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**An Assessment of the Extent to which Societal
Thinking Has Influenced What Members of the Church
Believe about Traditionally Held Biblical Assertions**

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Abstract

Throughout history and more specifically in recent years our culture has experienced an alteration from conservative to very liberal thinking. But to what extent has the church been affected by this shift in thought? The following research was conducted to assess the effect that society's thought has had on what members of the church believe about Biblically asserted truths. A cross-sectional survey was constructed in order to examine individuals' beliefs about assertions that have been traditionally held within the church. There were four demographic items and 10 statements made that were Biblically grounded. Each of the 10 statements was followed by a strength of agreement rating scale. I had a general hypothesis and 2 detailed hypotheses regarding specific statements that were presented in the survey. My overall hypothesis was that, in general, participants would score significantly lower than the two highest ratings (6 and 7) that any statement could receive. Specifically, I hypothesized that 1) the statement that would receive the highest strength of agreement rating was the one that opposed practicing homosexuality and it having a place in the church, and 2) the statements that would receive the lowest strength of agreement ratings were a) husbands making the final decision when conflicts arose between a married couple and b) man is incapable of doing good apart from God. The surveys were administered to 56 volunteer students of Olivet Nazarene University; however one of the surveys had to be taken out due to the respondent being an unbeliever (the project's focus was on cultural effects *within* the church). The students were offered extra credit in one of their courses if they participated in the survey. There were two independent variables that were used to analyze the results of the survey: 1) Gender and 2) Denominational Affiliation. The ratings on the 10 survey items served as the dependent variable. The results were also analyzed using two single-sample t-tests which analyzed the data against a test value of 7 and a test value of 6 (the two highest possible ratings). Gender did not have a significant statistical effect on the strength of agreement ratings between groups but remained low across genders. Denominational affiliation saw one marginally statistically significant difference between denominations. Other results were very supportive of my general hypothesis. Overall participants scored significantly lower than 7 for each statement and significantly lower than 6 for six out of the 10 statements. These statements included topics regarding 1) man's inability to do good apart from God, 2) divorce, 3) homosexual behavior, 4) swearing, 5) husbands making the final decision in marriages, and 6) a woman's modesty. Only one of my two specific hypotheses was supported by the data collection and analyses. While the two lowest rated statements were husbands should make the final decision and that apart from God humans are incapable of doing good, the highest rated statement was that humans have a sinful nature. Overall the research and results implied that the culture is in fact influencing what Christians believe on Biblical issues.

**An Assessment of the Extent to which Societal
Thinking Has Influenced What Members of the Church
Believe about Traditionally Held Biblical Assertions**

From the beginning of time man has been in a constant state of flux. Adapting to new changes around him and creatively developing more efficient ways to accommodate his “needs” in an effort to be fulfilled, and ultimately satisfied. This concept of change can be seen in all aspects of man’s life and modernization. Change is, and has been, apparent in technology, education, the media, and even the way in which a man thinks, throughout history.

Technological changes can be seen from the invention of farming to the first and second Industrial Revolutions, and are even apparent in today’s modern industrialization. Education used to be “the basic skills of communicating, trading, gathering food, and religious practices.” (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History>) Later on, education took on the form of reading, writing, geography and arithmetic (Wells, 1993, p.25). Today universities that were initially founded to train Christian ministers are now offering degrees in a multitude of different fields and teaching theology as an academic rather than ministerial discipline (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Colleges>). The media which was once confined to newspaper and radio has seen dramatic advancements with the television and the internet. And the change of man’s mind and ideas, probably the most dangerous of all of these things, which were once focused and intent on the Bible and “the classics” as their sole authority, were destroyed by the thoughts and ideas of the Enlightenment (advocating man’s reason as the sole authority) (Hines, 2007, para. 2), and now suffer from trying to find rest in a combination of the two.

Man is always changing, always adapting, and never settled or fully satisfied in anything that he does. Economist Henry George put it this way “Man is the only animal whose desires increase as they are fed; the only animal that is never satisfied.” (<http://www.quotationspage.com>) If mankind as a whole was content with what was around him at all times there would never be any reason for any type of change. The very catalyst for change is the dissatisfaction with something’s or someone’s current condition. To be said clearly, man is not and will never be satisfied with what he does or invents to try and appease himself. This is accurately depicted in the many different eras and revolutions that have defined man’s past and will continue to define his future.

