

When God Dies?

Kenneth Westbrook

When God Dies?

Copyright © 2023, Kenneth Westbrook

All rights are reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced in any form without written permission of the publisher, except in brief quotations in articles or reviews.

Bible quotations are from different Bible versions. An abbreviation follows each quotation to indicate the particular version.

Dedication

This book is dedicated to Linda, my sweet and faithful wife of fifty-nine years, and my children: David Westbrook and Angie Dennis, and their families.

Appreciation

A special word of appreciation to Tiffany McRee and Melissa Westbrook for their assistance in editing.

Contents

Most Important Life Decision 1

Is God Dead? 7

Need for a Strong Moral Core 12

The Surge of Atheism Error! Bookmark not defined.

Our Post-Christian World Error! Bookmark not defined.

Consequences of God is Dead Error! Bookmark not defined.

The Fundamental Culprit Error! Bookmark not defined.

Worldviews Make a Difference Error! Bookmark not defined.

Vacuum Invites -isms Error! Bookmark not defined.

Wokeism Error! Bookmark not defined.

Liberal Theology Error! Bookmark not defined.

A Brief Theology Error! Bookmark not defined.

God and Disobedient Nations Error! Bookmark not defined.

Living with a Reality Error! Bookmark not defined.

Healing our Divide Error! Bookmark not defined.

Final Word Error! Bookmark not defined.

ENDNOTES 26

Forward

The death of God has been a theological notion of many for many years. Ken Westbrook has delved into this idea in his book, "When God Dies"? Utilizing his pen as a surgeon uses his scalpel, he cuts layers of assumption away from the concept of God's death. He allows the reader to grasp the theory of such false theology through truth. We Christians are not incidental to the debate; we are essential. We wake up every day to what has been going on for ages. Probably more attention has been given to the search for truth than all concerns. We must not only believe the truth but boldly declare and consistently demonstrate it daily. Westbrook has taken such a stand.

Believers in Christ, acknowledging Him as the Savior and Lord of life, should refrain from fretting over present challenges, and instead, confidently declare that the world's only hope rests in the fact that God is Alive! Everything seen and not seen is the work of our Heavenly Father. He made it and still controls it. This book will assist in our witness and walk. We will have great joy as the author lets us study and meditate on the great truth: God is alive and in control. When you finish the book, you will be wiser and more robust in your faith. Any choice minus God is a great mistake!

Dr. John Sullivan retired
Executive Director-Treasurer
Florida Baptist Convention

Chapter 1

Most Important Life Decision

What is life all about? The key to wisdom is not learning facts that can be regurgitated but learning to ask questions, important questions, fundamental questions.

"Alfi," a song written by Burt Bacharach and Hal David in 1965 and recorded by numerous celebrities of that time, asks a fundamental question about life.

What's it all about, Alfie
Is it just for the moment we live

What's it all about
When you sort it out, Alfie
Are we meant to take more than we give
Or are we meant to be kind?

And if, if only fools are kind, Alfie
Then I guess it is wise to be cruel
And if life belongs only to the strong, Alfie
What will you lend on an old golden rule?

As sure as I believe there's a heaven above
Alfie, I know there's something much more

The song reveals that love is the “much more” that life is about. While this is true at some level, it is not a full answer. The most important question of this song is “What’s it all about?” What is life all about? Get the answer wrong and nothing else matters much.

The question may be better stated, What’s the purpose of human life? What’s the purpose of my life? Who or what determines that purpose?

When God Dies?

Your answers, if you wholeheartedly believe, will shape your life, your sense of success or failure, your accomplishments, your relationships, and your worldview.

This is the question of the past one hundred and sixty-four years (publication of Darwin's book *On the Origin of Species*). Many think the answer is settled; science has spoken and can rationally explain how without cause, from nonliving matter, life sprang up, reproduced itself, and evolved to the vast complexity we see around us each day. It was a theory then and remains a theory. This theory leaves man without meaning and significance except what he is able to cobble together from his own imagination. It leaves him to create his own sense of right and wrong and has led to various philosophies and ethical standards of life's purpose.

The other perspective is that God created mankind according to the Biblical record in Genesis. He created mankind in His own image with capacities above all other creations. Being in His image, mankind was given free will so we could have a meaningful relationship with Him. This view gives man purpose, value, and meaning that allows Him to love and thus desire to obey and please God, his creator. This truth is the basis for all morality.

