

Is decency outmoded in 2009?



Holiness: Still God's desire and always His desire for His people

By Bill Johnson

With the onslaught of pornography, obscenity and indecency engulfing our every day worlds, it is easy to think that decency is outmoded. On occasion I have had people say upon hearing the name of our organization "American Decency Association." Are you kidding?

Satan and his minions would have you and I believe that decency is old fashioned, corny, prudish.

Decency is defined by the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* as conformity to standards of taste, propriety, or quality. *The Free Dictionary Online* defines decency as "conformity to prevailing standards of propriety or modesty."

I believe the battle for decency goes along with the battle for Truth, righteousness, holiness. There are untold numbers of individuals, institutions and, associations continually attacking that which pleases and honors God, including decency.

The word decency is not found in the Bible though it seems clear that decency is an aspect of such Biblical terms as holiness and modesty. The definition described above by the *Free Dictionary Online* states "conformity to prevailing standards of propriety or modesty".

So I ask "Who sets those standards of pro-

priety and modesty?" I submit that the final authority is God and God's Word! It is to His standard that we need to continually look. Christ is the standard bearer.

God's Word is the standard for all of life.

God desires that his people honor, obey, love, walk in His Word and proclaim His Word to those around them.

In doing so the body of Christ is being the salt and light of the world and is setting the pace in establishing and/or re-establishing standards of propriety or modesty.

As the body of Christ falters or fails at being salt and light, the standard of propriety or modesty declines and/or is swept away.

Christ tells us in Matthew 5:13-15: "Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

When I was a teacher, for years I placed on my bulletin board a poster and would make effort to instill it in the children that I taught. The words of the poster say this:

Will The Real You Please Stand Up?

"Submit to pressure from peers and you move down to their level. Speak up for your own beliefs and you invite them up to your level. If you move with the crowd, you'll get no further than the crowd. When 40 million people believe in a dumb idea, it's still a dumb idea. Simply swimming with the tide leaves you nowhere. So if you believe in something that's good, honest and bright- stand up for it. Maybe your peers will get smart and drift your way."

Though the above paragraph is a thoughtful saying, God's Word carries the payload! Hear the Word of God out of 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.

As humans, fallen creatures, our tendency is to wimp out, to protect ourselves, to avoid tense situations that may be uncomfortably conflictive - even done in love.

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**From the desk of
Bill Johnson,
president**

The central core of the calling God gave to me is the pursuit of holiness

As you begin reading this newsletter on page one, you will see that it is a defense or a rationale for being engaged in the battle for decency. But the central core of the calling God gave to me a fair number of years ago is the pursuit of holiness.

It emanated out of the victory that Christ showed me and then gave me as I became a Christian and fought the fight of faith out of a bondage to pornography in my late teens and early twenties.

God applied His word to me that if you lust you are committing adultery. "How can you say you love Christ if you live a life of lust?" God got my attention on that principle alone. The Lord led me along so graciously and He tenderly and faithfully showed me that it was His will that I be holy for He is holy.

[J.C. Ryle writes about this "holiness" in his book "Holiness."](#)

(a) *Holiness is the habit of being of one mind with God, according as we find His mind described in Scripture. It is the habit of agreeing in God's judgment -- hating what He hates, loving what He loves -- and measuring everything in this world by the standard of His Word. He who most entirely agrees with God, he is the most holy man.*

(b) *A holy man will endeavor to shun every known sin, and to keep every known commandment. He will have a decided bent of mind toward God, a hearty desire to do His will, a greater fear of displeasing Him than of displeasing the world, and a love to all His ways. He will feel what Paul felt when he said, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man". (Rom. 7:22), and what David felt when he said, "I esteem all Thy precepts concerning all things to be right, and I hate every false way" (Psalm 119:128).*

(c) *A holy man will strive to be like our Lord Jesus Christ. He will not only live the life of faith in Him, and draw from Him all his daily peace and strength, but he will also labour to have the mind that was in Him, and to be "conformed to His image" (Rom. 8:29). It will be his aim to bear with and forgive others, even as Christ forgave us; to be unselfish, even as Christ pleased not Himself; to walk in love, even as Christ loved us; to be lowly-minded and humble, even as Christ made Himself of no reputation, and humbled Himself. He will remember that Christ was a faithful witness for the truth; that He came not to do His own will; that it was His meat and drink to do His Father's will; that He would continually deny Himself in order to minister to others; that He was meek and patient under undeserved insults; that He thought more of godly poor men than of kings; that He was full of love and compassion to sinners; that He was bold and uncompromising in denouncing sin; that He sought not the praise of men, when He might have had it; that He went about doing good; that He was separate from worldly people; that He continued instant in prayer; that He would not let even His nearest relations stand in His way when God's work was to be done. These things a holy man will try to remember. By them he will endeavor to shape his course in life. He will lay to heart the saying of John, "He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked" (I John 2:6); and the saying of Peter that "Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps" (I Pet. 2:21). Happy is he who has learned to make Christ his "all," both for salvation and example! Much time would be saved, and much sin prevented, if men would oftener ask themselves the question, "What would Christ have said and done, if He were in my place?"*