On the opposite side of the spectrum from man, stands God. He is lacking in nothing (Matthew 5:48), never changing (Malachi 3:6), and always satisfying (Psalm 107:9). He has a perfect Son that He sent to be sacrificed for the sins of those who believe in Him (John 3:16), and by His good grace He has given us His perfect word, being the power unto salvation for those who believe in Him (Romans 1:16). There is only one purpose that a Christian has on this Earth, and that is to glorify God in all that he does (1 Corinthians 10:31). But then how is it that we are to love God, or glorify God? What is the means to the end? Jesus makes it simple for us in the Bible, telling us that if we love Him, we will keep His word (John 14:23). The sentiment to keep God’s word is reiterated numerous times throughout the Bible and is solidified as being our sole function in Ecclesiastes 12:13 which states “The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

If we are in fact to fear God and keep His Word, first we have to know the God that we fear, and also know the Word that we are to be keeping. It would be impossible to

abide by something if we are not familiar with what we are commanded to abide by, *and so it is with the church*. There is only one God, one hope, and one truth. The truth about God that has been set forth to Christians today, by God, is through Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:2). More specifically, since we no longer see Christ, it is the words of Christ that make known the absolute truth about God. These words make up the entirety of the Bible; they are from within the innermost being of God (2 Timothy 2:16), and are the perfection of God's word imparted to us as believers through Christ Jesus. John 1:1, 14 states that, "In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... and the Word became flesh." The Holy Bible, is Christ, is the Word of God. Any deviation from that Word is apart from His truth, and therefore, is apart from Him and not to be revered. Anything that is apart from God must be of man and will therefore be unsatisfying for us, and ultimately displeasing to God (Hebrews 11:6). There are only two things that are not apart from God and therefore perfect and lacking nothing. Only one of those things is tangible. God is not apart from God, and the Holy Bible that is breathed-out by God is not apart from God (2 Timothy 2:16). They are both perfect and without flaw. It would be easier for both heaven and Earth to pass away than for one dot of God's Word to pass away (Luke 16:17).

If on one end of the spectrum we have man who is always changing, and never satisfied, and on the other end we have the Word of God which is never changing; which one would it make more sense to change, and which one to leave alone? Would it be to change the Word of God to meet man's "needs"? Or would it make sense for the power of the perfect Word of God to transform man in a way that will sanctify Him into the image of Christ? The answer is clear. God sets it forth to us through Paul in Romans 12:2

where He says “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is- his good, pleasing and perfect will.” It is not God’s will that we become enslaved to the things of this world and easily swayed by the “patterns” of this world. Rather, He created us to be set apart from this world (1 Peter 1:16) to do His will.

The problem that has arisen within the church, however, is caused by the prevalence of man changing the perfect word of God in order to appease himself or make it more “applicable” for today’s culture. The church, and specifically the Bible, has been grouped along with education, media, technology, and the way in which man thinks into being something that we as mankind can and should change to accommodate what man deems as being most effective for this time period. What man today fails to recognize is that God, and more specifically the Word of God, transcends time and boundaries.

The purpose of this research project is to focus on the corruption and decay that has seeped its way into the Church. To further examine the effect of the culture’s modernization upon what people (more particularly students) within the Church believe about truths that have traditionally been held throughout the history of the Church. Has the culture’s thought affected what Christians believe about some fundamental truths that come with being a Christian? Bertrand Russell said “Man is a credulous animal, and must believe in something; in the absence of good grounds for belief, he will be satisfied with bad ones.” Does “man” as defined by Russell encompass all of mankind? Or is there still a distinction to be made about what Christians believe? And does that belief set them apart from what the culture is screaming to be true?

To find answers to these questions, I conducted a cross-sectional survey. The survey was designed to contain statements regarding ten fundamental truths that have been traditionally held by the Church, as well as strength of agreement rating scales for each statement. The survey was then carried out to see if students at Olivet Nazarene University who are members of the Church would agree with those truths that are set forth by the Scriptures. The survey was intended to assess if Christians still hold to these Biblical truths, or if the culture has had an influence that has led to a more liberal thought on the matter.