Before we go further let me define a few things. In this book, where I use the word *God*, I do so to refer to the God of the Bible, the Creator, Sustainer, and ultimate Savior—the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. There are and have been many gods from the mythical Greek and Roman gods to the gods of the Indigenous Peoples of America and Australia as well as a host of others. When I use the word atheist, I mean those who deny the existence of God as I defined above; the only true God.

I cannot overstate the importance of the decision. The answer to “What’s life all about” begins with a choice of creation or evolution.

Modern philosophical thought would have you believe God is Dead; that God does not exist and has never existed. Western culture has been actively led in this direction for the last one hundred and sixty years by the media, academia, science, law, politics, and liberal theology. So, it's important to examine the aftermath of such a direction.

Let me try to illustrate the consequences of this decision

It is like the difference between belonging to a kingdom and being a citizen of a democracy. The Bible speaks about belonging to the kingdom of God. In America today we know little about living in a kingdom. In a democracy, an inhabitant is called a citizen with benefits from the government and responsibilities to the government unless he is a legal, temporary, foreign resident. In a kingdom, an inhabitant is a subject of the king and lives under the sovereign rule of the king. By sovereign rule, I mean the king has absolute power and control. The king provides benefits to the subject and expects personal allegiance from the subject.

As a Christian I not only believe that God exists, but I also subject myself to the spiritual authority and power of Jesus Christ. When I became a Christian, I gave up ownership of myself and surrendered to the ownership of Jesus Christ. I recognize that, as His subject, my role is to serve, worship, honor, and revere Him. My joy is to please Him through obedience; the meaning of my life is found in Him. I have peace through faith that He loves me, gave Himself for me, and will guide me through the most meaningful life possible on this planet. And when life is over here, I will spend eternity with Him. As a citizen of the U.S.A., I loyally serve, support, and love my country but with ultimate allegiance to Jesus Christ. Where the U.S. culture or laws clash with the teachings of Christ, I will follow Christ.

I cannot speak as an atheist, but my assumption is that everything I said in the paragraph above is absurd to him and the reverse

When God Dies?

of his understanding of his life. The atheist is left to figure things out on his own. He must choose or create meaning for his life. His goal in life may be money, power, prestige, fame, or accomplishments; if he fails to find meaning, his life to him is meaningless. He is his own authority or he can choose to submit to any philosophy he chooses. He can define his own ethics and morality. He can believe that his life is totally about himself, "I did it my way." Or he can choose valiantly to serve his fellow man. He can say with poet William Ernest Henley, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul." He is free to modify his worldview in any way, anytime he chooses. He has no assurance of life after death and can only see death as the end of his suffering and trouble.

The Christian and the atheist must live with the consequences of their choice. Someone said, "Choices have consequences." This is true both for the individual and for the culture in which we live. Sometimes consequences are predictable; in a broad sense that is true for the choice between a belief in God and secularism.

I admit I painted the difference between Christian and atheist with a broad brush. You may be thinking my definition of a Christian is so strong that it excludes many professing Christians who would define their relationship in much milder terms. The Bible indicates that the way is narrow, "Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." Matthew 7:13-14 ESV

Luke defines a disciple (a follower of Christ) this way, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." KJV Modern translations sometimes use "let go of" to translate the word "hate."

A person is not born a Christian; they cannot inherit Christianity from their parents; they cannot become a Christian against their will; all Christians must make a conscious and deliberate decision to become a Christian through faith in Jesus Christ and commit to Him as Lord and Savior. Until that happens Christ awaits their decision.

Although a person must make a personal decision to become a Christian, obviously others can influence the decision through lifestyle and persuasion.

The reason a person cannot inherit their parent's faith is that each person must believe the Gospel (good news). Before a person can believe, he must have heard the Gospel, understood it, and finally wholeheartedly believed to the point of committing his life to it. The Gospel means "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures." I Corinthians 15:3-4. KJV The gospel is simple enough for a child to understand and receive. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you," he said, 'Unless you turn and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'" CSB

So, we all enter the world as atheists or at least agnostic. When a person is old enough to understand and comprehend the gospel, they can express their faith in Christ and commit their lives to Him. To reach that age and never to have heard or understood the gospel by default makes one an atheist or agnostic.

