

## **Our Greatest Challenge – The Secular Versus Judeo-Christian Perspective**

What is the greatest source of challenges in our lives? Is it us? Or, is it someone or something else?

There are days when I focus my attention on religious talk shows, sermons, and Christian websites. When I return to the nightly news, the newspapers, secular websites, and regular TV programming, I am amazed at the difference in perspectives between the Judeo-Christian world and the secular world.

The biggest difference – other than obviously theology – is who or what is the greatest obstacle or challenge in our lives.

The Judeo-Christian world implores us to change our attitude, alter our expectations, and modify our destructive lifestyles. It advises us to be hopeful during the most turbulent times, and to persevere even while we suffer. We are told to control our emotions, overcome our feelings, be patient, forgive others, and appreciate what we have.

Change begins with us. Be joyful, positive, hospitable, and helpful to others. Stop dwelling on our own problems, recognize that suffering is a part of life, and someone always has it worse.

In marriage, we need to be faithful and quick to forgive. Sacrifices are expected, and we will not always receive what we desire.

At work, we should remain optimistic, honest, and hard working. We should avoid gossip, display a good attitude, and demonstrate respect for authority – even for the most odious boss.

In contrast, the secular world declares that we are all wonderful just the way we are. We should never change to accommodate others, society should accept us, embrace us as we are, and celebrate us.

Many behavioral problems are now declared a disability. Drug addicts and alcoholics are victims of society, and can collect government checks to compensate for their suffering. Cigarette smokers are victims of Big Tobacco. The overweight and obese are not guilty of overeating or under-exercising, but are the targets of Big Food Corporations. Big Pharmaceutical makes life-saving prescription medicines unaffordable.

If we lose our jobs, it is the result of a free trade agreement, another country taking advantage of us, or the result of greedy

corporations. Don't like your job? Blame your boss, your co-worker, or company.

When floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, or severe storms strike our area, the real culprit is not Mother Nature, but rather the evil people who deny climate change.

Can't pay the mortgage? Blame the Big Banks. College tuition too high? That's because the government won't pay the bill.

When we do poorly in school, it is the consequence of inadequate teachers, an inept school board, or lack of education funding.

When minorities don't get the promotion, it must be racism. When women don't get the promotion, it must be sexism.

Everywhere in the secular world, we witness victims of micro aggressions, misogyny, social injustice, white privilege, verbal abuse, sexism, racism, bigotry, xenophobia, Islamophobia, institutional racism, a rigged system, nativism, tribalism, hate speech, bullying, the industrial military complex, dog whistles, capitalism, safe spaces, and many more.

We blame genetics, parents, helicopter moms, past injustices, politicians, poverty, bad schools, tough neighborhoods, social media, trigger warnings, profiling, and peer pressure. We are insulted, disrespected, defensive, hyper-sensitive, offended, and outraged. There is no such thing as an accident or a tragedy in the secular world – someone else is always to blame.

The Judeo-Christian world believes that the greatest challenge we face is ourselves. It is our personal shortcomings, our addictions (whatever they may be), our physical, emotional, intellectual, and mental weaknesses that separate us from realizing our goals and dreams. It stresses accountability, personal responsibility, gratitude, and obligations.

The secular world stresses personal rights over responsibilities. It believes our greatest personal challenge emanates from someone or something else.

Of course, many religious people do blame outside forces in the guise of the devil, while many secular people take responsibility for their own mistakes, failures, and shortcomings. I am stressing what is taught, and not necessarily how people respond to their teachings. Still, just watch the next network evening news. It is not hard to see how the current secular world poisons our society, and pits individuals and groups against each other.

What is the greatest source of challenges in our lives? The secular and Judeo-Christian worlds hold two very different perspectives. Which are you?

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