It was my hypothesis that society has greatly influenced what is being held as truth within the Church. There is more room for tolerance and more acceptances of worldly things within the church. I hypothesized that the ratings that were given for each of the Biblically grounded statements would be significantly lower than the standard of perfection (a rating of 7) that is set forth by God for all Christians. I also hypothesized that the ratings that were collected would be significantly lower than a 6 but would not vary much across the statements. Specifically I hypothesized that, overall, the statement that would receive the lowest rating was that husbands should have the final decision when conflicts arise between a husband and wife. And that the second lowest rating would be in response to the statement that apart from God man is incapable of doing good. My final hypothesis was that the statement that would receive the highest rating is the statement saying that practicing homosexual behavior is a sin, and should therefore have no place within the church.

Method

Participants

The participants consisted of students from Olivet Nazarene University. More specifically they were students who were a part of either an Introduction to Sociology or a Basic Statistics course. Both classes were given an opportunity for extra credit in their respective courses if they attended and completed the survey. Between the two classes there were a total of 56 participants. One of the surveys was thrown out and not used in the data analyses because the individual was not a Christian, and the intent of the research being conducted was to focus on the effects of the culture on individuals who are a part of the Church. Thus, overall there were 55 individuals' results that were used in the data analyses. Of the 55 participants 39 were females and the remaining 16 were males.

Design

The method of data collection for this research was a cross-sectional survey that was administered to volunteer students of Olivet Nazarene University. Included in the survey were four demographic items which asked for the participant's gender, denominational affiliation, if they believed in the inerrancy of the Bible, and if they had a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ. Along with the four demographic items, there were 10 separate statements regarding beliefs that have been traditionally held by the Church. These 10 statements were each followed by a 7 point strength of agreement rating scale, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree. The participants simply read each statement and were asked to circle the number that best described how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement. Each of the statements had a Scriptural basis, with each statement's ideal strength of agreement rating being directly related to the truth

about the statement as interpreted through Scripture (i.e. 7 being the response that should be ideally elicited if the participant was to agree with what the Bible says about the issue).

Materials

The cross-sectional survey included four demographic items which asked the participants to either check the appropriate box (items pertaining to gender, belief in the inerrancy of the Bible, and if they had a saving relationship with Jesus Christ) or fill-in the appropriate information in the space provided (for their denominational affiliation). The section that consisted of the 10 statements was preceded by instructions that the participants were to circle the appropriate number that correlated with their strength of agreement with each statement. It was also made known that higher numbers equaled stronger agreement, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 being strongly agree. The various statements were all based off of Scripture, with each statement being drawn from at least one verse in the Bible. Each statement was presented in such a way that a rating of 7 would be in agreement with what the Bible says and 1 would be in disagreement with what it says. The 10 statements that were rated were all controversial topics that are significant in today's culture. The first two had to do with the Bible, the first placing it as the supreme authority and the second stating that its truth is absolute. The third and fourth focused on the state of human beings and their capabilities. The third stated that human beings are naturally sinful, and the fourth that they are incapable of doing good apart from God. Statements 5-8 and Statement 10 pertained to instructions on how to live holy lives, specifically dealing with divorce, homosexuality, abortion, profanity, and modesty

respectively. And the final statement said that a husband should make the final decision when a controversy arose between a man and his wife.

Procedure

After the survey was completed and ready to be administered to willing participants two separate classes of Olivet Nazarene University Students were given the opportunity to take part in the research for extra credit in their courses. Students from an Introduction to Sociology and a Basic Research and Statistics class were told that if they took the survey they would be awarded 5 extra credit points in their class. The survey was given on two separate days to the students in each class. Both times the survey was conducted the conditions were held the same. Before the survey was given, the students were made aware of the contents of the survey and that they should in no way feel obliged to complete the survey if they felt uncomfortable for any reason. When everyone in the room was finished the surveys were collected and the students were thanked for their participation. They were then informed about the purpose of the research and why it was being conducted. A copy of the exact survey that the participants completed is provided in Appendix A.

Results

Once all of the data were collected there were a total of 56 respondents. However, only 55 of those surveys' results were taken to be analyzed. One of the surveys was not used in the analyses of the project due to the participant being an unbeliever, since the focus of the project was primarily on the cultural effects on individuals within the Church. Also, it should be noted that one of the demographic items, belief in the inerrancy of Scripture, was not further analyzed because only 3 of the remaining 55 respondents' results indicated that they did not believe in the inerrancy of Scripture.

