stone with prayer.

Few noticed the preparation; none knew of the wondrous plan.

The temple you built, dear teacher, was unseen in the eyes of man.

However, the builder's temple is gone; it has crumbled into dust.

Low lies its stately pillars, food for consuming rust.

But the temple built by the parent will last while the ages roll,

For that beautiful unseen temple is a child's immortal soul.

--Adapted from *Hattie Ross Hall; via House to House/Heart to Heart*

**(NOTE:** The above poem is especially appropriate as we see the spiritual and moral standards of society becoming increasingly lax. The influence of our public educational system that has driven God out of the picture has been largely negative to biblical values, especially visible in sexual confusion, abortion and outright rejection of

God. Don't let schools and peers corrupt the minds and hearts of your children. Make a personal effort to instill the truth of God's word in their minds and hearts.)

***PRAY FOR:*** Ruby Bradd (cancer; Clinton); Wayne Polk (hardening of leg-arteries; Shelbyville minister); Larry Miles (our WEB manager; cancer); Gavin Hardin (Mary's nephew serving in Iraq; the many suffering persecution for their faith in Christ, especially in Islamic and communist countries).