

How to live in a world in which Bill Cosby might be a serial rapist

Excerpted from the National Review; November 22, 2014

By Nancy French; Nationally acclaimed religious author

UPDATE July 2015: Bill Cosby has admitted to buying drugs to lure women into sex.

Rape. Bill Cosby. Let that sink in

I found myself wanting to hide this news from my kids, who are 15, 13, and seven. After we adopted a little girl from Africa a few years ago, I introduced them all to reruns of The Cosby Show. “Look!” Naomi would say as she pointed to Rudy. “She looks like me!”

Now that those reruns have been yanked off the air because of rape allegations, how do you live in a world where Bill Cosby might possibly be a rapist?

I, for one, don't want to. I want there to be people in the world who are really, actually good. I want men to be like the fictional Cliff: faithful, generous, pure, courageous, funny, kind. I want women to be like his fictional wife Claire: sexy, wise, loving, smart, and attentive.

Do these qualities exist in real life, a life not scripted by studio execs trying to create an ideal image? Anyone who's ever tried to find a good Biblical name for their kids realizes that it's really not easy to find good people—even in the Scriptures. Abraham put his wife in danger by lying about her being his sister. Aaron followed the people he was charged to lead and gave them a golden calf, rather than pointing them to God as the one deserving of their praise. Moses responded in anger, thus failing to enter the Promised Land. Saul cared more about himself than obeying God. David's sin with Bathsheba tainted his ability to lead for the remainder of his reign. Zechariah failed to trust God completely in providing a child for him.

And these are just the people in the Bible! Are there political leaders you'd like to emulate? High-profile preachers? Really, off the top of your head, think of a person in your life whom you trusted who recently disappointed you with a suddenly revealed private life, or even with a glance that made you realize they didn't have your best interests at heart. Are there too many to count?

I desperately want people to be good, but the issue cuts into my own soul. Do the above virtues even exist when I look in the mirror, when I'm not wearing my best clothes and make-up and when I'm not trying to project my best façade? Am I honest, selfless, humble?

Perhaps the Cosby allegations are so devastating because we want other people to be better than we are. We want someone to rise above, to reach beyond, to achieve a holiness we know must be possible. Isn't it?

I have to acknowledge what my family might readily admit: I'm both disappointed and disappointing. But as a Christian, my sin doesn't define me. I'm a child of God, called to live the life of a recovering, redeemed sinner in a world full of other morally corrupt people.

And so, in every circumstance of high-profile people screwing up, God is doing something profound, something deep, something deeply unnerving: He's showing us that He alone is God.

Like the Biblical Israelites, we tend to bow down to the charismatic people in front of us — people we can see, if only on screen. People we think can somehow represent the virtue that comes only from God Himself.

When Bill Cosby (or Bill Clinton, General Petraeus, Ray Rice, Kobe Bryant, or whoever your personal idol may be) falls down in a publically humiliating way, our reaction shows just how misguided we were to put our trust in them to begin with.

These scandals remind us that none of these people have the ability to save us; they — like us — are simply in need of a Savior.

But there is good news for those of you who sat on your sofa every Thursday night, delighted by the antics of the Huxtables.

There is a Father who won't disappoint, and we have access to Him because of the one perfect person who did manage to walk this earth without being revealed as a tax evader, a hiker of the figurative Appalachian Trail, a hirer of prostitutes, or a liar.

Thankfully, in this world of constant disappointment, one is all it took.

From the County Executive's Desk ■ By Lawrence County Executive T. R. Williams

Commission will move our county forward or back



Last Thursday night, County Commissioners voted down a proposal from the Budget Committee to hold a wheel tax referendum, eliminating one option we had to fix our budget problems.

I am disappointed that Lawrence Countians didn't get the opportunity to make a choice in this matter. The wheel tax increase would have been the most equitable way

for us to share responsibility for the services on which we all depend.

Because of that decision, the Budget Committee will meet tomorrow morning to restart a process they felt was already complete. Members spent 40+ hours going through the proposed 2015-16 budget line by line, eliminating almost \$1 million in spending. After cutting everything they felt they could without hurting programs, there was still a big difference between county spending and revenue. The wheel tax increase would have provided funding to change that.

Now, the Budget Committee must come up with a plan that balances spending and revenue with a property tax increase, more spending cuts, or a combination of the two. Then, their proposal will have to be approved by a majority of the County Commission.

However the Commission chooses to close the gap between spending and revenue, it *has* to be done this year. Costs have risen while revenue lagged, so revenue has been supplemented with the county's savings, or fund balances. Now those fund balances are too low to allow that to continue. You would see the same thing happen if you used

your savings to pay your bills — eventually, you would run out of money.