Being an atheist does not make a person bad, unethical, or mean, nor does it make them a good person. So, what is the difference between a Christian and an atheist? The Christian—because of their wholehearted belief that God exists, that Christ died and rose again for their sins, and their commitment to follow him as Lord of their lives—puts an ethical and moral burden on them to live according to the teaching of Christ and the Bible as a whole. Satan tempts and sometimes believers yield to it. But when the

When God Dies?

believer confesses, God forgives and restores their connection. Faith enables a relationship between God and the believer through Jesus Christ. The relationship grows stronger and more significant through life experiences and the application of Biblical truth.

The atheist is no better than the ethical and moral code he chooses to take and the extent to which he remains loyal to it. There is no inherent reason for an atheist to choose high moral standards. The Christian is more likely to believe that homosexual lifestyle is wrong because the Bible clearly teaches that. The atheist, however, can choose to think of it as morally equivalent to a heterosexual lifestyle and experience no guilt at all.

So, this is where the differences become difficult. Christians will most likely hew close to the line according to Biblical teachings and feel guilt when they violate those teachings. However, for atheists, Biblical morality and teachings about sin and moral failure are irrelevant. If they violate them, they experience no guilt at all and may even feel morally superior in the process. For the atheists, in their worldview, God doesn't exist and the Bible is a myth—irrelevant (inapplicable, not important); many feel a need to challenge the assertions of Christianity.

Chapter 2

Is God Dead?

The “God is Dead” theology was a movement that went public on April 8, 1966, when Time magazine published what became one of its biggest-selling issues. The cover simply asked, in large red letters over a black background surrounded by a wide red border, *Is God Dead?* The cover story, written by John T. Elson, explained the ideas of a crop of young theologians who were raising Cain in American seminaries by proclaiming, in the words of Friedrich Nietzsche, "God is dead!"¹

The decade of the 1960s was a turbulent time. I will list some of the highlights:

Nov. 8, 1960 J F Kennedy was elected president

April 17, 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba

Aug. 18, 1965 March on Washington

Nov. 22, 1963 Assassination of John F. Kennedy

July 2, 1964 Civil Rights Act passed

Aug. 7, 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed

Aug. 6, 1965, The Voting Rights Act passed

Aug. 1965 five-day Watts riot saw 34 people die and a thousand injured

April 8, 1966 Time Magazine published the article, “Is God Dead?”

Jun 30, 1966 the National Organization of Women was established

When God Dies?

Aug. 1966 Riots in Detroit, 43 deaths

April 4, 1968 Assassination of Martin Luther King, riots broke out in over 120 cities including Chicago and Washington

April 19, 1968 Musical HAIR debuted on Broadway, with nudity

June 5, 1968 Assassination of Robert Kennedy

June 30, 1968 Tet Offensive in Vietnam

Aug. 5, 1968 Election of Richard Nixon President

The 1960s was a decade marked by the hippie movement, the sexual revolution, recreational drug use, especially LSD, and the rise of the Jesus Freaks. During all the social upheaval, the race to beat the Soviet Union to the moon sparked massive growth and innovation in electronic technology.

During those 10 years, I finished high school, got married, did four years of college, and three years of seminary, and my wife and I were blessed with a son. I ended the decade as a pastor of a church in Florida. It was a lot to live through.

During the 1960s I didn't give much thought to the cultural implications of all the happenings around me. I focused primarily on a local congregation of believers and their daily struggles. Looking back, I can understand it better.

The "God is Dead" movement of the 1960s has not died.

April 15, 2022, the New York Times published an op-ed piece, *In This Time of War, I Propose We Give Up God*. The author, Shalom Auslander, wrote, "Perhaps now is a good time to teach our children to pass over God — to be as unlike him as possible." The article ironically was published during Easter and Passover. He charges God as being cruel and hateful for killing the firstborn of Egypt so Pharaoh would allow the Jews to escape to the Promised Land.

Our country is in a desperate place right now and it has been that way for quite a while. We are divided. Let me quote from the Pew Research website.

Americans are in a negative mood about the current state of the country, with large majorities expressing dissatisfaction with the economy and overall national conditions. And when they look toward the not-too-distant future, they see a country that in many respects will be worse than it is today, according to a new Pew Research Center survey.

Sizable majorities of U.S. adults say that in 2050 – just over 25 years away – the U.S. economy will be weaker, the United States will be less important in the world, political divisions will be wider and there will be a larger gap between the rich and the poor. Far fewer adults predict positive developments in each of these areas.