Table 1 shows the mean, median, and mode for the strength of agreement ratings for all 10 of the to-be-rated statements. These ratings reflect the participants' strength of agreement with each of the 10 scripturally-based statements. The first three statements along with the statement pertaining to abortion (Statement 7) yielded the highest agreement ratings. The first two dealt with biblical authority and biblical truth, and the third stated that humans are naturally sinful. The statement that received the lowest rating was that husbands should make the final decision when disagreements arise between married couples. Other statements that provoked low agreement responses were items regarding man's inability to do good apart from God, as well as divorce being intolerable except on the grounds of sexual immorality. The remaining three statements said that the practice of homosexuality should have no part in the church, swearing is always a sin, and a godly woman is one who dresses modestly. The ratings for these three statements were found somewhere between the high ratings and the lower ratings previously mentioned, with none of them having an outstanding numerical difference between the other two.

Table 1**Descriptive Statistics for Agreement Ratings on Survey Items 1-10**

Variable	Mean	Median	Mode
1. Biblical Authority Supersedes All	6.564	7.000	7.000
2. Biblical Truth is Absolute	6.018	7.000	7.000
3. Humans have a Sinful Nature	6.691	7.000	7.000
4. Apart from God - None Good	4.200	4.000	3.000
5. No Divorce Except Adultery	4.600	5.000	7.000
6. Homosexual Behavior a Sin	5.491	6.000	7.000
7. Abortion for Birth Control Morally Wrong	6.164	7.000	7.000
8. Swearing Always a Sin	5.127	6.000	7.000
9. Husband Final Decision in Conflicts	3.218	4.000	1.000
10. Godly Woman Dresses Modestly	5.273	6.000	6.000

The data that the above means are based upon were subjected to between-subjects tests to see if there were any significant statistical differences between 1) males and females, and 2) different denominational affiliations. An Independent T-test was conducted using gender as the independent variable for the rating on each of the 10 statements but it did not yield any significant results. A single-factor between-groups analysis of variance was also done for each of the 10 statements using denominational affiliation as the independent variable. The subjects were divided into three denominational categories. The three categories are as follows: Nazarene, Non-Denominational, and Other (this consisted of all of the other denominations that took part in the survey that were not from the Nazarene or Non-Denominational background. The remaining denominations had to be grouped together in order to maintain a balance between the groups being tested. There was no other denominational affiliation that produced a significant amount of respondents.) The numerical representation from each

group was Nazarene – 18, Non-Denominational – 15, and Other – 22. Table 2 shows the mean strength of agreement ratings across the three denominational categories, while Table 3 displays the summary of the results of the 10 analyses of variance.

Table 2

Mean Agreement Ratings as a Function of Denominational Affiliation for Survey Items 1-10

Variable	Nazarene	Non-Denominational	Other
1. Biblical Authority Supersedes All	6.667	6.467	6.545
2. Biblical Truth is Absolute	6.222	5.733	6.045
3. Humans have a Sinful Nature	6.778	6.600	6.682
4. Apart from God - None Good	3.333	4.600	4.636
5. No Divorce Except Adultery	4.778	4.733	4.364
6. Homosexual Behavior a Sin	5.278	5.400	5.727
7. Abortion for Birth Control Morally Wrong	6.389	5.600	6.364
8. Swearing Always a Sin	4.889	5.333	5.182
9. Husband Final Decision in Conflicts	3.222	2.933	3.409
10. Godly Woman Dresses Modestly	5.444	5.000	5.318

As shown by the results in Table 2 most of the ratings were similar regarding the 10 items. They remained high across denominations for the four aforementioned statements that received the highest ratings. There was a slight but noticeable difference between the Non-Denomination groups' s rating on abortion being morally wrong, which was slightly lower than that of the Nazarene, and Other group. The remaining statements showed similar ratings across denominations with the exception of the statement that apart from God humans are incapable of doing good. While all of the denominations scored relatively low (in relation to 7), the Nazarene denomination scored this statement at more than a point lower than the other two groups.

