

American Decency Association

PO Box 202, Fremont, MI 49412 231-924-4050 www.americandecency.org

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

March 2012

Believing God

By R.C. Sproul, Jr.



We live in an age of spin and propaganda. We no longer weigh careful arguments and reach our conclusions judiciously. Instead, we inhabit what one cultural critic called a “sensate culture.” We do not think, we feel. We do not decide, we choose. We do not deliberate, we do. Our choices are made for us by the master manipulators. They tell us through images, through associations, but never through logic, what toothpaste we will use, what shoes we will wear, and what party we will vote for.

Consider, for a moment, our own self-image. Christians, in the West at least, tend to see themselves in terms of cultural trade-offs. We may not, we reason, be as smart as the unbelievers, but we are nicer. We may not be quite as sophisticated as

the unbelieving intellectual crowd, but we are cleaner. We may not read their highbrow authors, attend their ponderous films, or frequent their trendy galleries. But we read nice, clean historical romance novels, watch rapture-fever

movies, and have paintings of nice, warm cottages hanging over our mantels.

There is some truth to this self-image. After all, has not the apostle Paul told us, “For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things that are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Cor. 1:26–29 nkjv). For those of you keeping score, that’s us — we are the foolish, the weak, the ignoble, the despised.

We will never “cool” anyone into the kingdom.

Fools that we are, we sometimes seek to undo this arrangement. We look across the battlefield at the seed of the serpent. We see their sophistication, their wisdom, their nobility, their strength, and we seek to imitate them. We think that in order to win the debate, we need first to win their approval, to demonstrate to those outside the promises of God that we are just as together, just as hip as they are. We take our gnawing hunger for approval and baptize it, turning it into being “all things to all men” (1 Cor. 9:22).

We have need of two things. First, we must jettison this approach to winning the lost. We will never “cool” anyone into the kingdom. The more we pander to them, the more we persuade them that they are what really matters.

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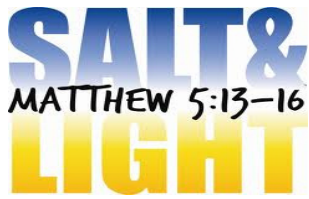
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The more we mimic them, the more they delight to see themselves in our mirror. The more we become like them, well, the more we become like them. We end up, as we seek to shine our own lights, under a bushel. We become savorless salt, good for nothing but being trodden underfoot.

Second, we need to have a better, more biblical understanding of those with whom we are dealing. The image shows us learned men and women, sitting in endowed chairs at prestigious universities. They have letters after their names. We pay tens of thousands of dollars a year to have our children listen to them. They appear on C-Span and PBS. They write for The New York Times Book Review, as well as writing books reviewed therein. They are graduates of elite universities, and now teach at elite universities. And God says that they are fools. The new atheists are, in the end, not

appreciably different from the old ones, of whom God said, “The fool has said in his heart, ‘There is no God’” (Ps. 14:1). Their image is power and glamour. The reality is that they are mouth-breathing, knuckle-dragging rubes.

We must do far less than trying to fit their image of what it means to be urbane, but we must do far more than merely believing in God. Instead, we are called to believe God.

We, when we enter into the arena of truth, are not facing Goliath. We are not coming face to face with the chariots of Pharaoh. Instead we do battle with frightened and foolish little children who already know what we are seeking to prove.

As Christians called to seek first the kingdom of God — to make known the glory, the power, and the beauty of the reign of Jesus Christ over all things - we must do far less than trying to fit their image of what

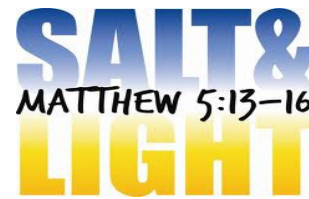
it means to be urbane, but we must do far more than merely believing in God. Instead, we are called to believe God. He is the one who says they are fools. He is the one who says that in Christ we are more than conquerors (Rom. 8:37). Our calling is to be as unmoved by their image as we are by their “arguments.” Both are mere folly.

Jesus told us to set our worries aside. Wherever we find ourselves, whether we are walking through the valley of the shadow of death or engaged in the battle of ideas on Mars Hill, we ought have no fear. He, after all, is with us, even unto the end of the age. Our calling is not to seek grand victories. He will not, after all, share His glory with another. Our calling is fundamentally simple — to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Then, and only then, will all these things be added unto us. May God grant wisdom to His fools, that by them more fools might be brought into His kingdom.

[Taken from Ligonier Ministries, *Tabletalk* August, 2008]

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