

The Manhattan Declaration
Joshua 24:15

Opening video: http://www.creativepastors.com/product_1764?stream=Upside_Down_MPEG1

The video clip is titled, "Right Christmas." It is subtitled, "Upside down."

As you are aware, there are some who are trying to turn the truths of Christianity "Upside down." The truths of Christianity are being aggressively challenged by many non-believers all around the world.

In response to that, a group of Christian leaders across America met in September and November to discuss the current attacks upon Christianity. Attacks from the media, from special interest groups, from extreme liberal theologians, even from the government.

As a result of that gathering a document was drafted and signed by these leaders. It is called "The Manhattan Declaration."

This document transcends denominational loyalty.

It transcends Catholicism and Protestantism.

It transcends Orthodox and evangelical affiliations.

It includes Christians from various traditions:

- who still believe in the inspiration of the sacred scriptures,
- who still believe in the deity of Jesus Christ, and
- who still believe that not only does God determine right from wrong, but that God has also revealed right from wrong in the Bible.

Those who have drafted that document have signed it and have invited Christians to go online and sign it as well. (Visit: www.manhattandeclaration.org)

They have invited us to take a stand for traditional, Biblical Christianity.

- To take a stand for traditional, Biblical morals and values.
- Indeed, to take a stand for Jesus Christ.

I have already signed this document.

To date over 300,000 Christians have already signed it.

Because this is such an historical document and has already received some attention in the news media, I thought it relevant that I discuss it with you this morning. Let me quickly hit the major points of the Manhattan Declaration.

1. Why now?

Why the Manhattan Declaration and why now?

Let me quote from part of the Declaration,

"Because (these truths) are increasingly under assault from powerful forces in our culture, we are compelled today to speak out forcefully in their defense, and to commit ourselves to honoring them fully no matter what pressures are brought upon us and our institutions to abandon or compromise them. We make this commitment not as partisans of any political group but as followers of Jesus Christ, the crucified and risen Lord..."

Concerning the Manhattan Declaration, Dr. Albert Mohler writes,

"I believe we are facing an inevitable and culture-determining decision on the three issues centrally identified in this statement.....There is every good reason to believe that the freedom to conduct Christian ministry according to Christian conviction is being subverted and denied before our eyes. I believe that the sanctity of human life, the integrity of marriage, and religious liberty are very much in danger at this very moment."

As you are aware, many of the major denominations have split over some of these very issues. Some of the most critical social issues of our day are in fact, first of all, Biblical issues. They are, in fact, spiritual issues.

The Bible addresses the issues of abortion and homosexuality and religious liberty. Unfortunately, those of us who adhere to Biblical teachings are in the minority and our civil right to follow these Biblical principles is under severe attack.

Many of us believe that enough is enough! We believe that it is time to take a stand!

I am reminded of the stand Joshua took in the Old Testament:

Joshua 24:15 "But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve..... But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."

It's all about choices.

Will you choose to follow the way of the world or will you choose to follow the way of the Lord?
Will you choose to adhere to the morals and values of the world or will you choose to adhere to the morals and values of the world?

You can not straddle the fence! Consider these very pointed words of Jesus Christ:
Revelation 3:15-16

15 I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other!

16 So, because you are lukewarm — neither hot nor cold — I am about to spit you out of my mouth.

So, if you are challenged to make a choice, before you consider signing it, you should ask what specifically this declaration addresses?

2. What does it address?

There are many social issues which are relevant to the church. But this document primarily addresses only three.

Let's discuss the three issues the Manhattan Declaration addresses and then we'll ask why these particular issues.

The declaration states:

"We are Orthodox, Catholic, and evangelical Christians who have united at this hour to reaffirm fundamental truths about justice and the common good, and to call upon our fellow citizens, believers and non-believers alike, to join us in defending them. These truths are:

1. The sanctity of human life
2. The dignity of marriage as the union of husband and wife
3. The rights of conscience and religious liberty."

A. Sanctity of human life.

The Bible teaches that we are made in the image of God. Therefore, we believe in the sanctity of human life.

We do not believe that life is some freak accident of nature. We do not believe that life is void of any Divine plan. We believe in the intrinsic dignity of each human being.

Furthermore, we believe that human life begins at conception. As such, it is entitled to the same protections, rights and respects as the rest of us.

Psalms 139:13-16

13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place. When I was woven together in the depths of the earth,

16 your eyes saw my unformed body. All the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

This leads to the inevitable conclusion that life begins at conception, and therefore, abortion is wrong. Unfortunately, not only is it legal in the United States, but government funding continues in support of abortion.