My note: Undoubtedly you have noticed the older style of vocabulary and writing. There were many in earlier years who held high the Scriptures. There is much benefit in reading such writers as J.C. Ryle. Ryle (1816-1900) once believed that Christianity must be one of the most disagreeable occupations on earth - or in heaven. But one day in 1837 he happened into a church where, hearing Scripture read out loud, he was transformed. One verse, and the emphasis made in between each clause, gripped him: "By grace are ye saved ...

through faith ... and that not of yourselves ... it is the gift of God." (Eph. 2:8)

Charles Spurgeon said he was an "evangelical champion." Ryle simply observed, "What is won dearly is priced highly and clung to firmly."

[Continuing to quote Ryle - skipping to point h in his book "Holiness"](#)

(h) *A holy man will follow after purity of heart. He will dread all filthiness and uncleanness of spirit, and seek to avoid all things that might draw him into it. He knows His own heart is like tinder, and will diligently keep clear of the sparks of temptation. Who shall dare to talk of strength when David can fall? There is many a hint to be gleaned from the ceremonial law. Under it the man who only touched a bone, or a dead body, or a grave, or a diseased person, became at once unclean in the sight of God. And these things were emblems and figures. Few Christians are ever too watchful and too particular about this point.*

My note: I couldn't resist bringing my comment to this. Ryle wrote this long before the advent of pornographic magazines and video tapes and pornography on the Internet. If he were writing this today, I can't envision him neglecting this great area of temptation. Using his words above "Few Christians are ever too watchful and too particular about this point. Who shall dare to talk of strength when David can fall?"

[Continuing to quote Ryle:](#)

(i) *A holy man will follow after the fear of God. I do not mean the fear of a slave, who only works because he is afraid of punishment, and would be idle if he did not dread discovery. I mean rather the fear of a child, who wishes to live and move as if he was always before his father's face, because he loves him. ...*

A final note and closing:

What a beautiful picture of the fear of God.

May each of us have such a sense of God's existence, grace, presence and awesomeness that we have *the fear of of a child who wishes to live and move as if he was always before [our Father's] face, because he loves him.*

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The Bible tells us in Matthew 5:10-12, *Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*

Decency: Conformity to prevailing standards of propriety or modesty.

As Christians our ultimate standard is the very Word of God and Christ Himself.

As we begin a new year, I want to encourage all of us who are a part of this ministry to remember from Scripture the calling and mission of the American Decency Association.

Mission Statement

The mission of the American Decency Association is to educate its members and the general public on matters of decency; to initiate, promote, encourage and coordinate activity designed to safeguard and advance public morality consistent with biblical Christianity.

Vision Statement

The vision of the *American Decency Association* is that believers will recognize Christ's call to "be holy for I am holy," and to be a "city on a hill" shining forth His light unashamedly for all the world to see. As Christians, we need to be increasingly discerning regarding our choices of media entertainment, recognizing that our bodies are the temple of the Lord, and we should not expose ourselves to that which will degrade and dishonor. Similarly, recognizing that as consumers in the marketplace, we are paying for the destructive influence that much of entertainment media is having on our families and our nation, we also need to be increasingly discerning regarding the companies we support, aligning our disposable incomes with our moral convictions.

Scripture verses that have undergirded and given legitimacy and weight to our ministry and mission and to our sustenance and nurture:

Psalm 101:3a

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes:

Hebrews 12:14

Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord:

I Peter 1:15,16

But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Job 31:1

I made a covenant with mine eyes; why then should I think upon a maid?

II Timothy 2:3,4

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.

II Timothy 3:12,13

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.

I Peter 3:3-5

Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

II Timothy 3:16,17

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

ADA's logo:



Here is the message behind our logo.

1. The symbol of the cross, of course, represents the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ that sets us free from the bondages of sin and leads to our victory over the grave. The power of the cross, the Gospel. The Gospel gives us the power of God to live with hope and boldness for Him.

2. The multiple lines criss-crossing horizontally and vertically represent the highways and byways of life - the increasing busyness of our culture. Our ministry finds itself having a significant message of hope, truth, reconciliation and restoration to a world caught up in helter skelter living that is prone to substituting a lie for the truth.

