

Fr. Perozich comments —

Am I formed by faith or by culture?

Faith is a gentle persuasion, a subtle movement on the whole being. It is a free gift of God which requires acceptance and submission.

Culture can be subtle, but often it is brash and imposing, and can form a person in a way that is counter to faith.

Rev. Mark H. Creech offers a meditation to keep a Christian firm in faith against an imposing culture.

Seven lies America believes, and the ancient lie behind them all

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America has always had its sins. No generation has had a monopoly on virtue, and nostalgia can make us forget how badly earlier generations failed. Human nature has not changed. Pride,

greed, lust, cruelty, dishonesty, and unbelief are as old as humanity itself.

Still, something significant has changed in our time. Increasingly, we are not merely breaking moral standards; we are denying that they even exist. What previous generations often recognized as wrong, even when they practiced it, our generation increasingly declares right.

The Bible shows us that this is nothing new. In the Garden of Eden, the serpent approached Eve with a question meant to sow doubt: “*Yea, hath God said?*” (Genesis 3:1). Then came the plain contradiction: “*Ye shall not surely die*” (v. 4). Finally, came the seductive promise: “*Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil*” (v. 5). This is the trajectory of deceit.

The ancient lie behind so many modern ones is this: You do not need God to tell you what is true or good. You can decide for yourself.

That falsehood echoes around the world today, and it is plainly evident in America.

Here are seven ways we hear this awful lie repeated.

1. 'I can determine my own truth'

One of the most common expressions of our age is “my truth.” Certainly, people have different experiences, perspectives, memories, and opinions. Truth itself, however, cannot contradict itself and still be true. If one person says something is true and another says the opposite, both claims cannot be equally correct in the same sense at the same time.

Jesus did not say, “I am one possible truth.” He said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life*” (John 14:6).

Christianity begins with the conviction that **truth exists independently of us. We do not create it.** We discover it, submit to it, and ultimately encounter it in Jesus Christ. [*We discover truth because it is revealed to us by God — rp*] G. K. Chesterton once observed that “there is a whole truth of things.”

This is precisely what the language of ‘my truth’ obscures. **Truth is not ours to manufacture or possess. We are accountable to it.**

Once truth becomes whatever each individual decides, morality loses its fixed anchor. Right and wrong become matters of preference, power, fashion, or popular opinion. And when truth belongs to everyone individually, it ultimately belongs to no one.

2. 'The most important thing is to be true to myself'

Few sayings sound more noble these days than “Be true to yourself.” Jesus taught the exact opposite: *“If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me”* (Matthew 16:24).

The self is not always trustworthy. Sometimes our instincts are selfish, our appetites destructive, our ambitions proud, and what feels authentic may actually be sinful. The Bible does not teach self-hatred, but it also does not teach self-worship. **It teaches self-surrender to God and His Word.**

Christianity teaches that the highest goal of life is not discovering and expressing whatever is within us. It is being transformed into what God created us to become.

The question is not merely “What do I want?” The greater question is “What does God want of me?”

3. 'My desires define who I am'

Our culture increasingly treats desire as identity. We are told, in effect, to trust ourselves – our feelings, instincts, attractions, and inner impulses – as reliable guides to who we really are. If I feel something deeply enough, or if I have what seems like an overwhelming drive, then that defines me, and denying it means denying who I am.

The Bible presents a very different picture of human nature. Our desires, like every other part of fallen humanity, are affected

by sin, rebellion against God's rightful rule, and therefore stand in need of redemption. The Bible repeatedly warns not to follow every desire of the heart. Jeremiah declared, "*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?*" (Jeremiah 17:9). Unchecked and unrestrained by God, our desires can lead us into terrible bondage in this life and to eternal ruin in the next.

We are much more than our appetites, and our desires do not have the authority to define us. A person may experience anger without being defined by it. A person may experience greed without being defined by it.

In the same way, our culture increasingly treats sexual desire or gender identity as central to who a person is, particularly in LGBTQ discussions. But from a Christian perspective, no single desire or inward feeling, sexual or otherwise, has the final authority to define a human being.

Human dignity does not come from satisfying every desire, nor does identity ultimately stem from our desires. It comes from being made in God's image.

4. 'Freedom means doing whatever I want'

Americans cherish their liberties, and rightly so. Nevertheless, too many have confused liberty with license; they are not the same. **Modern culture often understands freedom as the removal of restraints:** No one should tell me what I may or may not do. No one should tell me how to live.

Jesus gave a sobering warning about this kind of freedom, saying: "*Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin*" (John 8:34). Ask the alcoholic, the drug addict, the compulsive gambler, or the person enslaved to pornography. But don't be fooled; the chains can be more subtle and harder to recognize. Some people cannot let go of resentment, control their temper, stop gossiping, curb their spending, resist envy, or live without others' approval.

What begins with “Nobody can tell me what to do” can eventually become “I cannot stop.”

Sin promises freedom before it fastens its chains. God’s commandments are not prison bars meant to diminish human happiness. They are guardrails along the treacherous roads of life.