And when Americans reflect on the country's *past*, the present looks worse by comparison. Around six in ten (58%) say that life for people like them is worse today than it was 50 years ago, according to the survey, which was conducted from March 27 to April 2 [2023]. ²

You may not trust opinion polls. In many cases over the past few years, they have been criticized for inaccuracies. How can they claim to know what the entire country thinks when they ask the opinions of only two thousand or so people, with confidence intervals of 2 to 4 percentage points, and then broadcast the results to the nation?

A few years ago, I asked the same question to a friend who happened to be an expert in opinion polling. He explained that it is like tasting lemonade. First, you squeeze the lemon into the water and add sugar. Next, you stir and taste. You don't have to drink half the contents to get an idea if it is sweetened correctly or not. After you stir thoroughly all you need is a sip to know how the rest of the

When God Dies?

drink tastes. And he told me it's like that in the science of opinion polling. You have to obtain a truly random sampling of the population to know what the whole thinks at the moment; it is like sipping lemonade.

The key to the accuracy of opinion polling is the random sample. If the sample is skewed, the results will also be skewed and inaccurate. Before the advent of cell phones, it was easier to obtain a truly random sample of the American population because nearly everyone's names and numbers were listed in a phonebook. A computer could take a long list of phone numbers known to be active and arrange them in a scientifically random order. A pollster would then call a couple of thousand individuals and question them to gauge their opinions or beliefs on a given matter. The pollster could then be reasonably confident, within a small margin of error, about what the United States population thought as a whole. This process relied on the theory that individuals would answer truthfully as long as they believed their responses would remain anonymous.

With social media, cell phones, burner phones, and a host of other technical matters, it is not easy to get a true randomized list anymore. The sampling can get more complex. If you want the sampling to have certain amounts of people of different political stripes, ethnic origins, incomes, or ages, the list can get complicated in a hurry. If a pollster wanted to skew the results, he simply skews the sample called.

So as much as we hate polling, they do give us a snapshot of America's opinions for a moment in time. And now the polling I referred to above is showing that people are not hopeful for the future and are not satisfied with the present.

But you may say, "I don't need a poll to tell me that our country is in trouble and more trouble going forward. The political landscape is corrupt, and the economic system is not helping the middle class, let alone the poorer class. The southern border is in crisis,

drug addiction is claiming numerous lives, crime is on the rise due to police defunding and no-cost bails, and issues like child trafficking are causing immense concern.

My purpose in this book is not to solve all the problems overnight. My hope is to point to the primary reason for all the problems. Without admitting the problem, the solution is impossible to know. When you peel back the onion, you will find this one cause fundamental to all the other divisions. Vivek Ramaswamy is running in the Republican Primary to be the Republican candidate for president of the U.S.A. He says he is running to restore the core identity of the U.S.A. By that he means we have lost the meaning of who we are, why we exist as a nation, and what America is all about. He uses the word revival in his statement of purpose for running. By *revival*, he means to bring back the unity, identity, and purpose of the nation of a former time—better, more appealing, more legitimate.

I agree that our moral core is deteriorating, rotting away. However, I don't think there is a political solution or an economic solution. Our problem is that we have lost our moral and spiritual *identity* (to use Ramaswamy's term). Generally, we don't agree about what is right and wrong. We don't agree about who we are or why we exist as individual persons or as a nation. The forces of liberalism, progressivism, and wokeism have created a cultural confusion.

The culprit...atheism. As atheism has increased in the culture, the moral core has become confused, divided, weaker, and disorganized—schizoid. As more people believe that God is dead—irrelevant—the more divided and less cohesive the culture becomes. When God dies (the belief that he does not exist) in the hearts and minds of a significant number of people, the less able we are as a culture to function in a wholesome and helpful way.

Chapter 3

Need for a Strong Moral Core

Let me use the solar system as an analogy to our culture. At the very center, the sun exerts tremendous gravitational strength to hold all the diverse planets and their moons in their orbits. The planets vary in size, distance from the sun, and composition, with some having rings, some being gaseous, some rocky, and some icy. They have one thing in common, the sun and its gravity. What if the sun's gravitational force gradually relaxed to zero? It is obvious; the planets and the entire solar system would fly outward and go their own merry way until captured by another gravitational force that could hold them in orbit.