Table 3**ANOVA Summary on Agreement Ratings for Survey Items 1-10 Using Denominational Affiliation as the Independent Variable**

Variable	DF	F	MSE	Probability
1. Biblical Authority Supersedes All	2	0.266	0.638	0.768
2. Biblical Truth is Absolute	2	1.673	0.593	0.557
3. Humans have a Sinful Nature	2	0.247	0.529	0.782
4. Apart from God - None Good	2	2.771	3.629	0.072
5. No Divorce Except Adultery	2	0.214	4.830	0.808
6. Homosexual Behavior a Sin	2	0.321	3.376	0.727
7. Abortion for Birth Control Morally Wrong	2	1.227	2.672	0.301
8. Swearing Always a Sin	2	0.224	3.854	0.800
9. Husband Final Decision in Conflicts	2	0.277	3.642	0.759
10. Godly Woman Dresses Modestly	2	0.325	2.600	0.724

As shown in Table 3, there were no significant statistical differences of .05 or less between denomination groups on any of the 10 statements. However there was one that showed a marginally statistical difference and that was Statement 4. The Nazarene denomination scored this item, which stated that apart from God man is incapable of doing good, marginally lower than the other two groups.

The overall mean ratings for each of the ten statements were then analyzed using single-sample T-tests for values of 6 and 7 to find out if there were significant differences between the means and the two set values. Table 4 shows the results of a single-sample T-test that was conducted to determine if there would be any significant statistical difference between the means and a test value of 7.

Table 4**Means and Single-Sample T-test Summary for Strength of Agreement Ratings
Using a Test Value of 7**

Variable	Mean	DF	T- observed	SE	Probability
1. Biblical Authority Supersedes All	6.564	54	-4.107	.106	.000
2. Biblical Truth is Absolute	6.018	54	-5.672	.173	.000
3. Humans have a Sinful Nature	6.691	54	-3.198	.097	.002
4. Apart from God - None Good	4.200	54	-10.560	.265	.000
5. No Divorce Except Adultery	4.600	54	-8.220	.292	.000
6. Homosexual Behavior a Sin	5.491	54	-6.169	.245	.000
7. Abortion for Birth Control Morally Wrong	6.164	54	-3.778	.221	.000
8. Swearing Always a Sin	5.127	54	-7.179	.261	.000
9. Husband Final Decision in Conflicts	3.218	54	-14.898	.254	.000
10. Godly Woman Dresses Modestly	5.273	54	-8.045	.215	.000

As shown in Table 4 the means significantly differed statistically for each of the ten statements when tested against the test value of 7. The ratings for each of the ten statements were significantly lower than the highest rating of 7. Table 5 shows the results using the same single-sample t-test to analyze the data for significant statistical differences using a test value of 6.

Table 5**Means and Single-Sample T-test Summary for Strength of Agreement Ratings
Using a Test Value of 6**

Variable	Mean	DF	T- observed	SE	Probability
1. Biblical Authority Supersedes All	6.564	54	5.305	.106	.000
2. Biblical Truth is Absolute	6.018	54	.105	.173	.917
3. Humans have a Sinful Nature	6.691	54	7.148	.097	.000
4. Apart from God - None Good	4.200	54	-6.789	.265	.000
5. No Divorce Except Adultery	4.600	54	-4.795	.292	.000
6. Homosexual Behavior a Sin	5.491	54	-2.081	.245	.042
7. Abortion for Birth Control Morally Wrong	6.164	54	.739	.221	.463
8. Swearing Always a Sin	5.127	54	-3.346	.261	.001
9. Husband Final Decision in Conflicts	3.218	54	-10.959	.254	.000
10. Godly Woman Dresses Modestly	5.273	54	-3.387	.215	.001

As shown above, when using a test value of 6, six of the statements' ratings were significantly lower than 6 (the probabilities that are **emboldened**, the others were either above 6 or not significantly lower than 6). The following six statements received a significantly lower rating than 6. 1) Apart from God man is incapable of doing good, 2) Divorce is unacceptable for reasons other than marital unfaithfulness, 3) Practicing homosexual behavior is a sin, 4) Swearing is always a sin, 5) Husbands should make the final decision when conflict arises between man and wife, and 6) A Godly woman is one who dresses modestly.

