

Meeting the Challenges of 21st Century Culture

The challenge of political correctness: How the culture sees moral judgment

Intro: One of the perennial challenges of the people of God is avoiding being improperly influenced by the culture around them. In every age God has warned his people about conformity to the world around them and urged them to engage the culture while maintain absolute loyalty to His word.

So even in our time we must be aware of the cultural challenges we face and respond properly to them. In the next few lessons I want to talk about some of those challenges and how we can meet them.

Today I want to talk about the challenge of political correctness: how the culture sees moral judgment.

There was probably a time not too long ago when most people would have never heard of or used the term political correctness; but in the past few years it has emerged as the expression of a point of view that can be threatening to faith.

What is political correctness?

Let's begin by considering a few definitions.

Politically correct: agreeing with the idea that people should be careful to not use language or behave in a way that could offend a particular group of people (M-W dictionary)

Politically correct: conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated (M-W dictionary)

Politically correct: marked by or adhering to a typically progressive orthodoxy on issues involving especially ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or ecology.

And that of course begins to get to the heart of why this is a cultural challenge to Christians.

“Progressive orthodoxy” is the teaching of those who reject traditional religious values such as those taught in Scripture in preference to what they perceive to be more enlightened ones. The positions they forge are regarded as the “correct” point of view; and anyone who disagrees with them are subject to ridicule or exclusion from the market place of ideas.

The suggestion of “language that offends” implies that Christians should not speak out against behaviors that the pc crowd considers to be acceptable—behaviors like the practices of the LBGT community, social drinking, gambling—or refute the truth claims of other religions such as Islam for example.

Instead Christians are urged not only to tolerate such practices, but accept and approve of them, since all points of view stand on equal footing and are equally valid.

In , THE CULTURAL CHURCH, p.#77 LaGard Smith, says, "Political correctness' is nothing more than a benign catch phrase for 'the liberal agenda.' In other words, you and I have to toe the liberal line on issues like abortion, gay rights, and radical feminism, or else be reported to the sensitivity police for being intolerant."

What is wrong with this political correctness?

It is inherently self-contradictory

Political correctness has a basic flaw. If all views are equal, why do some who embrace this view feel the need to push this agenda as the "correct" one at the same time demonizing other views as "incorrect"? If the ultimate value is toleration, why are the political correct crowd so intolerant of those who disagree with them, resorting to calling them "bigots" and accusing them of "hate speech?"

Political correctness seeks to shut down the voice of those who make distinctions (it by nature suppresses free speech and censors those who disagree). While calling anything opposing their views "hate speech" it seeks to generate hatred for those who disagree. Some of the most intolerant people in the entire world are those who claim to preach tolerance.

In seeking to validate all people as equal, it removes divinely-revealed distinctions based on morality.

In that sense the Bible would be politically incorrect for it speaks of the people of God vs those not God's people. It speaks of saints and sinners. It speaks of the saved and lost.

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.'" (Matthew 7:21-23)

Political correctness would indict the language of Jesus and His apostles as bigoted and hateful. What would the politically correct say about Jesus' words to the Pharisees?

"You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell?" (Matthew 23:33)

It denies that absolute truth exists.

We'll talk about this more in a future lesson; but one of the underlying assumptions of political correctness in moral matters is the idea that there is no absolute standard of morality.

Have you ever noticed the absoluteness of that statement, "There is no such thing as absolute truth?"

"Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you

shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”” (John 8:31–32)

It abrogates the moral authority of God and replaces it with popular opinion.

If there’s anything the Bible makes clear it is that popular opinion is not a proper standard for determining truth.

“Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.” (Matthew 7:13–14)

“You shall not follow a multitude in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert justice;” (Exodus 23:2)

In reality, political correctness is really the effort of a relatively small minority to influence and shape popular opinion against the majority. And in this case it is simply Romans 1 all over again:

“Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes, And clever in their own sight!” (Isaiah 5:21)

It confuses and reverses divinely-revealed standards of right and wrong.

The prophet Isaiah issued this warning to those in ancient Israel who reversed God’s standards:

“Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; Who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isaiah 5:20)

It replaces love for others with tolerance of evil.

It is one thing to tolerate the evil in another; it is another to lovingly challenge and confront it in order to bring about change that brings salvation. The consequences are great.

“He who justifies the wicked, and he who condemns the righteous, Both of them alike are an abomination to the LORD.” (Proverbs 17:15)

“He who says to the wicked, “You are righteous,” Peoples will curse him, nations will abhor him; But to those who rebuke the wicked will be delight, And a good blessing will come upon them.” (Proverbs 24:24–25)

How Christians should respond

Love all people.

Hate the sin; love the sinner.

If indeed we are the children of God, then we must as Scripture makes clear “love others” just as God loves them. While God’s wrath is justly directed toward sin, His efforts are intended to save the sinner from his sin.

If we truly know God, then there can be no place for hatred for any group of people in our society. We must see people as God sees them—His creatures made in His image.

“The rich and the poor have a common bond, The LORD is the maker of them all.” (Proverbs 22:2)

“and He made from one, every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times, and the boundaries of their habitation,” (Acts 17:26)

Don't be intimidated into silence.

As the ranks of the politically correct grows, it becomes more and more likely that Christians will be ashamed that they hold a minority view. Such Christians need to remember the words of the Lord:

““For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will also be ashamed of him when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels.”” (Mark 8:38)

Have the courage of conviction to speak out against what is wrong. Jesus knew the disciples would be fearful against the powers of evil. He urged them to speak the truth boldly:

“What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. “And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.” (Matthew 10:27–28)

Speak the truth in love.

In today's politically correct environment, anyone asserting that something is true is automatically labeled a bigot, offending the reigning goddess of tolerance. The only absolute left in American society is the absolute that nothing can be absolute. This is the philosophical heart of the culture war. We should remind ourselves, however, that no society has ever survived without a strong moral code which by definition involves moral absolutes. (Colson)

As Christians, we need to get our facts together. We need to know what the Scriptures teach and how to present it.

“But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;” (1 Peter 3:14–15, NASB)

Be willing to go beyond toleration to

Be prepared to endure persecution from the politically correct.

The reign of philosophical relativism will divide religious institutions into two categories: the first (and majority) are those who will conform to the culture—and lose their Christian distinction; others will stand firm and experience genuine persecution. (James Colson, <http://www.acton.org/pub/religion-liberty/volume-3-number-4/challenges-facing-culture>)

Jesus anticipated these conditions:

“Blessed are you when men cast insults at you, and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely, on account of Me. “Rejoice, and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11–12)

“And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.” (Matthew 10:22)

Conclusion: As political correctness grows, so will efforts to intimidate voices of truth and shut down their efforts. Let us prepare to resist these efforts.