

## ***“The Values Pyramid”<sup>1</sup>***

A pyramid is a reasonable way to illustrate relative influence and importance. Imagine the pyramid’s base as containing the standard of values supporting everything above. The next layer (common societal and cultural values) is directly shaped and molded by the strength of the base. On the top, and the smallest, are government and societal institutions. For me, the bottom section upholding everything else should be God’s word. Its truths are timeless, and its values, principles and moral perfection empower and guide individual lives for their own good, and for those influenced by them. Also, evil is identified for what it is – the destroyer of souls and everything it touches. This Biblical foundation is sensitive to cultural differences, but not at the expense of purity, morality, righteousness, and conscience. In other words, it’s not malleable and subject to manipulation to justify selfish, sinful desires.

The next layer represents the values our society and culture hold dear. When these reflect Biblical values such as personal responsibility, hard work, respect for property and the environment, sexual and moral purity, the sanctity of marriage and life, then society prospers. We’re free to use our creativity, energy, and drive to provide for our families and those that are less fortunate. This freedom allows us the liberty to choose to do what is right, while being restrained by personal responsibility and self-discipline. The pursuit of the greater good is rewarded by the satisfaction of knowing God is using us to validate His truths – which are a testimony to His mercy and common grace. Evil is easily shown for what it is; shameful, destructive, and something to be shunned. Though we’ll have difficulties in life, we know that living our faith by doing what’s right is a testimony to the world that will ultimately be rewarded by God. When Biblical values permeate both public and private aspects of society, everyone benefits and prospers no matter what cultural, ethnic, or religious background they come from. The truth of this is demonstrable through our life experiences and by all manner of objective research.

When God’s word is openly respected and proper cultural values are common, government will incentivize what strengthens those values (Rom 13:1-6). In our country, the genius of our colonial and national experience was the creation of a representative, constitutionally restrained government to enact laws and public policies reflective of the values of our society. In this way, values are codified for the next generation to enjoy, freedom of conscience is protected, and the gospel is free to be offered far and wide.

What happened? The above paradigm characterized much of the life of our country, but doesn’t reflect the dominant pattern any longer. As a matter of fact, the influence of the current values pyramid appears to be completely inverted from the one we want. Our culture is not only becoming openly hostile to Biblical

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truths and aggressively anti-Christian; our Government is actively removing all Christian influence from the public sphere. I ascribe this incredible shift to two major epochal changes: the debasing of the authority of scripture, and our government embracing a completely secular worldview.

The methodical dismantling of the authority of scripture began with fervor in the nineteenth century. Wolves in our own sheepfold sowed the seeds to replace Biblical authority with a man-centered authority. The devastating fruit from this attack continues today, as a weakened Body of Christ is in some respects a hollow shell (2 Tim 4:3) and in many ways embraces a false “cultural” Christianity that selectively submits to God’s word and the Lordship of Christ. During this time, not only did many Christians unilaterally disarm and disengage from the cultural war, but sadly, many became convinced judging ungodliness was wrong. What filled the societal vacuum? Beginning in the 1960’s, values-free cultural standards began coming out of the closet with fervor. Although that alone is a formidable enemy to Christian influence, the real threat became government leadership and activist judges. These embraced the resulting values-free cultural standards with court decisions and laws that relentlessly removed Christ from the public realm and embraced a godless, secular worldview as its guiding light on all things public and private.

The inversion of the pyramid is almost complete. Christian influence is a small, ever shrinking base, banished from the public arena and relegated to an hour each week at church and the privacy of our homes. Believers are routinely stereotyped by the media and entertainment industry as ignorant, narrow-minded, bigoted, out of step, and even the cause of societal problems. A powerful, debased culture has produced a complicit, thoroughly secular government and a judiciary with no moral compass. The far-reaching power of government is now our enemy in many respects. What are we to do? Is it hopeless? With the Body of Christ so weak, the culture so venomously anti-Christian, and the government so pervasive, can we recover? Are the fields of this nation still ripe for harvest? Next month I’ll deal with these and other questions. Before then, if you have an opinion – I’d love to hear it.

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