But our response has got to be more than just a theological stance. We have a bigger responsibility than that.

It is incumbent upon us to speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves.

The Psalmist pleaded, Psalm 82:3-4

3 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed.

4 Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Certainly the sanctity of human life includes other issues such as stem cell research, euthanasia, infanticide and other issues. But it all starts with the devaluation of humanity as a result of abortion. This issue must be confronted.

B. Dignity of marriage.

The homosexual community has aggressively pushed their agenda through legislation, through the school systems, through Hollywood produced movies and TV shows...

They are not satisfied with live and let live. They want to redefine the institution of marriage. They want to brainwash your children into believing that homosexuality is a normal, acceptable alternate life style.

This is contrary to all Biblical teaching. Both Old and New Testament speak out repeatedly against same-sex relationships.

Some people erroneously claim that this is only an Old Testament issue. That is not true.

Some people erroneously claim that Jesus Himself never addressed this issue. I beg to differ!

Matthew 19:4-6

4 "Haven't you read," Jesus replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,'

5 and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife , and the two will become one flesh'?

6 So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

Another New Testament reference written by the Apostle Paul:

Romans 1:24-28

24 Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

25 They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator — who is forever praised. Amen.

26 Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

27 In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

28 Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

The words used to describe same-sex relationships in just this set of verses include:
-sinful, impure, degrading, shameful, unnatural, indecent, perversion, depraved.....
It concludes by stating that this, "ought not to be done."

Old and New Testament alike condemn homosexuality and define marriage as being between one man and one woman.

Certainly there are many other challenges which marriage faces in this day and age. But lets at least protect the Biblical definition of marriage.

C. Rights of religious liberty.

You may or may not be aware of the fact that in some countries it is illegal for churches or preachers to preach or teach some of these Biblical truths.

The day may soon come when we will have to decide if we are willing to speak out for the Lord even if civil authorities would deny us that privilege.

This is nothing new. Consider the challenge faced by the Apostles and their response to this challenge.

Acts 4:18-21

18 Then (the Sanhedrin) called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

19 But Peter and John replied, "Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God's sight to obey you rather than God .

20 For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

21 After further threats they let them go.

The Apostles were commanded to stop preaching and teaching about Jesus. But they refused to be stopped. Just one chapter later their disobedience got them in trouble.

Acts 5:27-30

27 Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest.

28 "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

29 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men!

"We must obey God rather than men."

Christians are to obey the governing authorities UNTIL the governing authorities command you to disobey God. Then, like the Apostles, we must obey God rather than men.

However, in doing so, one must be willing to suffer the consequences of such actions, just as the Apostles did. Look at what happens just a few verses later:

Acts 5:40-42

40They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

Like the Apostles and Christians in the Bible, like the founding fathers of this great nation, we must be willing to fight for our religious liberties.

The signers of the Manhattan Declaration are stating that we will take a stand on these issues and we are willing to suffer the consequences for doing so.

One last point to address. Some may ask, why these issues. Why not some other issues. That's a fair question.

3. Why these issues.

Why abortion? Why homosexuality?
Aren't there other "sins" which we should confront?

Of course there are. And we do confront those.
But the fact is, murderers, thieves, adulterers, gossips.....don't have parades celebrating their sins. They don't have legislation trying to legalize their sins.
They aren't trying change the definition of their sins.
They aren't trying to force churches to condone their sins.
They aren't trying to brainwash children concerning their sins.

As an example; Sonny and Cher Bono had a daughter named Chastity, who just recently when through a sex change operation. In a recent interview she/he stated, "I'm in awe of a child who is 5 or 6 and can articulate that they are transgender."

A 5 year old child?! Kids don't come up with this kind of stuff on their own. Where do they learn this? From teachers and counselors and others who have an agenda.

Christians have not selected these social issues as the battle ground.
Opponents of Christianity have selected these issues.
We are merely responding to the issues before us.

We are simply saying, enough is enough. We are simply saying, it's time to take a stand.

Let me quote one last time from the Manhattan Declaration:

"Because the sanctity of human life, the dignity of marriage as a union of husband and wife, and the freedom of conscience and religion are foundational principles of justice and the common good, we are compelled by our Christian faith to speak and act in their defense."

Ephesians 5:8 "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light."

What does light do? What is it's purpose?
Jesus explains:

Matthew 5:14-16

14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Are you willing to let your light shine? Are you willing to take a stand?

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