Visualize our culture in a similar way. Let the sun represent our common cultural core: beliefs, values, and principles. I am talking about freedom, democracy, all the rights in the Constitution, all the principles in the Declaration of Independence as well as common moral responsibilities based on principles founded upon Judeo-Christian belief in God.

Our Declaration of Independence states, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." So, a belief in God as Creator is at the heart of the founding of our nation. The Declaration of Independence expresses our right to exist and asserts that those rights come from God, not government. This was the broad cultural understanding at the beginning of our country. The laws of the land do not hold us together, it was a common belief that we existed as people and as a nation because of our Creator.

Let the planets represent subcultures: different languages, different religions, and different styles of music, etc. The solar system would represent our functioning structure. The sun losing its gravitational power represents our moral core beliefs fading away. When our common core principles, beliefs, and values are no more, there is nothing to hold the nation together. The results are predictable.

Our country can tolerate a lot of multiculturalism as long as we share a common moral core. But when we think that the basic core is up for re-evaluation, re-definition, re-thinking, and re-design, the country is in trouble.

Here is the point, our country has been starved of the knowledge of God or respect for Him. By *starved* I mean that at one time there was general support for the Christian faith in the culture. A person unfamiliar with the Bible and its teachings was considered uneducated. Prayer was offered in schools, the Bible could be read in public schools, prayer could be offered at high school football games, and unchristian speech was not appreciated or tolerated in movies and other media. Today, if you dare speak about what the Bible teaches in Romans chapter 1, you will face cancelation. If you express your Christian views on abortion, use incorrect pronouns, or advocate for Nativity Scenes or crosses on public property, your job or promotion may be at risk. Freedom of speech for Christians seems to be a thing of the past.

I grew up in the 1950s when the culture was, to my recollection, very different. The Ten Commandments were a guiding part of the culture. A framed poster of the Ten Commandments would likely have been found in public school classrooms as well as courtrooms across the nation. Professing atheists were a minority. Madalyn Murray O'Hair was one of the most notorious and outspoken. She became notorious by being involved in the School District of Abington Township, *Pennsylvania, et al. v. Schempp et al* where the court found it unconstitutional for a public school to require Bible reading

When God Dies?

in a classroom. At the time, four other states had similar statutes that required Bible reading in public schools.

The fact that this court decision was handed down in 1963 is some indication of the state of the culture at the time. Christianity had been embedded in the culture for a long time and was the de facto religion of America. However, atheists were on the move and using the legal system to accomplish their purposes; the court decision mentioned above probably would not have been passed by any legislative body at the time. So obviously, the Ten Commandments as well as all religious prayers at football games and other such practices, as a result of the court decree, were likewise deemed unconstitutional and remain matters of contention.

Over time, the rejection and, in many instances, outright defiance of the Ten Commandments indicate how our culture has discarded the most powerful moral laws for self-governance in favor of self-worship and Humanism. Let's take a quick look at the Ten Commandments and you judge if they still have much moral impact on the general culture of America.

Commandment # 1, You shall have no other Gods before me.

The Humanist Manifestos clearly replace God of the Bible rejecting revealed truth in preference for the rational thinking of mankind; science is the preferred way to determine the truth of all matters. The Bible is no longer thought of as holding truth for the general welfare. I will address the Humanist Manifestos later.

God has been pushed from the conscience of American culture for decades. Politicians may proclaim that they are a people of faith, but to specify that their faith is in God or Jesus is a rarity. Days that magnify His name are diminished; Christmas is all about Santa Claus, Easter is all about the bunny, and Sunday is just another day. When Thanksgiving is celebrated, God is seldom the object of the thanks giving; people have no one to offer thanks to, so

they are just glad about whatever they have that is important to them.

Commandment # 2, Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven images.

The gods worshiped today—materialism, secularism, atheism—are difficult to depict as graven images. The materialist surrounds himself with stuff he collects and loves. In a sense he worships stuff. The idols that replace God in our culture can be stuff: the boat, the motorhome, the mountain cabin, the lake house, or the condo in the Caribbean.

Instead of graven images, the reflection in the mirror may be an accurate representation of the modern god, the worship of self, and everything pertaining to it.

Instead of graven images, modern intellectuals create new ways of thinking and acting and pronounce them as new moral values that everyone is expected to obey. It's called political correctness. This correctness replaces the demands of the Biblical Ten Commandments.

