

Reading the Culture

James C. Denison, Ph.D.

Theologian-in-Residence, Texas Baptist Convention

President, the Denison Forum on Truth and Culture

Submitted July 28, 2012

Randel Everett addresses "a crisis of morality"

Eighty percent of young evangelicals have engaged in premarital sex, according to the National Association of Evangelicals. Nearly a third of evangelicals' unplanned pregnancies end in abortion. Almost half the babies born in America are born to unmarried mothers. These are just some of the facts that lead Randel Everett to state, "Whether we like it or not, a crisis of morality has dawned upon the twenty-first century." What is the solution?

Dr. Everett is pastor of First Baptist Church in Midland, Texas, and the former Executive Director of the Texas Baptist Convention. All of us who know him expect whatever he writes to be profound, wise, and often humorous. *Pillars*, his latest book, is no exception. His treatise on the Ten Commandments relates their truth to life today in ways that are informative, inspiring, and often convicting.

Like most pastors, I have studied and taught the Ten Commandments for years. But I found in Everett's exposition several insights I'd never considered before:

- In the Hebrew text, the word "you" is singular in each of the commandments. They are addressed to each person individually, not to Israel generally, as God's specific word for us today.
- Citing J. I. Packer, Everett notes that "law and love form the axis of true morality." Law without love is mere principle, while love without law is blind.
- Commenting on the First Commandment: "It is important to get the idea of God right because we inevitably become like the god we worship."
- Since our bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), we should compare the abuse of sex to "the act of spitting on the altar in God's house."
- "When God made Adam and Eve He created the home before there was ever a temple or a synagogue or a church. There was a family unit before there was any organized religious activity or civil government. It was the family that was the very foundation of all human relationships."
- Taking children to church only when they want to go "is as effective as waiting until they get a desire to learn before enrolling them in school."
- "In the United States, the most dangerous place for a baby to be is in the mother's womb, for there are more than one and a half million abortions annually."
- "By the time of Jesus the Romans had conquered the Greeks, but the Greeks' immorality had conquered the Romans." Now we live in a culture that is as immoral as theirs.

- The Ten Commandments reinforce one another, for "very rarely will a person break the commandments one at a time."

Everett's treatise is not only a very insightful commentary on the Ten Commandments—it is a call to live by the moral standards and revealed truth of our Father. His quote from President Gerald Ford could be viewed as a summary of his entire exposition: "Truth is the glue that holds society together."