

Truth or Consequences

Slide –

We're going to do a little bit of TV trivia. A quick question.

Slide - I think everyone here has heard or seen the program called The Price Is Right with Drew Carey.

Anybody know who was before Drew Carey? Drew Carey, 2007, who was before Drew Carey?

Slide - Bob Barker, you remember Bob Barker. Now, this is for your oldies.

What show did Bob Barker host before he hosted The Price Is Right, anybody know? - Truth or Consequences.

Truth or Consequences, you know that program was funnier than the present one, because it asked contestants certain questions.

And if they didn't know the answers, you know, or the truth, they would have to suffer the consequences.

And the consequences usually had something to do with getting a pie in the face, or some other silly thing that would happen.

So, you're always afraid of the consequences, something that would happen.

Well, on a more serious note, I was reminded of the title of this old show a while back as I read through the Book of Judges, in the Old Testament.

And in the Book of Judges, I read that the Jews seemed to have played this game with God, but with much more deadly results than on the TV show.

The Book of Judges tells the story of the early successes that the Jews had as they obeyed the truth that God had given them in commands and instructions through Moses.

Slide - **Jews settled the land** that had been given to them by God.

Jews conquered the nations that opposed them and they took over already established cities.

Didn't have to build anything, it was already built.

And of course, **Jews grew in population and prospered** in wealth and in power.

However, the time eventually came when they turned away from this path of truth and as the writer says in

Slide - Judges 21:25, he writes, "In those days, there was no king in Israel. Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

Interesting, the writer uses this expression here, "Everybody did what was right in his own eyes," in order to explain the reason for the troubles that were taking place in the land at that time.

Well, today believe or not there is a parallel between the attitude and the trouble of those times and the times that we are living in today.

And suggest some ways that we might make an effort to turn things around.

Now, the truth that Israel lived by was that they followed the commands of God diligently, and they were blessed because of this.

In Deuteronomy Chapter 11: 26, Moses states that God laid before the people the law of blessing and cursing, and it was very simple.

Slide - If they obeyed and remained faithful to Him and to the truth, he would bless them in the land that he had given them.

But then, if they disobeyed him and followed other gods, other truths, then he would curse them. Very simple.

That's why they called it the law of blessing and cursing. You obey me, I'll bless you.

You disobey me, I will curse you.

Well, the writer in the Book of Judges describes in part some of the consequences, or curses, that they had to endure because they wandered away from the truth.

The story of their unfaithfulness begins to unfold early in the book as Israel fails to completely obey God's command to totally wipe out the pagan tribes living in the region.

Slide - So, their first step away from God was their **failure to conquer the pagan influences** around them.

And I read very briefly in Chapter 1:27-28.

Slide - It says, "But Manasseh did not take possession of Beth-shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villages, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, "or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages.

Slide - So, the Canaanites persisted in living in that land. It came about when Israel became strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but they did not drive them out completely."

And so, the book goes on to record how God rebuked them for this failure and how this disobedience came back to haunt them as the pagan religions took root in their country and then began to seduce the Jews into idolatry.

The very reason that God had said, "You needed to wipe them out. "They will draw you in to their idolatry," and that's exactly what took place.

Slide - **Then the idolatry became rampant in their nation.**

This idolatry grew until the entire nation was polluted and was nearly overthrown by the very people they had been sent to conquer, the Canaanites and the Moabites.

God saved them from being totally defeated by providing leaders, people like Deborah, for example, and Barak.

Slide - And then, we see that the **idolatry persisted** in the land.

Even though they were saved militarily, the Jews continued to practice various forms of idolatry and were punished by God for it by being overrun by neighboring armies.

For example, the Midianites, who were finally defeated by Gideon, but not before inflicting serious harm to their economy.

To the Jewish economy. Yeah people were killed and things happened, but it's their economy that took a big hit.

You see God knows how to hit and hurt a nation. You hurt them in their economy.

This cycle persists as God continuously sends leaders to bail out the Jews out of trouble with other nations as well as internal struggles for power among individuals.

Slide - And then, you have the, the final stage of this disobedience, and that is a **complete moral breakdown.**

Of course, one of the most attractive features of the pagan religions was their complete absence of moral standards.

I mean, they practiced human sacrifice. They included all kinds of sexual debauchery in their religious ceremonies.

It was inevitable that this lack of moral direction in religious affairs would eventually begin to bear fruit in the general conduct of the society on a day-to-day basis, and that's exactly what happened.

And so, as we read the later Chapters of the Book of Judges, we see evidence of this degradation.

Slide - We find out that they begin to invent their own religion and they have their own religious leaders.

There was rape and murder. Chapter 19 talks about this.

In Chapter 20, we see they begin to have war among themselves.

They're not fighting others; they're fighting among themselves now.

And then in Chapter 21, we see that they kidnap women to replace wives who had been killed in battle.

And so, the nation that had been freed from slavery through tremendous miracles, and they were given a rich land to inhabit, were now without unity and direction, and why?

Well first of all, they no longer obeyed God, their king, and they had no human king to lead them.

And they each had their own standard.