3. The fish, the ichthus. During early Christianity, Christians were often put to death for practicing their faith, so they worshiped in secret places. A fish painted on the outside door of a house let other Christians know that they would be safe and welcome inside.

4. The fish points upward to the right not to the left. This world is not our home. We are strangers in a foreign land. Increasingly, we recognize we are swimming upwards against the tide - not conformed to this world.

5. The fish, representing believers in Christ, is on the cross. We are called to join in the sufferings and afflictions of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we see in our beloved America the increasing diminishment of faith, how can we not see that true believers will increasingly experience scorn, mocking, belittlement, persecution? The positioning of the fish on the cross speaks to that which more and more we will face.

6. The lines of white shining through the dark lines symbolizes our light shining in a darkened world. Let your light shine. We must not hide it!

The action side of American Decency Association

“... but if the salt has lost its savor, it is good for nothing but to be trodden under foot of men.

By Bill Johnson

When I became a Christian in my early twenties, I began to see there were many words communicated via sermons, bulletin inserts, Christian magazine articles, newsletters, radio broadcasts but not too much call for a response to the Word or activism.

I also began to see that one of the red flags within Christian circles was that if a church became too concerned about activism then the preaching of the Gospel was taking a back seat and being minimized. I could see that this, indeed, could be a dilemma as preaching the Word truly does need to be the central thing.

In the 1980's, Focus on the Family initiated an attempt to encourage churches to have social action committees to deal with social concerns within the local community, state and/or nation. Focus had a full time staff person(s) who would go across the country encouraging churches to develop social action committees.

This social action could be in the form of a letter writing campaign to advertisers sponsoring filth, or encouraging the county prosecutor to prosecute pornography, etc.

One church of which I am aware became concerned about this activism side and voted to change the name of the committee from social action committee to social awareness committee. The concern was that resulting activism might become too controversial.

As a young Christian and recognizing that I was being reformed by His Word, I could see that He was transforming me - if more slowly than I should have been. Nonetheless I personally was experiencing the power of God. He does change lives!

As a teacher in the public schools, I was seeing that it was the world system that was having its way with most everyone: the children, their parents, the teachers, the staff, the administration (I taught in four different public school systems before I left teaching in 1988).

I could clearly see that I need the Lord and that He transforms. I could see that people need the Lord. I could also see that the



world, through the influence of the evil one, was having its way.

I learned about spiritual warfare. I read about the spiritual equipment needed to stand against the wiles of the devil: the helmet of salvation, the sword of the Spirit - the Word of God, the breastplate of righteousness. I learned about all of this from Ephesians 6:10-19.

I learned that Christians are to be influencers and change agents of Christ. We are His workmanship.

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. [Ephesians 2:8-11]

I learned that we are to be the salt of the earth, and that if we aren't, the Christian influence will be trodden under foot of men. Christ's ways will be diminished, eradicated. [Matthew 5:13-15]

One key portion of my leading/calling stands out clearly. Due to my space limitation, I will give you the very abbreviated version.

As many of you know, God used AFA's founder Donald E. Wildmon significantly in my calling. One of his writings in his NFD Journal (now AFA Journal) impacted me years ago. It was entitled "And 300,000 pulpits were silent." The premise of it was that though Satan is attacking individuals, the home, community, state and nation, many pastors and churches don't preach against sin, leaving Christ-

ians oblivious to what is pleasing to God and what is not pleasing to Him, many were vulnerable to attacks of the evil one in regard to matters such as pornography, homosexuality, poor entertainment choices, gambling, abortion.

A portion of Dr. Wildmon's challenge:
"Today, 4000 innocent precious lives of unborn babies were snuffed out. Their arms and legs were torn from their bodies, their skulls crushed. One and one half million times each year our "civilized" society will take an innocent life.

And 300,000 pulpits are silent.

Six hundred thousand children, between the ages of 3 and 18, are involved in child pornography. Twenty thousand of them will disappear each year, never to be seen again.

And 300,000 pulpits are silent. ...

(This goes on through a litany of other concerning realities and picks up towards the end as follows:)

"What important matters are being dealt with in our churches?"

The church bulletin says there will be a meeting to plan the church-wide supper. We are raising money to put a new floor cover in the kitchen. (The old one doesn't match the new stove and refrigerator.) The sermon subject last Sunday was 'How to Have a Positive Attitude.' We are organizing a softball team."

Sometimes blasphemy comes unnoticed."

[Taken from NFD Journal, Dec. 1985]

You will note that this issue of Frontlines is strikingly void of specific calls to action. We have used this particular issue to give reminder of our call, mission, our desire for decency and to urge Christians to "pursue holiness without which no man shall see the Lord."

American Decency Frontline
Vol. XXIV, Issue XIII
Published monthly by
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