Freedom is not the ability to do whatever we want. It is the power to do what we ought.

5. 'Sex, marriage, and family are ours to define'

If there is no Creator whose design precedes us, human beings are free to redefine the body, sexuality, marriage, and family according to shifting opinions and social fashions.

Jesus points us beyond custom, legislation, and culture to creation itself: *“He which made them at the beginning made them male and female”* (Matthew 19:4).

Christianity's view of sex, marriage, and the family begins with the creation narrative in Genesis. Male and female are not accidental categories. Marriage is not merely a social arrangement devised by human beings, and the family is not simply whatever each generation chooses to call it. **These realities belong to an order that precedes government and culture. They are defined by God.**

“Human beings may reject God’s order. We may redefine words and rewrite laws, but we cannot erase the created reality beneath them. When we break God’s commandments, we break ourselves in the process. As Scripture says, *‘The way of transgressors is hard’* (Proverbs 13:15).

6. 'Love means affirming whatever someone chooses'

Perhaps no lie today masquerades more successfully as compassion. Certainly, Christians can be harsh, self-righteous, insensitive, and unloving, and whenever they are, they should

repent. Nonetheless, love cannot require us to call falsehood truth or wrongdoing good.

Scripture says that love “*rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth*” (1 Corinthians 13:6). Love and truth are not enemies. Real love seeks another person’s genuine good, and sometimes that requires saying what is difficult for them to hear. Many years ago, a relative of mine was suffering from heart disease. He had already survived a heart attack and, on another occasion, a sudden cardiac arrest. During one visit, his cardiologist walked into the examining room holding his medical file.

After studying it intently, he looked up and asked, “Are you still smoking?” My relative sheepishly admitted, “Yes.” The doctor, with what I can only describe as righteous indignation, tossed the file at him, sending papers scattering across the office, and said, “Then stop wasting my time!” That moment became a turning point, and my relative gave up smoking.

Some might consider the doctor’s reaction harsh or even insensitive. I see it differently. He cared enough about his patient to confront him about how seriously he was harming himself. That was not a lack of compassion. It was compassion refusing to flatter a man who was putting his own life in danger.

A parent who never corrects a child is not truly a loving parent. A preacher who refuses to warn people about sin and judgment because he fears offending them is not faithfully serving God or others.

Love embraces, comforts, shows compassion, and forgives. But sometimes love warns, and sometimes it must warn loudly.

7. 'I can find fulfillment without God'

This may be the saddest lie of all. Modern America offers more avenues for pleasure, entertainment, consumption, and self-

expression than any previous generation could have imagined. Yet the human heart remains desperately restless.

Augustine captured the problem centuries ago when he said: “You [God] have made us for Yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in You.”

Jesus warned, “*A man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth*” (Luke 12:15). He also said, “*Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God*” (Matthew 4:4).

We pursue money, possessions, entertainment, sexual pleasure, recognition, political power, technology, travel, achievement, and endless experiences, hoping that something will finally satisfy the emptiness within – that persistent longing we often cannot even name.

Brian “Head” Welch, guitarist for the rock band Korn, learned this firsthand. By the world's standards, he had reached the top. He had money, fame, women, drugs, and the success that comes with being part of a major rock band. Yet in a 2013 interview with *The Christian Post* at an I Am Second event in Dallas, Welch said he had been “chasing all that stuff,” and it left him empty. He described himself as “a complete empty shell.” **After encountering Christ, however, Welch said, “That’s when I was fully satisfied.”**

That is the great deception of life without God. A person may gain nearly everything the world says should satisfy him, yet still find his soul famished and yearning.

Nothing in life can bear the weight of being God.

The one lie behind them all

Here, the seven lies merge into one: I determine what is true. I define myself. My desires are authoritative. My liberty is supreme. I define sex, marriage, and family. Others must affirm my choices. I can build a fulfilling life without my Creator.

Beneath them all rests the supreme lie; one can still hear the serpent's whispering hiss: “*Ye shall be as gods...*” (Genesis 3:5). The most profound moral struggle of our age is over sovereignty: God or us? Who defines truth, good and evil, human identity, and human flourishing?

The first lie did not deliver freedom as promised. It brought exile. **Humanity reached for independence from God and inherited the fetters of sin.** But the Bible's story doesn't end outside Eden, with our first parents separated from their Maker. Jesus, the Son of God, came into a world ruined by that rebellion. Where humanity disobeyed, Christ fully obeyed, “*and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross*” (Philippians 2:8).

It may seem far too simple to say that our deepest needs and greatest challenges are ultimately answered in Christ. I strongly believe we need better laws and better politics, and I have devoted much of my life to that work. But I am even more firmly convinced, and I implore you to believe it, too, that **Jesus is the Truth Himself. When He is given the throne in our lives, confusion gives way to clarity, bondage to freedom, and darkness to light.**

Jesus said, “*Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32).

The serpent's lie claims that freedom comes from becoming our own gods. The Gospel teaches that liberty is found in surrendering to the One who truly is God.

Read this article and many others by Dr. Creech at RevMarkCreech.org.