



STATEMENT DA-311

VIEWPOINT

Apologetics for the Church: Why Christians Are Losing the Culture War

by Chuck Colson

Consider the fundamental question of truth. The Bible teaches that God has revealed His word in Scripture, which means humans have access to a truth that applies to all people in all times — a truth that transcends our own limited and mistaken perceptions. In short, an absolute truth.

But a common view today is that truth is relative, changing with the person and the situation. In his annual survey, pollster George Barna asks a random sampling of adults whether they agree with the statement, "There is no such thing as absolute truth; two people could define truth in totally conflicting ways, but both could still be correct." In 1991, 67 percent of Americans agreed with the statement. By 1994, the number had climbed to 72 percent.

But the real surprise was the response by believers. In 1991, more than half (52 percent) of born-again Christians sided with the secular culture in rejecting absolute truth. In 1994, it was even higher (62 percent). The percentage who reject absolute truth is growing faster among Christians than among our secular neighbors. Clearly, believers cannot present a credible defense of biblical truth when more than half don't even believe in real truth.

Or consider the defense of biblical moral standards. In a December, 1995 survey commissioned by Prison Fellowship, Barna discovered that only about a third of Americans think moral truth is absolute. Another third believe moral truth is relative and changing. The final third hasn't a clue what truth is.

Again, where do Christians fall? Shockingly, a majority of born-again Christians — 64 percent — came down on the same side as nonbelievers. No wonder Christians are starting to look just like the rest of the culture in their moral behavior. In another study, Barna discovered that born-again Christians actually have a *higher* rate of divorce (27 percent) than nonbelievers (23 percent). Fundamentalists top them all (30 percent). What's worse, 87 percent were divorced *after* they accepted Christ and knew the biblical teaching against it. How can Christians have any credibility in defending the truth of biblical morality if we disregard it in our own lives?

To practice an effective apologetic, we need to formulate and live out a Christian world view — an overall *view* of the *world* we live in. Otherwise, we may know our Bible well and even cite chapter and verse, but we lack the broader framework that connects our moral and spiritual beliefs to the issues we face in a secular culture.

For example, to understand divorce from a Christian world view, we should ask what God's purpose was in creating marriage in the first place. Marriage is not just a means of meeting personal emotional needs. It is fundamentally a

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social institution, providing a structure for spouses to take care of each other and their children. It draws isolated individuals into a wider network of relatives and kin. It nurtures responsibility for the entire community and for the future. This broad-based, comprehensive understanding of marriage provides the plausible structure for specific scriptural commands regarding sexual morality. Without it, biblical sexual morality may appear arbitrary and negative, and we are handicapped in trying to argue for it in the public square.

Apologetics begins with developing a biblical world view on all of life. Yet Barna's polling data reveals that even among dedicated Christians, only about one-eighth have a biblical world view. And without a full-orbed Christian world view, our faith becomes privatized and powerless. That's why Christian sociologist James Davison Hunter believes we have already lost the culture war. We've poured great effort into campaigns against social evils like abortion and pornography. Yet we've failed to put the brakes on America's moral decline. We've been fighting battles without knowing what the war is all about: a clash between competing world views.

Chuck Colson is founder and chairman of Prison Fellowship Ministries.