Let's Stop Redefining Sin

I remember the first time I heard a cuss word on TV. I remember the show; I remember the scene. My reaction was, "Whoa. They just pushed the envelope."

Some would laugh today if I mentioned the show and what was said. It now surely falls into the category of "what's-the-big-deal?" If I used this word, though, I think my mother would still wash my mouth out with soap. I'm not willing to find out.

My undergraduate degree required a class in communication law. I learned that, while the FCC does have rules defining what it obscene, indecent, and profane, much of their action is determined by community response. Advertisers also influence a producer's decision about what is shown or said. If people complain, advertisers fear losing business and may drop the show.

So if no one complains, the show goes on … and next season (or next episode), they'll push the envelope further. Over time, what we see and hear becomes commonplace—and accepted. We are seeing the truth of what John Wesley said: "What one generation tolerates, the next generation will embrace."

The most blatant example of this is the push to accept and approve homosexuality and embrace same-sex marriage on equal terms with heterosexual marriage. Many historians trace the roots back to the summer of '69 and the riots outside a gay bar called the Stonewall Inn. Over the years, the homosexual agenda has been pushed more and more. So, was the acceptance of homosexuality forced on us … or did we just gradually come to tolerate and finally accept it?

The prophet Daniel was called into read the writing on the wall. If you're not familiar with this event from history, Belshazzar, the Babylonian ruler, was having a seriously big party. He invited a thousand of his closest friends. As an act of mockery to God and His people, Belshazzar was using the holy vessels from the Jewish temple to get soused. But he sobered up quickly when a hand appeared and wrote his judgment on the wall.

Belshazzar didn't know it was a judgment until Daniel was called in to interpret the words and their meaning. Daniel could've told him what the words said and left it at that. But Daniel called out his sin, and he called sin sin. After reminding Belshazzar that he knew how God had brought judgment on Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel said."

"But you his successor, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this. Instead, you have exalted yourself against the Lord of the heavens. The vessels from his house were brought to you, and as you and your nobles, wives, and concubines drank wine from them, you praised the gods made of silver and gold, bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or understand. But you have not glorified the God who holds your life-breath in his hand and who controls the whole course of your life" (Dan. 5:22-23).

Daniel called sin what it is, and he did so to the face of the king. Daniel could've kept his mouth shut, but he was compelled to speak the truth. Based on Daniel's character we see in the rest of the book, I've no doubt that Daniel spoke these words with a tome of love and concern. But Belshazzar learned a hard lesson: "Be sure your sin will catch up with you" (Num. 32:23).

We live in a culture rampant with sin, but in many circles, it's not even being called sin anymore.

- Killing an unborn child is justified as making "a responsible choice based on my needs."
- Deviation away from God's standards for sex is viewed as simply a lifestyle choice.
- *"It may be wrong for you, but it's not wrong for me."* In other words, if a person doesn't think it's wrong, then it's not a sin.

People can redefine sin all they want, but it's still sin in God's eyes.

I am not rallying solely against abortion and homosexuality. I am rallying against turning a blind eye to sin—any sin. Let's speak the truth about sin—but let's do it with a load of love and grace.

Sin was a big enough deal to Jesus that He died to set us free from it. So let's confront the sin around us—and point to the life-giving forgiveness of Christ.