They lived by their own truth and their own rules, and they sought only their own welfare.

Slide - This is why the author ends the Book of Judges with the words, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes."

Well in many ways, our society today resembles the Jewish society of that day.

Of course, not technologically, or anything like that, but in many moral ways we do.

Now if the only way to measure success was money and wealth, our society today would be the most successful one in history.

Slide - I mean, unemployment is below 4%. you never get to zero percent, that's impossible.

So, when you're down to 3%, 3.5%, that's almost like zero unemployment.

Our economy is better than it has been for the last 50 years.

And America is the most powerful nation in the world, and no other nation can match it.

We know that. But the wealth of a nation doesn't necessarily measure the health of a nation.

A billionaire, for example, can have a billion dollars in the bank, but if he has terminal brain cancer, that billion dollar means nothing to him.

Slide - In a book entitled "When Nations Die," author Jim Nelson Black researched the 10 greatest empires and nations in history in order to learn what were the major causes of their fall.

In every instance, he concluded that the internal immorality that they were subjected to was the major contributing factor in the decline of every great nation in history.

Isn't that amazing?

The point here, it seems to me that the Law of Blessing and Cursing is at work for all nations, because whenever any nation strays too far away from God's basic commands, they just don't continue. They don't survive.

It would seem to me that **this** basic lesson should not be lost on the nation that we live in today.

Slide - Yes. America is wealthy, but America is not very healthy.

If you don't believe me, note the striking similarities between our nation in 2019 and the nation of the Jews that we read about some 3,000 years ago.

Here's some similarities.

Slide - First of all, they had immoral leadership.

Well in many ways, we have **leadership today that condones and even celebrates immoral behavior.**

The Jews accepted and practiced sexual immorality attached to pagan religions they were drawn to, and we on our part have leaders, I mean all kinds of leaders.

We have governors and senators and people who lead in this nation.

We have leaders who condone and actually pass laws that protect and celebrate sexual behavior that God forbids and labels as sinful and as an abomination.

Imagine, God says this sexual practice here is an abomination, and this public leader over here openly celebrates what God calls an abomination.

I mean, eventually, something's got to give.

Somebody in that situation is going to win, and somebody is going to lose, and you know what, I don't think it's God that's going to lose.

Some Jews burn their own babies as offerings to the pagan god Molek, and we find that horrifying.

And yet today, our nation aborts about 2,000 babies a day. And our laws permit it and protect it and promote it.

We have marches in the street demanding the right to kill babies.

The Jews didn't see the threat that their behavior was causing them to be under, just as the rising number of people in our country see absolutely no problem in the degradation of our moral fabric and the risk that this poses to our welfare.

It's not just that it would be nice if we were a more moral people.

I'm saying to you that it'd be a question of survival that we be a more morally responsible people.

Slide - Another similarity: relativism.

We live in a society that believes, for the major part, that says, what's good for me is okay.

Leading philosophers and educators are promoting the idea that there is no absolute right or wrong, no rules, and no one has a right to impose their moral standards on everyone else, or anyone else.

In the United States, we live by our standard, right? Doesn't this sound a lot like Judges 21:25, where it says, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes"?

Brothers and sisters, I'm not making this stuff up.

I mean, this sermon writes itself.

Immoral leadership and relativism as the social currency of a nation is leading this country to spiritual bankruptcy.

If you don't believe me, just look closely at what is happening around us.

Slide - Thousands of religions and semi-religious groups have sprung up in the last century, most of which deny Christ or the authority of God's Word.

Dishonesty and duplicity in business and government as well as the court system,

That breeds **contempt for the Rule of Law**, which is the principle that holds this country together.

But when leaders see themselves as exempt from the Rule of Law, the breakdown of society is not far away.

Slide - Acceptance of sexual perversity as normal, even protected by law, has decreased our moral standards to an all-time low position.

Morality has never, ever been at a lower position in this nation than it is today.

Slide - Social strife among the races and the sexes, among families, among those who have different political ideology has created an adversarial society that has trouble living in peace even though we have the richest nation in history.

That's the irony. We are the richest nation in history, but we can't get along.

The point I'm trying to make with all of this is the following:

Slide - the failure to obey God and live accordingly to his eternal immutable principles for what is right and wrong will bring the same results in every generation whether it be the Jews 3,000 years ago or ourselves in the America of the 21st century.

Do not doubt me on that idea.

If they fell then because of their disobedience, we can fall now for the very same reasons.

There is a solution.

There is another similarity between them and us, and that is that there is a solution to the problem, a way to avoid a downfall.

The solution, however, begins by fixing the primary errors, not by trying to wipe out the consequences.

For example, you don't wipe out poverty by giving the poor money. No, education and training is what's needed.

That's what helps eliminate poverty.

You go to the root of the problem, not the consequences created by the problem.

The solution to our national downward turn requires a change in two areas.

Slide - Number one, people must turn back to God.

I mean, you'd expect a preacher to say that in a sermon.

The difference here is that it's not just something that fits into a sermon.

It's something that has to happen in reality in order to avoid the disaster that we're heading towards as a society.