Commandment # 3, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.

This admonition was enforced in public schools in my teenage years. If a student was heard taking the name of God in vain, he would be punished by being separated from the class or sent home. It was disrespectful of God and degraded God in the eye of man. Today, it would be considered normal speech. Today, if a child disrespected another person, for example, by using an ethnic slur, he would receive appropriate chastisement and possible expulsion from school. Our culture has removed God as the focus of life and placed it on man; humanism. Culture deems it okay to disrespect God, but how dare you offend a person? It is said to be offensive and is a detestable sin of Humanism. In God's eyes, all humans are to be respected.

When God Dies?

Commandment # 4, Remember the Sabbath day and keep it Holy.

In my teenage years, I recall an occasion in our church that playing softball on Sunday afternoons was offensive to some. In my hometown, Little League would never think of playing on Sunday or Wednesday nights because those times were reserved for churches to conduct worship services.

At one time in America, Blue laws made sure that most commercial activity ceased on Sundays because it was a day of worship. Not so much anymore. Sunday or the Sabbath, has become irrelevant in our culture. Why? Because God has become irrelevant.

Commandment # 5, Honor thy father and thy mother.

In my growing up years, no one questioned the authority of mom or dad in my family. Obedience to parents was to follow the law of God; it was a sacred duty. “Yes ma’am, no ma’am, yes sir, no sir” were the ways you addressed a parent when asked a question. Our obedience training was started as toddlers, reinforced by the church and Scripture, and supported by the entire family including grandparents, uncles, and aunts. I don’t have to comment on the current state of childhood discipline in the homes of our land.

In homes where children are not taught about a loving God who expects them to obey their parents, it may make parental discipline more difficult and juvenile delinquency more prevalent. By the way, juvenile delinquency was uncommon in my childhood community.

An illustration: Fox News reported the following August 9, 2023, as I’m writing this paragraph.

Newly unsealed search warrants reportedly reveal the shocking words a 6-year-old Virginia student allegedly uttered after brandishing a gun at school and shooting his teacher in the classroom.

"I shot that b---- dead," the boy said on Jan. 6, 2023, just moments after the shooting, according to Amy Kovac, a reading specialist at Richneck Elementary School in Newport News, Virginia. Kovac rushed into the classroom afterward and restrained the child until police arrived."

Point made.

Commandment # 6, Thou shall not kill

This means do not murder. Mass shootings were mostly unheard of in the 1950s. Now it is rampant. Random shootings into houses and killing innocent people should not happen in a civilized country. Drug overdoses caused by drugs laced with Fentanyl killed 109,000 persons in the U.S.A. last year. Cable, as well as local news networks, report murder on the streets of America's large cities daily. Life has become cheap. I will address more about mass shootings later.

Commandment # 7 Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Sexual deviancy has always been a problem, but not to the extent it is today. In my day, a teenage girl rarely became pregnant, but if it happened, she would be shipped off to an aunt in another state or county and after the baby was delivered and given up for adoption, she returned. No one spoke of it; they only whispered. It was a shameful thing, and though equally guilty, the boy, equally guilty, would often go unidentified. Sexual purity was a high virtue; today sexual purity is rare. Children born to unmarried mothers in the U.S.A. is about 40% and has been since about 2008. That does not account for the 620,327 abortions last year that were likely conceived in illicit sexual activity. Adultery is the cause of many divorces. Divorce is so common today because in the 1970s no-fault divorce was instituted across the land and the flood gates opened.

The following story was reported by the AP news service on September 12, 2023.

When God Dies?

RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A candidate in a high-stakes legislative contest in Virginia had sex with her husband in live videos posted on a pornographic website and asked viewers to pay them money in return for carrying out specific sex acts.

Screenshots of Susanna Gibson on the website were shared with The Associated Press. The campaign for Gibson, a Democrat running for a seat in the Virginia House of Delegates in a district just outside Richmond, issued a statement Monday in which it denounced the sharing of the videos as a violation of the law and her privacy. Gibson called the exposure of the videos “the worst gutter politics.”

“It won’t intimidate me and it won’t silence me,” she said in the statement. “My political opponents and their Republican allies have proven they’re willing to commit a sex crime to attack me and my family because there’s no line they won’t cross to silence women when they speak up.”