Discussion

The reason that this research project was conducted was to determine if the culture's shift in thought has affected what Church members believe about traditionally held Biblical truths. Has the post-modern era of thought infiltrated the Church in the same way that it has taken over our culture? To do this I put together ten statements

expressing fundamentally held beliefs that find their grounding and backing in the Scriptures and asked students of Olivet to rate their agreements with these Biblical beliefs.

The ten statements, along with their Scriptural basis are as follows. Statement 1 said “The authority of the Bible super cedes all other authorities.” The main Scripture that this statement is grounded in is found in Ecclesiastes 12:10-12 which states “The Preacher (God) sought to find words of delight, and uprightly He wrote words of truth. The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.” Here it is written that God set forth the words that were to be put into the Bible and so they should be revered in such a way that humans acknowledge the Author of the Book. There is a distinction that sets the Bible apart from every other book. No other book is capable of building a man up the same way that the Bible does. It is put into its own category and exceeds the limitations that are put on all other writings because it has the power to transform a man’s mind, heart, and soul. Another Scriptural reference that advocates this statement says that the Bible is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and from the innermost being of God Almighty.

The second statement rated on the survey read “Biblical truth is not relative, but is absolute.” The basis for this statement was found in Colossians 2:8 which says “See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ.” What this verse does is shows that the things that are set forth by the world are for the

world and not a part of Christ. They are “empty” and full of “deceit” or untruthful. This is in sharp contrast to the things of Christ, which can be known by His followers to be truth and that truth should be what shapes our lives (Colossians 3:16-17).

Statement 3 said “Human beings are naturally sinful.” According to Genesis 6:5 “The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” All man could do was be sinful. Even youths are born into sin. Psalm 51:5 states “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.” From birth David pronounces his iniquities and this corruption indeed affected all humans, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

The fourth statement was similar to the third, it read “Apart from God, human beings are incapable of doing good. This sentiment appears throughout the Bible, most pertinently in Romans 3:10-12 which states “as it is written: None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” Here Paul, or God through Paul, sets forth a pretty bleak outlook for the fate of man. Fortunately, in Hebrews 11:6 a distinction is made that with faith in God, or through God we can now please God, or do good. The Scripture says “For without faith it is impossible to please God.”

The final six statements dealt more strictly with how we are to act as Christians, and what we believe is tolerable or intolerable in the eyes of God. The first of those final six statements and Statement 5 on the survey said, “A couple who is in the church should not divorce for any reason other than marital unfaithfulness.” Divorce is mentioned numerous times throughout the New Testament, speaking against it. Mark 10:9 speaks

about marriage and against divorce. This Scripture says “Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.” Jesus makes a distinction in Matthew 19:9 when He says “whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery.” This is reiterated in 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 which reads “To the married I give this charge (not I but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.”

Statement 6 read “Practicing homosexual behavior is a sin, and therefore, has no place within the church. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 Scripture declares “men who practice homosexuality” are put into the same category as adulterers, sexually immoral men, thieves, drunkards, revilers, and swindlers and it is said that none of these “will inherit the kingdom of heaven.” Practicing homosexuality is to have nothing to do with the church. The Bible labels homosexual behavior as unnatural and shameless (Romans 1:26-27) and to say that it has a place in the church is contrary to the Word of God.

Statement 7 deals with abortion and said that “Having an abortion as a means of birth control is morally wrong.” Personally I believe that having an abortion for any reason is morally wrong, but to narrow what the participants were responding to the distinction of “as a means of birth control” was added to the end of the statement. If God knew Jacob and Esau before they were even born or had done anything good or evil then why would man think that he could take that very life that God knew away? Jeremiah 1:5 says “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” It is truly a person that is inside a woman’s womb and terminating that life form within a woman’s stomach is the

same as committing murder. Abortion is in direct conflict with one of the 10 commandments; Exodus 20:13 declares “You shall not murder.”