The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Jesus must once again be the God of the USA.

This was the salvation of the Jews, and this is the ultimate salvation of our nation as well.

We must begin the process by making Him the God of our own lives and our own laws and homes first.

We must preach the gospel and turn the people back to the Lord one at a time.

"Man are you kidding me? "We're barely 20 people on a rainy day "Floral City America.

"What difference are we going to make?" One at a time, brothers and sisters, one at a time. One at a time.

We must resist every effort to remove God's honor and influence wherever and whenever we can.

Whether it be by using the ballot box or writing letters, we must not allow godless men or women to rule over our cities, our states, our schools.

The seeds for much of the immorality and disbelief that we see today were sown several hundred years ago by thinkers and writers in Europe.

In the same way, the seeds of renewed faith and obedience can be, and need to be, sown today.

The final results may not happen in your lifetime, my lifetime, but the first signs of a change may occur if you begin in your lifetime, in your own home, or in your community, or in your school.

Turning the nation to God can only be done if the people of God point the way.

If we don't do it, who else will?

Slide - The second part of the solution: establish God's Word as the standard.

It seems like a fairly simple equation, doesn't it?

Ever since prayer and the Bible have been systematically removed from homes and schools and government, there has been a gradual decline of morals.

I mean, that's a proven fact, simple observation. You have a 15-year-old kid that has never been taught, "Thou shall not kill." Never been taught that.

What does he do when he gets the notion that he's angry, he's upset, he's alone, he's fearful, he gets a gun and goes to school, and in his mind, his mind says, "Why not?"

And there's nothing in his mind that says, "Because God says thou shalt not kill.

"And you will be held accountable. His mind only says, "Why not?"

I know I'm simplifying it, but if you don't teach God's laws to children, they'll do whatever seems right in their own minds at the time.

The answer, of course, is to return God's Word to these places.

Slide - Might seem like a pipe dream, but it begins by bringing the Word back into the home.

If God's Word is to be the standard for the nation, it must first be the standard for the home.

Parents need to read it and teach it to their children, and live by its direction.

Christians must demonstrate the merits of living by God's Word **as proof that it actually works.**

Slide - And we need to bring the Word back to society.

We have an entire generation who have not even heard God's Word, let alone understood how to live by its standard.

We've got to get the Word out of the church building into the hearts of the people.

We need to share it with our friends and family, as well as others using even today's technology.

I mean, why is it... Why is it that an old guy standing behind a lectern simply teaching the Bible, period, no bells, no whistles, no showbiz, no flashing lights, nothing, just an old bald guy teaching the Bible chapter after chapter manages to get four million views on YouTube? 250,000 visits a month.

How does that happen? I'll tell you how that happens.

That happens because people are hungry to hear God's Word being taught in a simple fashion, period.

Whatever method is effective so that people can hear the Word.

Why? Because the Bible says faith comes by hearing, and hearing the words of Christ, Romans 10:17.

Let society hear the Word, and use whatever influence we have to put into office from the lowest to the highest men and women who respect God's Word.

We might not be able to agree on every point that they think about the Word and we think about, of course.

I mean, you get 50 people, you'll get 50 different ideas.

But at least if we're all coming from the Word, we have an opportunity to make serious changes in our society.

God's Word was removed by people in power who didn't believe it.

Brothers and sisters, it can be put back by electing officials who do believe it.

Many people who are against Christ, unbelievers who reject God's Word, are quick to say that Christians are harmful to society because of their faith.

Of course, they always neglect to review the record of social decline that has taken place on their watch.

How good have you done on your watch, you who do not believe in prayer, you who do not believe in God, you who do not believe in God's Word?

How much success have you had to raise up this nation morally? Not much.

Slide - What we want to do is bring it back to the point where it is a nation whose law and personal conduct are once again based on God's Word.

Well, it's been a long lesson since we started with Bob Barker. Anybody remember the title? Truth or Consequences.

Now the reason I gave it this title is because it summarizes in three words what I've tried to explain the last half hour.

Slide - Truth or consequence, very simply, is this: if we don't live by God's truth, we will suffer the consequences.

Simple as that. Whether we are Jews living in the Middle East 3,000 years ago or Americans living in the USA in the year 2019, or even a single individual living here in Floral City, America,

the return of a nation is slow, and it requires the effort of many over a long period.

But it is possible we only have to begin with ourselves.

And the return of a person is also possible if that person realizes that today, today is the day of salvation and restoration.

So, I ask any who is here, is this the day for you? Is this the day that you face truth or consequences?

Avoid the consequences of sin and disbelief.

I encourage anyone here today to come to Christ and wash away your guilt in the waters of baptism.

Come if you need a restoration or prayer for any need, and I encourage us as a church, as individuals that make up this church, to be sensitive to the idea that within our powers of prayer and our power to share our Word, we can be an agent for change that changes this entire nation into a nation that once again is under God, not only on a coin, but under God in our hearts, and in our minds, and in our spirits.

If you need to respond to today's invitation, then I do encourage you to come forward now as James leads us in our song of encouragement.

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