

IS THERE A BLUEPRINT FOR A FLOURISHING HARMONIOUS, JUST, SOCIETY

YES! There is.

Western society has spent the last few decades trying to write God out of society, out of the schools, and out of public discussion and daily life. Trying to deny that we have a creator who designed us and gave us all the instructions we need for a flourishing, harmonious, and just society and denying that there are absolutes of right and wrong. It is as silly as refusing to read the handbook on anything we buy or filling our vehicles with milk instead of petrol or diesel. The maker knows best!

WHEN ALL ELSE FAILS READ THE INSTRUCTIONS

Most people accept that the world is a mess, socially, economically, environmentally, politically, and spiritually and there is huge concern as to the future. How did we get in this mess?

Around 3,400 years ago God gave the Israelites, through Moses, 10 commandments which have formed the basis of moral law ever since. God promised that when the instructions were kept the nation would flourish, if they disobeyed they would fail. They proved both parts.

The 10 commandments

- 1 **You must not have any other God but me**
- 2 **You must not make or worship or serve any idol**
- 3 **You must not misuse the name of the Lord your God**
- 4 **Remember to observe the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy**
- 5 **Honour your father and mother**
- 6 **You must not murder**
- 7 **You must not commit adultery**
- 8 **You must not steal**
- 9 **You must not testify falsely**
- 10 **You must not covet**

Exodus 20- v 1-17

Almost 2,000 years ago Jesus summed them up

“The greatest commandment is this, You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind, and all your strength. The second is equally important, Love your neighbour as yourself.”

Mark 12 v 30

Jesus also gave us **THE GOLDEN RULE.**

“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you”.

Matthew 7 v 12

If we followed this one simple yet profound instruction we would be living in a very different society. No more bullying, hate, lying, trolls, stealing, adultery, rape, violence, drunkenness, cheating, unwanted pregnancies, child poverty or abuse, homelessness, road rage, addictions, suicides, pornography, abortions, hypocrisy, and racism.

We can never achieve perfection until Jesus Christ sets up His eternal kingdom but we can and should be much better than we are now.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR AS YOURSELF Every person is of equal value to God and should be to us

God has made from one man all nations of the earth. *Acts 17 v 26*

You must not mistreat or oppress foreigners in any way.

Exodus 23 v 21

The second of the great commandments given by Jesus is “Love your neighbour AS YOURSELF.” Tragically large numbers of people in our society have very little or no self respect and self love. I worked for 4 years in Supportive Accommodation with up to 90 men suffering the whole range of alcohol and other drug addictions, homelessness, mental health, violence, and criminal justice issues. I learned much about the reality of life at the bottom, its causes, and potential cures. In at least 90% of cases the problems led back to a single primary cause – dysfunctional or non-existent parenting. No one had cuddled them and read them stories, encouraged them in their schoolwork and role modelled to them a functioning family, or taught them the basics of good social relationships, honesty, nutrition, thrift, and diligence. Instead violence, abuse, and drunkenness were their earliest memories. Many suffered from foetal alcohol syndrome through no fault of their own. Most did not have a chance of a successful life.

A successful life includes taking responsibility for ourselves and others, respecting ourselves and others, and these values are learned in childhood. We also need to learn that life is not always fair.

Many people spend their time pursuing fun, food, fame, fashion, and fortune. There is nothing wrong with any of these in moderation and in context but they are external stimuli that never truly satisfy.

The values that God gives are much deeper and totally satisfying

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, humility, self control.

Galations 5 v 22-23

Combined with the great virtues of prudence, justice, temperance, courage, fortitude, thrift, fidelity, diligence, faith, hope, and love, we have ultimate satisfaction for ourselves and success for society.

The biblical definition of love

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, or boastful, or proud, or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

1 Corinthians 13 v 4 - 7

All good comes from God, all evil comes from Satan, and we are given the ability and responsibility to choose the good.

It is our spiritual dimension that determines how we act in any circumstance.

THE FAMILY IS THE FOUNDATION OF SOCIETY.

God created us as men and women, in his image in a spiritual sense. He established marriage between a man and a woman committing to each other for life to reflect the commitment God makes to his people to be with us in this life and us to be with Him in the next.

The sociological evidence is overwhelming that children brought up by their two biological parents do better in life although there will always be exceptions. There are many who are solo parents through illness, accident, desertion, or other reasons and do a fabulous job of raising their children, often in difficult circumstances. Many do not.

The University of Otago study of over 1,000 people born in Dunedin in 1972-1973 shows that, “Young children's self control skills – such as conscientiousness, self discipline, and perseverance - predict their health, wealth and criminal history in later life regardless of IQ or social background. Even small improvements in self control for children and adolescents could yield important reductions in costs of healthcare, welfare dependency, and crime, with less physical problems, substance dependency, money mismanagement, solo parenthood, and criminal convictions. (Press release 25 January, 2011)

We will never resolve our social problems by throwing more money at them or providing harsher penalties, more treatment centres, or more counsellors. They will only be resolved when people decide they will not commit crime, do not need artificial stimuli, and will treat all others with respect.