Gibson said that exposing the videos is “an illegal invasion of my privacy designed to humiliate me and my family.” Gibson’s attorney, Daniel P. Watkins, said that disseminating the videos is a violation of Virginia’s revenge porn law, which makes it a crime to “maliciously” disseminate or sell nude or sexual images of another person with the intent to “coerce, harass, or intimidate.”

“A criminal act has occurred here, and that’s the dissemination of revenge porn by a Republican operative,” Watkins told the AP.

Any semblance of American cultural standards of sexual morality being even close to that of Biblical morality is simply coincidental.³

Commandment # 8, Thou shalt not steal.

There was a time when, if a child stole something from a store and the parent found out about it, the parent would most likely march the child to the store, make them return the item, apologize to the store owner, and the child was expected to promise never to do it again. Today, in some woke districts of our land, shoplifting is not prosecuted for items costing less than \$1,000.00. They get what they want and walk out with impunity. Parents as well as children participate.

It even occurs within the government; the incalculable financial losses and abuses resulting from fraud are alarming. This is one of the major corrupt practices in modern-day Washington, D.C. politics. Fraud and abuse in the federal government's spending amount to over \$200 billion annually. The exact figure is uncertain; it is merely an estimate.

Commandment # 9, Thou shall not bear false witness.

In my day, lying was a serious offense and ruined your character. However, today it is common. A congressman from California was recently censured by Congress for lying. He responded that he was honored by the censure because his actions worked. Next term he is running for the Senate.

Scams appear on your phone, email, text, and every other way imaginable. It is hard to know the truth today. Scams, fake news, foreign propaganda during our elections, and false advertising, have blossomed on the Internet.

Commandment # 10, Thou shall not covet.

I remember as a young child I once saw a boy riding a bike and said to my mom, "I want that bike." She replied harshly, "No son, you do not want that bike. You may want one like it. That is his bike and you can't have it." Today, the idea of equity is being promoted. Everyone should have equal outcomes. It is unjust for some

When God Dies?

to have stuff and others not to have stuff. Some are privileged and get stuff they don't deserve; others are unjustly deprived of what they want or need. Wealth distribution (economic justice) from those who have to those who have not is a common political ideology today; also known as Socialism. Take from the rich and give to the poor by government action. You can have too much; the government should take it and give it to someone who has not earned it. Covetousness is an attitude of the heart that justifies stealing. There is little pressure today in culture against it.

There are two parts to the Ten Commandments. The first four commandments deal with our relationship with God. God becomes Lord of our life when we realize four things: He is God and there is no other, He is invisible and no image could ever do him justice, we are to revere His name and hold it in the highest honor, and we are to reserve each seventh day to honor and worship Him and follow His example.

Put in simple terms we are to acknowledge Him, bow down, and worship Him. This establishes a relationship. In today's world, it means He is God and we are not. He cannot be confined to a simple box or image. His existence cannot be denied or defined.

That being true and believed, we honor Him by never using His name in a frivolous, meaningless, or profane manner. That would dishonor and devalue Him and ourselves.

Finally, we set aside a day as holy and to be used primarily to worship Him in private and in public. It is a way to declare publicly and proudly that He is our God; we follow and honor Him.

These four things are so far from reality in our culture today. Their absence is blaring and screaming that although many would not wear the label *atheist*, their behavior is consistent with the term.

The first part of the Ten Commandments describes How God desires to relate to us and we to Him. The first four commandments

set the context for the next six commandments. Knowing God's will and enjoying a relationship with Him we will desire to obey the next six. The first four help us be right and stay right with God; the next six help us be right and stay right with our fellow man. When we have a good relationship with God and our fellowman our anxiety fades into hope and faith.

Let's take a quick look at the next six commandments.

The fifth commandment concerns children in the home. They are to honor their parents through obedience. This is God's preferred way for children to learn proper behavior, beliefs, and principles of life. Parents teach by word and example and children learn and obey. A very simple plan. Parents are the people with the most love and intrinsic interest in the well-being of children. They spend a lot of time with their children, especially during their formative years. They learn to respect others, they learn how to relate to others, and they learn about God. This essential task of parents cannot be farmed out effectively to the government schools or even to churches. Churches can help but do not function as the primary source of moral teaching and enforcement of moral behavior.

