

# American Decency Association

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

Encouraging Christians to guard their hearts

October 2014

## How to Survive a Cultural Crisis

By: Mark Dever



Public opinion appears to be changing about same-sex marriage, as are the nation's laws. Of course this change is just one in a larger constellation. America's views on family, love, sexuality generally, tolerance, God, and so much more seems to be pushing in directions that put Bible-believing Christians on the defensive.

It's easy to feel like we've become the new "moral outlaws," to use Al Mohler's phrase. Standing up for historic Christian principles will increasingly get you in trouble socially and maybe economically, perhaps one day also criminally. It's ironic that Christians are told not to impose their views on others, even as the threat of job loss or other penalties loom over Christians for not toeing the new

party line.

In all this, Christians are tempted to become panicked or to speak as alarmists. But to the extent we do, to that same extent we show we've embraced an unbiblical and nominal Christianity. Here, then, are seven principles for surviving the very real cultural shifts we're presently enduring.

### 1. Remember that Churches Exist to Work for Supernatural Change.

The whole Christian faith is based on the idea that God takes people who are spiritually dead and gives them new life. Whenever we evangelize, we are evangelizing the cemetery.

There's never been a time or a culture when it was natural to repent of your sins. That culture doesn't exist, it hasn't existed, it never will exist. Christians, churches, and pastors especially must know deep in their bones that we've always been about a work that's supernatural. ...

### 2. Understand that Persecution is Normal.

... Persecution is what Christians face in this fallen world. It's what Jesus promised us (e.g., John 16). ...

One of my fellow pastors observed that, in the history of Christian persecution, it's often secondary issues—not the gospel—that elicit persecution. Persecutors don't say, "You believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ; I'm going to persecute you now." Rather, some belief or practice we maintain as Christians contradicts what people want or threatens their way of seeing the world. And so they oppose us. ...

Pastors especially should set the example in teaching their congregations not to play the victim. We should salt into our regular preaching and praying the normalcy of persecution. It's the leader's work to prepare churches for how we can follow Jesus, even if it means social criticism, or loss of privilege, or financial penalties, or criminal prosecution.

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### 3. Eschew Utopianism.

Christians should be a people of love and justice, and that means we should always strive to make our little corner of the globe a bit nicer than how we found it... But even as we work for the sake of love and justice, we must remember we're not going to transform this world into the kingdom of our Christ.

God hasn't commissioned us to make this world perfect; he's commissioned us chiefly to point to the One who will one day make it perfect, even as we spend our lives loving and doing good. ...

### 4. Make Use of Our Democratic Stewardship.

I would be sad if anyone concluded from my comments that it doesn't matter what Christians do publicly or with the state. Paul tells us to submit to the state. But in

our democratic context, part of submitting to the state means sharing in its authority. ... To neglect the democratic process, so long as it's in our hands, is to neglect a stewardship.

We cannot create Utopia, but that doesn't mean we cannot be good stewards of what we have, or that we cannot use the democratic processes to bless others. For the sake of love and justice, we should make use of our democratic stewardship.

### 5. Trust The Lord, Not Human Circumstances.

There's never been a set of circumstances Christians cannot trust God through. Jesus beautifully trusted the Father through the cross "for the joy set before him" (Heb. 12:2). Nothing you and I will face will amount to what our King had to suffer.

We can trust him. He will prove trustworthy through everything we might have to endure. And as we trust him, we will bear a beautiful testimony of God's goodness and power, and we will bring him glory.

### 6. Remember That

### Everything We Have Is God's Grace.

... We need to keep that perspective so that we aren't tempted to become too sour toward our employers, our friends, our family members, and our government when they oppose us.

How was Paul able to sing in prison? He knew that of which he'd been forgiven. He knew the glory that awaited him. He perceived and prized these greater realities.

### 7. Rest In The Certainty Of Christ's Victory.

The gates of hell will not prevail against the church of Jesus Christ. We need not fear and tremble as if Satan has finally, after all these millennia, gained the upper hand in his opposition to God through the same-sex marriage lobby. ...

Christ's kingdom is in no danger of failing. ... We may not be able to out-argue others. ... But we can love them with the supernatural love God has shown to us in Christ.

[Mark Dever, [www.thegospel-coalition.org/article/how-to-survive-a-cultural-crisis](http://www.thegospel-coalition.org/article/how-to-survive-a-cultural-crisis)]



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