Statement 8 read “Swearing (the use of profanity) is always a sin.” I cannot think of an instance where if we do not use our words to glorify God it is not a sin. If in everything, word or deed (Colossians 3:17) we are to glorify God (1 Corinthians 10:31) how can we justify the use of profanity. The Bible speaks out against filth coming out of our mouths and says that “on the Day of Judgment people will give account for every careless word they speak, for by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.” Every careless word that we speak we are held accountable for. We are commanded in Colossians 3:8 to “put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and **obscene talk from your mouth.**”

Statement 9 was the statement that yielded the lowest ratings, which is not surprising when taking into consideration feminism and the strides that feminist thought has taken in today’s culture. The statement said “When disagreements arise between husbands and wives, the husband should make the final decision regarding the resolution of the conflict.” This statement is most clearly backed in Ephesians 6:22-24 which says “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in **everything** to their husbands.” If wives are living a life that is pleasing to God and following His commandments for their lives inside of their marriage then a life of submission is in order. God has placed a husband as the “head” over the marriage, and the Bible draws the comparison to Christ being the head of the church. If then, we as Christians are to submit

to Christ as being our head, should not wives also submit to their husbands in the same manner? We as Christians would never question or undermine Christ, and if the relationship of husbands and wives parallels that of Christ and the church then it would not be fit for wives to undermine or question their husbands.

The final item included in the survey dealt with a woman's modesty. The statement read "A Godly woman is one who dresses modestly. 1 Timothy 2:9-10 says "Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness." In today's culture modesty is a highly undervalued trait in women. "Attractiveness" nowadays is defined as how much of a woman you can see, and the more the better. This is the exact opposite of what a Godly woman should portray. Whereas many worldly women are trying to stand out by showing off their bodies shamelessly, a Godly woman is instructed to be modest and let her inner beauty in Christ and learning in quietness (v. 11) be what defines her. She is called to separate herself from valuing the shallowness of outer beauty as a reflection of who she is and called into a spirit of humility and modesty.

Each of the topics that were picked to present in the survey were both controversial and culturally relevant. They were selected intentionally so that the gap between what the Bible says about the issue and what the culture says about the issue could be easily distinguished. My general overall hypothesis was that the ratings would be significantly lower than the set standard (7) that would be set forth if what the Bible has to say about an issue is true. This hypothesis was supported by the results of the analyses of the data that were collected. For all ten statements rated the participants

scored significantly lower than the highest rating of 7. That is, if every statement that was set forth was true in its entirety (and at the very least we can say that in general they were all true, pending some differences in interpretation, and this being only for a few of the items selected), then for every item the participants' statistics were significantly different than what they should have turned out to be if they wanted to stay "in step" with Scripture.

To take into consideration possible interpretation or clarity issues, the results were also analyzed setting the means against a test value of 6 to see if there were any significant statistical differences. It was my hypothesis that all of the statements' ratings would be significantly lower than 6. This was only partly validated by the data analysis as only six out of the 10 statements received significantly lower ratings than a 6. Strikingly, still more than half of the statements received ratings that were significantly lower statistically than a rating of 6. These were statements 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10. However, this is not because of the participants' disbelief in the inerrancy of Scripture. As previously mentioned, 52 out of the 55 respondents did believe that the Bible was the inerrant Word of God. It also cannot be attributed to the lack of belief in Scripture's supreme authority or that Biblical truths are absolute and not relative. These two statements received two out of the top four highest ratings at a 6.564 and 6.018 respectively. This shows that although the respondents claimed to believe in the inerrancy, supremacy, and reality of Scriptural truths, their ratings on the more applicable life issues (Statements 5-10) would indicate otherwise.

The specific hypotheses that I made about the statements that would receive the two lowest ratings (husbands making the final decision and man incapable of doing good)

was confirmed by the data analysis. These two statements received a mean rating of 3.218 and 4.200 respectively. However, my hypothesis regarding the statement that would receive the highest rating (practicing homosexual behavior has no place within the church) was not supported. This statement had a mean rating of 5.491 which was a full point lower than the highest rated statement pertaining to Biblical authority (6.564).

The research was conclusive in displaying results that supported my general hypothesis. That was, that collectively, the means of agreement ratings would be significantly lower than a perfect standard of 7 as well as a standard of 6. This conclusion has heavy implications for what is going on in the church today.