As County Executive, I have short- and long-term goals for this community. The first is to stabilize our finances by eliminating the deficit spending that depleted our fund balances. We must then rebuild them so they can serve as the rainy day (rather than every day) funds they are intended to be, to help our community grow and thrive.

A healthy bottom line will help us achieve not only my long-term goal but everyone's: more higher-paying jobs for our community. We are working hard to make that happen, and several prospects have toured our new spec building in Team Lawrence Park. I'm encouraged by the work of our new Chamber president, Ethan Hadley, who arrived in Lawrence County with a tremendous record of success in economic development.

We want our county to stand out because of its well-educated, skilled workforce. I hope parents are already talking to next spring's high school graduates about the Tennessee Promise, which provides two years' tuition at a community college or technical school; and returning students take advantage of the Tennessee Reconnect grant, which allows adults to attend technical school free of charge. For more information about these and other programs, visit the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation at TN.gov/collegepays.

We do *not* want our county to stand out because our roads and schools are in terrible condition; law enforcement and emergency services are under-equipped; or because we do not support the work of dedicated volunteers in our communities.

A property tax increase and/or spending cuts are on the table for Commissioners. As I see it, their vote can move our county forward or backward. Standing still isn't an option.

I know you are but what am I?

Or how to hijack a good debate

By Emily Weathers Kennedy

Guest Columnist

Because I am an op-ed writer, I am often drawn into political debates, and I usually don't mind. In fact, I instigate some of them. Sometimes I come away with a newfound understanding of a person and his or her beliefs.

When this happened recently, each side decided our friendship was worth more than winning a debate. Though bruised, we participated in something vital to our country's conversation. After all, Thomas Jefferson did say, “It is the duty of every American citizen to take part in a vigorous debate on the issues of the day.” While most folks would disregard debate as a “duty,” it can be quite healthy for the nation as a whole.

At one point in our nation's history (and it wasn't that long ago), debate and compromise within our government were possible. Men and women in Congress could thrash each other on the Senate and House floors then compromise over drinks and meals afterwards. Somewhere along the line, however, something else became infused into the political conversation, pushing elected officials to one side or another like boxers punching and dancing around each other then retreating to their own corners for their managers to whisper fighting words to pump up the adrenaline.

“Hook with your left! Go after birth records!”

“Pound with your right! Keep him deflecting and don't let him get a swing in! Make sure he doesn't get one piece of legislation passed.”

“Use misspeak. Say ‘pro abortion’ instead of ‘pro choice’ and ‘abortion rights’ not ‘privacy rights.’”

“Hit a low blow. Swift boat his war record.”

This vitriol filtered down to everyday citizens via the media, especially talk radio. When I hear such lines of thinking, I am reminded of arguing with my siblings as children. My sister just liked to argue - about **anything**. We went around and around until I was worn down, spent. My brother would go a few rounds then just retort, “You're just jealous!” That stance worked; I felt like my head was going to explode, so I left, knowing I could not win. Those two were good. Very good.

There are names for such tactics, though I didn't know it then. Though my siblings grew out of them, they were clever in using them way back when and gave me practice in knowing how not

to debate as an adult. When people use these and others on me now, I walk away or run, depending on the situation. For example:

1. Confusing or clouding an issue so that the original point gets lost. Either stick with the original topic or I will have to take my leave.

2. Condescending or patronizing with such comments as, “You liberals are cowards. You run from an argument once you know you are caught.” No, I won't launch an attack and then skedaddle (hit and run) before my opponent can counter-attack. The reality is that I am perfectly capable of backing up points with facts. I just choose not to beat my head against the wall.

3. Using double standards where one set of rules applies to one group and a very different set of rules applies to another group (also known as *hypocrisy*, when the easier, looser, standards apply to only one side). For example (and this is my favorite): “Poor people who get money from the government are ‘takers,’ and ‘leeches getting handouts,’ but rich people who get millions or billions of dollars from the government are ‘smart businessmen.’” That double standard is also used in the push for drug testing for “takers” of federal money (i.e. the poor vs. corporations).

4. Using uneven standards of acceptance and intolerance for statements and beliefs from opposite sides of an argument. For example: demanding that opponents accept statements and beliefs in the name of open-mindedness and tolerance (e.g. Confederate flag = Southern pride), while simultaneously denouncing the opponents' statements and beliefs (e.g. offense over flag = too much sensitivity).

