

The Mess We've Made

In Greek mythology, Narcissus became enamored with the beauty of his own image and lost his will to live. Today 'narcissism' is spreading like the plague! Surveys done among children and teens reveal a preoccupation with fame, looks, and wealth. We are in love with self at the expense of loving God and others. Something is seriously wrong when our focus turns inward, as Jesus warned (Matthew 5:19-20).

Four Stages in the Downward Spiral of Human Brokenness:

1. _____ (Idolatry) – Worshipping God Substitutes
 - a. *“For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, for their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.” Romans 1:21-23.*
 - b. The worst sin of all is not giving God the glory he deserves. We are created to worship. *“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvelous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise.” I Chronicles 16:24-25.*
 - c. The predominant belief system in America today is **Moralistic Therapeutic Deism**, also known as **Whatever-ism**. Its key beliefs are:
 - i. A god exists who created and ordered the world.
 - ii. This god wants us to be good, nice and fair to each other.
 - iii. The central goal of life is to be happy and feel good about yourself.
 - iv. God is not involved in my life unless I need him to resolve a problem.
 - v. Good people go to heaven when they die.
 - d. The true God of the Bible is intimately involved with His creation and sent Jesus to the earth out of love for us. Jesus died that we might live and be restored in our relationship to God. We are to worship Him alone.

2. _____ (Immorality) – Violating God's Commands
 - a. *“Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator.” Romans 1:24-25.* If man abandons God, God will abandon man.
 - b. Every command is given for our own good. *“Walk in all the ways that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days.” Deuteronomy 5:33.* Sex causes us to bond physically and spiritually with our married partner. Outside of marriage, sex is inherently self-destructive (I Corinthians 6:33).

3. _____ **(Indecency) – Rejecting God’s Created Order**
 - a. *“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. 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.” Romans 1:26-27.*
 - b. Transgender feelings were recognized as a mental disorder by the American Psychiatric Association until 2012, as was homosexuality until 1973. While sexual sins pervert God’s natural order, homosexual sins invert the way God designed us. Deliverance is found in Jesus as both Rosaria Butterfield and Chris Yuan can attest to.

4. _____ **(Insanity) – Losing the Capacity to Reason**
 - a. *“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.” Romans 1:28.* Both the culture in Noah’s age and in Lot’s age (Genesis 6:5-7; 19:4-5) degenerated into insanity. Jesus taught that the end of our age will be as it was in the days of Noah and Lot (Luke 17:26-29).

How should we then live? Some like Rod Dreher in *The Benedict Option* call upon Christians to withdraw from society (II Corinthians 6:17). Others like Jeff Myers in *Understanding the Culture: A Survey of Social Engagement* challenge us to engage our culture and seek to redeem it (Philippians 2:14-16). Either way, our broken world needs Jesus (John 3:16). Will you love people and help them find hope in Jesus?

Discussion Questions

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1. Have you ever heard about Narcissus who fell in love with his own image reflected from a pool of water? How is our culture becoming more and more 'narcissistic'? Are you surprised the British schoolchildren thought the very best thing in the world was becoming a celebrity, or having good looks, or being rich? Why or why not? What has happened to cause our culture to be more self-centered than it used to be? What did Jesus say about the dangers of fixating on self (see Matthew 15:19-20)?
2. Read Romans 1:21-32. What is taught in verses 21-23 about idolatry? What is the worst sin? What is wrong with not giving God the glory that he deserves? Do you agree that we as human beings were created to worship? What is the first of the Ten Commandments? What is our purpose as human beings according to I Chronicles 16:24-29? What is our purpose according to the Westminster Confession? What is Moralistic Therapeutic Deism or Whatever-ism? What are its major beliefs? Why do you think this belief system is so attractive to the average American? How does this belief system contrast with the true God of the Bible?
3. What is the second stage in human brokenness according to Romans 1:24-25? Why is it important to know that if man abandons God, God will abandon man? Do you believe that every commandment God gives is ultimately for our own good? What is taught in Deuteronomy 5:29-33? Why is sexual sin so dangerous? What was God's purpose in creating sex? What is taught in I Corinthians 6:33 about sexual sin?
4. What is the third stage in human brokenness according to Romans 1:26-27? Why do you think the American Psychiatric Association identified transgender feelings as a mental disorder until 2012? What changed? Why did they identify homosexuality as a mental disorder until 1973? What changed? How is sexual sin a perversion of that which is God-given? How is homosexual sin an inversion of that which God designed? Why is it important to know that people like Rosaria Butterfield and Chris Yuan have been delivered from homosexual sin?
5. What is the fourth stage in human brokenness according to Romans 1:28-32? How is this like the age of Noah and the age of Lot (Genesis 6:5-7; 19:4-5)? What did Jesus say about the end of the age in Luke 17:26-29? Given the world we live in today, why is it important to know that there are times when we need to withdraw (II Corinthians 6:17) and there are times when we need to engage the world and seek to redeem it (Philippians 2:14-16)? Why is it important to know that either way, Jesus is still the only hope for our world (John 3:16)? Will you love broken people and point them to the Master?