The research was conducted to find out if the culture's liberal thought was having an effect on fundamental Biblical beliefs, which have traditionally been held by members of the church. The data supports that the culture has in some way affected these beliefs. What can be known about God and also what can be known about how we, as Christians, are to live our lives is set forth to us through the Word of God. These standards for practice and belief are non-negotiable and should be fought to be upheld, especially against the sinful nature of this world. When we, as a church start to let sin and corruption seep its way into the one thing that God has given us that is apart from all of that, we are going to start to see drastic changes not only in the way we think, but also in the way that we live our lives. When all we're living off of is an idea of what we *think* the Bible says instead of setting forth in full confidence what we know to be true, then our lives are going to start to resemble the lives of all people everywhere. All of a sudden, there is nothing that sets us apart. We have been tossed around by listening to cultural ideas that are unbiblical. Instead of disposing of those things and finding out what God's

Word has to say about them, we're being swayed and influenced by them in a way that is affecting our lives, and in turn, our testimonies as believers.

If our actions as Christians and what we tolerate does not set us apart from the world, then what does? If that is being stripped from us then all we're left with is a powerful-turned-empty phrase that "we believe in God." Harsh as it may seem, even the demons believe in God (James 2:19). We claim to have faith, but the Bible tells us in James 2:20 that "faith without deeds is useless." It is our actions that set us apart as Christians. The problem presented here is that if our actions are not firmly founded on correct beliefs in what the Bible says is true, we are now acting in a way that is apart from God, not unlike a man who does not have God. Jesus said in John 8:31-32 "if you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." Therefore, what sets us apart is our diligence in our obedience to the Word of Truth, and knowing that truth is the first step.

The culture's thought is and always will be a dangerous and pressing issue upon Christians everywhere. It clouds the truth of what can be known about God and how we should live our lives to please Him. The data proved to be constantly low across denominations. This problem is not just affecting a select group of Christians. But what can be done to rise above and combat the culture? Or is it a battle doomed for defeat?

There is no way that such Biblically opposed issues such as practicing homosexual behavior (5.491), divorce (4.600), and swearing (5.127), to name a few, should be so highly tolerated within the church. This problem can only be fought against with one thing. It is the very thing that this survey was based upon, the Bible. If this survey says nothing else, it says this, that it isn't an issue of a persons' belief in God or in

the Word of God. The problem is that Christians everywhere are being fed more by the culture than by the very thing that we are told to live by (Matthew 4:4), and that becomes what our lives are being shaped by. Christians need not be influenced by anything other than what we are commanded to live. Until that happens, until we as Christians become more sensitive to the Word of God and less tolerable to the things of this world we are fooling ourselves and disobeying God.

One of the original topics that this project branched off of was how the culture is has moved so drastically away from the ideas from within the church, and what the church should do to combat this. I believe that the only way to fight against it is to stand firm against what is being taught in the culture, and that starts from within the church. Until we are being fed something other than what we are hearing everyday from the culture, something different from the culture, God's Word, then our lives will continue to mirror those who are on the outside looking in. If somebody is on the outside looking into somewhere that is very similar, if not identical to where they are already standing, then what reason do they have to move to that place? 2 Corinthians 6:17 says "Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord." Our lives need to reflect Christ in all that we say and do, and that is what will set us apart from this world. Then the world will clearly see that there is something different about those who proclaim the Almighty name of God. If not, and we as a church continue on the path that we are on right now, I have to assume that the worst days are yet to come.

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Appendix A

Section 1: Demographics

For Items 1-4 listed below check the appropriate box or place the appropriate information in the blank.

1. Gender

Male

Female

2. Denominational Affiliation _____

3. Do you believe that the Bible is the inerrant (error free) word of God?

Yes

No

4. Do you have a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ?

Yes

No

Section 2: Strength of Agreement Ratings

Please rate your strength of agreement with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number. Note that higher numbers equal stronger agreement with the statements, with 1 being strongly disagree and 7 strongly agree.

1. The authority of the Bible super cedes all other authorities.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

2. Biblical truth is not relative, but is absolute.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

3. Human beings are naturally sinful.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

4. Apart from God, human beings are incapable of doing good.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

5. A couple who is in the church should not divorce for any reason other than marital unfaithfulness.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

6. Practicing homosexual behavior is a sin, and therefore, has no place within the church.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

7. Having an abortion as a means of birth control is morally wrong.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

8. Swearing (the use of profanity) is always a sin.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Strongly
Disagree

Strongly
Agree

9. When disagreements arise between husbands and wives, the husband should make the final decision regarding the resolution of the conflict.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree

10. A Godly woman is one who dresses modestly.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree