

Commentary: Why you shouldn't be outraged by the Super Bowl halftime show

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Outrage.

That was the word I saw over and over as I scrolled through my social media feeds after the Super Bowl. One after another, posts from faithful, God-honoring and truly inspiring Christians vehemently condemned the Super Bowl halftime show in which two popular Latina women danced—scantly clad and provocatively—while live cameras cleverly captured their performance.

I kept wondering: “Why are we all so angry about this? Why are these, my fellow Christians, so outraged?”

In some ways, I get the outrage. I get where the righteous indignation comes from.

What Christian wouldn't be shocked when watching a supposed “family show” with such a blatant contradiction of biblical values? What Christian wouldn't be disheartened when such a poignant example of the rapid and steady decline of America's cultural fabric is shown, when such an obvious testament to moral degradation is in play, when we have to cover our children's eyes and turn our own heads while quickly shuffling them out of the room?

Still, I found myself confused.

And then it hit me.

Reaction to a changing culture

Anger so often stems from unmet expectations. We, as Christians, have a lot of unmet expectations.

We've been coddled and cajoled into thinking the world around us should match the spiritual one inside of us. We've been rocked to sleep swaddled in blankets of American entitlement and individualism telling us we each have the right to live in a culture that matches our biblical worldview. In fact, we expect such a life.

Moreover, many Christians in the past have experienced—nominally, at least—a society in which the moral tidepool has coincided with our biblical values so much that we could wade knee-deep into it and evangelize with little disparity, persecution or outrage.

But over the last 50 years or more, that reality has changed.

We no longer live in a culture that embraces Christianity unequivocally. We no longer shop in stores that hide pornographic magazines behind the counter or walk down busy streets where kinky massage parlors are tucked behind the alley unseen.

No, we live in a country growing more and more antithetical to Christianity every day, a country well on its way toward being entirely antagonistic to Christianity, and it seems everyone except Christians truly are aware of—let alone feel a sense of responsibility for—this change.

Until we wake up and stop expecting this country to be what it “should” be, until we quit acting on social media like outraged victims when cultural events like the Super Bowl halftime show don't “live up” to our biblical standards anymore, until we start seeing this culture through the eyes of the gospel the way Jesus would, we will continue to perpetuate that same

cultural digression we ourselves are so outraged against.

One reaction leads to another

Our very outrage, our judgment, our condemnation will do two things if we aren't careful.

First, our outrage will rally us together into a righteous Christian horde in which we pat ourselves on the back and reiterate our biblical values, all the while sinking further and further into an "us vs. them" mentality that conveniently keeps us from feeling the responsibility we have in sharing the gospel "in word or deed" with those around us (Colossians 3:17).

Second, our outrage will only distract, encouraging both "us" and "them" to stay focused on what the gospel isn't about at all—a system of "do"s and "don't"s, a religion of rights and wrongs, a kingdom of naysayers and dogooders who engage liberally in hot-button issues with fists up and boxing gloves on.

Another way to respond

What can we do? How can we respond to the Super Bowl halftime show's wanton display of sexual promiscuity and human depravity?

We acknowledge it for what it is.

Philip Yancey calls things like the halftime show "signs of thirst."

The halftime show is an outcry from people who are thirsty for love but have yet to be quenched. It's an exclamation of people hungry for spiritual freedom who still remain bound, tied up, fighting to break free.

We have to rise above the outrage in ourselves or, better yet, get

underneath and uproot it and pray like Henri Nouwen did, as recorded by Yancey in his book *Vanishing Grace*: *“God, help me to see others not as my enemies or as ungodly but rather as thirsty people. And give me the courage and compassion to offer your Living Water, which alone quenches deep thirst.”*

We have to follow Jesus’ example, such as with the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11). We have to get down off our virtual platforms and crouch in the dirt until we re-establish some common ground.

We all are sinners, after all. We all need a Savior. Until we don’t anymore, we need to heed Jesus’ words: *“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone.”*

Maybe then we will be in a better position to give his thirst-quenching gospel of grace.

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