5. Making up laws. When I hear, “Unconstitutional use of Executive Orders” I cringe. Not only is the speaker unaware of the constitutionality of Executive Orders but also the use of said orders by former presidents with no issue.

6. Disregarding mistakes (e.g. weapons of mass destruction) and rewriting history. Comparing the freely elected President of the United States to Hitler or other tyrants and despots is profoundly lowbrow. I won't engage.

□So, go on, give debate a whirl, but if what I hear sounds like: “I know you are but what am I?” I'm outta there. Vamoosed. Gone.

Emily Weathers Kennedy is a freelance writer, blogger, artist, photo stylist, and decorator. Her work is online and in product catalogs. Emily lives with her husband, 4 dogs, and 1 cat and writes from their farm in Loretto, where she was born and raised.

“Fixing No Child Left Behind and Ending the Federal Mandate on Common Core”

By Lamar Alexander; U.S. Senator; R-Nashville



This week the U.S. Senate began debate on a bipartisan agreement to fix No Child Left Behind, an education law that Newsweek magazine calls the “law that everyone wants to fix.” The agreement would end the federal mandate on Common Core and restore responsibility to states, local officials, teachers and parents for 50 million children in 100,000 public schools.

I negotiated this bipartisan legislation, the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015, with the Senate education committee's top Democrat Sen. Patty Murray, D-Wash., and we found a broad consensus about the urgent need to fix this law—and remarkable consensus about how to fix it.

And the consensus is this: that we should continue the law's important measurements of students' academic progress but restore to states, school districts, classroom teachers, and parents the responsibility for deciding what to do about the results of these measurements. This change should produce fewer tests for our students and more appropriate ways to measure their

achievement. It is the most effective path to advance higher state academic standards, better teaching, and real accountability.

Many busy Tennessee parents may not know that their children have been going to school for the last seven years under a broken and expired federal education law. However they have no doubt heard about the frustration over Common Core, the academic standards that most states have adopted.

In 2009, the U.S. Department of Education created a \$4.4 billion pot of money that states competed for—called “Race to the Top”—and gave states got additional points for adopting Common Core.

No Child Left Behind expired in 2001 and Congress has not been able to agree on how to fix it, so in 2012 the Obama administration began offering waivers to states from the law's unworkable requirements. In return, the Education Secretary required states to adopt certain academic standards.

Too much federal control has governors, chief state school officers, and teachers complaining about federal overreach.

Our legislation would end the federal mandate on Common Core, affirm that states may decide for themselves what academic standards they will adopt without interference from Washington, D.C., and send decisions about educating Tennessee's children back into the hands of Gov. Haslam, the Tennessee legislature, our school districts, teachers and parents.

Under our proposal, the federal government may not mandate or incentivize states to adopt or maintain any particular set of standards, including Common Core. Tennessee can choose Common Core if it likes, but it can't be mandated by Washington. States will be free to decide what academic standards to maintain in their states. If they want Common Core, they can have Common Core. If they want half of Common Core, they can have half of it. If states want Un-Common Core, they can have that too.

In addition to ending the federal mandate on Common Core, the legislation would also strengthen state and local control, end the education secretary's waivers, maintain important information for parents, teachers and communities, end federal test-based accountability, and help states fix the lowest-performing schools, support teachers, expand their best charter schools, and improve the fragmentation of early childhood education programs.

I hope we can finish our business on the Senate floor, negotiate a bill in conference with the U.S. House of Representatives, and send a bill to the president for his signature before the end of the year.

If senators were students in a classroom, none of us would expect to receive a passing grade for unfinished work. Seven years is long enough to consider fixing No Child Left Behind.

Letters ...continued from A-4

Try to understand!

Dear Editor:

I am in agreement with Sam Kennedy's article in the July 1 Advocate. I happen to be descendant of several Confederate veterans and as far as I know no Union veterans. I think there is much we as Southern people can be proud of without having constantly to bring up the War between the States. If folks want to remember that brief history (5 terrible years+) let them. I am proud of the South's overall contributions to American life in areas such as culture, history, politics, sports, science and many others. We Southern people are not just white Christians but also include: African-Americans, Jewish-Americans, Asian-Americans, Native-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and others.

We should also recall that not all Southerners in the 1860's supported the Confederate cause. A number believed in the Federal cause. Some folks switched sides during the war or sought to remain neutral. I am a history bug and love reading American history especially Southern history.

I really don't believe that anyone is trying to take anybody's flag away from them. But do remember that there are people who may find it offensive. Try to understand their reasons. - Bob Hayes (Lawrenceburg)

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