If every person chose their partner carefully, committed to each other for life, and brought up children in that caring, nurturing, and positive role modelling environment at least 70% of our social problems would be solved. Our prison population would be halved, and taxes could be reduced by at least \$12 billion per year!

This is not unrealistic, pie in the sky, impossible, judgmental, not the way it is, or any of the other excuses I have heard many times to avoid asking the most important question: **IS IT TRUE?**

Marriage and divorce

Jesus was asked: “Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife?” Jesus replied “God made them male and female from the beginning of creation. This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife and the two are united into one. Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together.”

Mark 10 v 2-9 (abridged)

Adultery is the ultimate human betrayal in the eyes of God.

We were designed by God to abstain from sex outside of marriage and be faithful within it. God gave us our hormones as the greatest test of our self control!! No more rape or roasts, no more STD's or unwanted pregnancies, if we follow the simple instruction

Treat older women as you would your mother, and treat younger women with all purity as you would your sisters

Timothy 5 v 2

THE TRUTH, THE WHOLE TRUTH, AND NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

We live in a post-truth era (Oxford Dictionary). Fake truth, alternative facts, hypocrisy, superficiality, decisions made on the basis of emotions rather than truth. A society that tries to remove God and any sense of accountability to Him and each other is a society on the skids. We live in an age of illusion, delusion, confusion, and depression which ultimately leads to social chaos and disaster.

Jesus Himself said

“You shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free.”

John 8 v 32

We need integrity, intelligence, courage, commitment, and wisdom if we are to seek the truth in any issue, uncomfortable though it may be. If we do not understand the issue we cannot provide the solution. Anything less than the whole truth is hypocrisy that destroys society.

Some will see the statements in this presentation as judgmental and not ask “Are they true?”. We have an obligation to point out in humility, and aware of our own failings, what is best for humanity, and that there is absolute truth. These are not my ideas. I am simply pointing out what the bible says. It is the ultimate source of wisdom and truth. The bible comes from God – it is the 'Makers Handbook'.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

Most social issues have a number of strands that need to be treated simultaneously.

When children turn up at school without food or adequate clothing feed and clothe them and give them a chance but also deal with the family's needs in the short, medium, and long term.

When people are homeless feed and house them in the short term but deal with their deeper needs in the medium and longer term.

Above all let us have the courage and honesty to restore the value of committed lifelong families which is the best way to actually solve our social problems.

Alcohol and other drugs do enormous harm in our society.

King Solomon wrote almost 3,000 years ago

“Wine produces mockers, alcohol leads to brawls.

Those led astray by drink cannot be wise!” *Proverbs 20 v 1*

It is quite OK and totally possible to have a very satisfying, contented, and happy life without any alcohol or other drugs!

Truth, justice, forgiveness, compassion, reconciliation, restoration, and healing are dear to the heart of God. They should also be to us.

DEADLY SINS

that destroy society.

- 1 Failure to seek the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth
- 2 Failure to separate two parts of any issue
 - (a) whether something is right or wrong and
 - (b) what we should do about it

There is no room for harassment or abuse of those who are different. In moral issues they answer to God.

- 3 Pechant to avoid the issue of 'is it true?' by running to default positions of whether the issue is racist, sexist, judgmental, homophobic, Islamophobic, xenophobic, etc.
- 4 Processing issues through our emotions rather than our brain.
- 5 Speaking in generalities instead of specifics (avoiding the truth and not addressing the problem)

JEALOUSY, GREED, HATE, BITTERNESS, ANGER, LYING, VIOLENCE, DRUNKENNESS, UNFAITHFULNESS.

IS PEACE POSSIBLE?

In ourselves?

In our families and communities?

In our world?

YES – but only if we follow the ways of God.

The secret of 'perfect peace' is simple

You (God) will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, all whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal rock. *Isaiah 26 v 3-4*

The bible is full of instructions as to how to have peace in ourselves despite the problems and unfairness that life brings, to live in peace with each other, and to bring peace to a troubled world.

God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. *Matthew 5 v 9.*

Live in harmony and peace. Then the God of love and peace will be with you. *2 Corinthians 13 v 11*

At the birth of Jesus the angels announced

“Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to those with whom God is pleased.” *Luke 2 v 14*

How do we please God? By keeping his commandments.

We have already pointed out that the greatest commandments are:

“Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength”

“Love your neighbour as you love yourself”

If we put these commandments into practice we will be a very successful nation

The
Secret
of
a
successful
Nation

**“From dissension, envy, hate,
And corruption guard our State
Make our country good and great,
God defend New Zealand”.**

Thomas Bracken. New Zealand National Anthem