A few years ago, when a child misbehaved at school, the teacher would send a slip home with the child to inform his parents. If the misbehavior continued the teacher would request a conference with the parents to discuss the matter. The teacher-parent relationship was built on mutually agreed expectations and each helped the other to guide the child to a better future.

The debate now is whether the school authorities should inform parents if a child is self-identifying as a gender different than was assigned at birth. The idea that a school or teacher would even think about concealing such a matter from parents is appalling. Such a thing undermines the child-parent relationship of trust and love. It teaches the child that the school (a government agency) cares more for them than their parents. It teaches the child to trust

When God Dies?

the school and to distrust parents. I can't think of anything that dishonors the fifth commandment more. Such policies rip the fabric of the nuclear family and culture. Children are taught to lie to their parents and that the school will protect them.

That children should honor their parents by giving them obedience, love, and trust in every aspect of their lives should be the norm expected by schools and parents.

The sixth commandment simply says thou shalt not kill. It means life is sacred. If young children were indoctrinated that killing people was contrary to God's will and if that belief were supported and amplified by their family and our culture, our world would change. Life is cheap, especially for the helpless: the baby in the womb, the senior adult in a nursing home, the homeless on the street, or even a bystander who is shot during a fight between two rival gangs.

The seventh commandment is concerned with the stability of the home; thou shalt not commit adultery. When a spouse has invested love and trust in the other, it is devastating to find that the marriage has been a lie all along. Adultery is probably the greatest threat to the home and the sin most difficult to forgive. Adultery breaks a vow to the spouse, to God, and to society. Adultery destroys trust. Adultery destroys homes. Adultery sets an example for children that it is acceptable/normal and makes it more likely that children will grow up to repeat their parent's actions. God's law says it is not normal. In His loving-kindness, He prohibits it.

The eighth commandment prohibits taking another's property; thou shalt not steal. Stealing destabilizes the economy. It's thinking more of yourself than you do of others. Stealing devalues the one from whom something was taken. It means I care more for the item I stole than my relationship with the owner. It's important to teach children that everything does not belong to them. Property rights are a vital part of a stable society.

The ninth commandment, thou shall not lie; thou shall not bear false witness. At the time I write these words we are suffering a death of truth in the United States. Our culture has been ravaged by lies in social media, in science, in government, in law, in education, and just about everywhere else.

The tenth commandment says, “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor’s.” KJV The word covet has to do with a yearning to have something belonging to someone else. It is the motivation to plot, connive, and take it without mutual consent or agreement. It is the thought process that leads to stealing, adultery, killing, lying, and hoarding of things others might have.

You can find the Ten Commandments in the Bible in two places Exodus and Deuteronomy. You cannot find them displayed in a government school or courtroom. Don’t expect the public school guidance counselor to reference the Ten Commandments.

There are references to it in the New Testament especially in the *Sermon on the Mount* that Jesus preached. (Matthew chapter 5-7). The key phrase is, “You have heard it was said by them of old, but I say.” He follows that phrase with a clarification and a lifting of the moral issue to a higher level. He never downgrades a commandment. Murder is dealt with in Matthew 5:21-26. Jesus gets to the motivation of the murder problem, anger. Adultery is dealt with in Matthew 5:27-32. He prohibits lust, the motivation for adultery. In Matthew 5:33-37 He deals with lying. He famously instructs us not to take an oath but, “Let your *yes* be *yes* and your *no* be *no*.”

In Mark 10:17-22, a man came to Jesus asking, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” Jesus said, “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother’” (verse 19). Jesus listed only

When God Dies?

the interpersonal commandments, but He did not mention the 10th commandment, thou shall not covet. To point that out, Jesus asked him to do what he could not do, sell all he had, give it to the poor, and follow Jesus. The man was stunned and walked away grieved.

Jesus summarized the Ten Commandments into two Great Commandments. The first great commandment is, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). And Jesus said, “The second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (verse 39).

When God dies, morality suffers. Evil thrives and the Ten Commandments become irrelevant.

ENDNOTES

¹<https://web.archive.org/web/20231110134450/https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/belief/2009/oct/04/death-god-theology-el-son>

²<https://web.archive.org/web/20231110134921/https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/04/24/americans-take-a-dim-view-of-the-nations-future-look-more-positively-at-the-past/>

³<https://web.archive.org/web/20231110135111/https://apnews.com/article/susanna-gibson-virginia-house-of-delegates-sex-acts-9e0fa844a3ba176f79109f7393073454>