

THOUGHTS ON FOLLOWING THE CROWD

GROUP #1: Martin Luther King Jr.

"Strength to Love" Sermon, Philadelphia: Fortress Press 1963

"People are afraid to be different. Their great concern is to be accepted socially. They live by some such principle as this: "Everybody is doing it, so it must be all right." For so many of you morality merely reflects group consensus. In modern thinking, the mores are accepted as the right ways. You have unconsciously come to believe that what is right is determined by public opinion polls."

Martin Luther King Jr. goes on (paraphrased)..."Each person has within themselves the ability to stand up for what they believe in, but they must resign themselves to the difficult task of finding the courage to act responsibly. Because everyone is doing something doesn't make it right. A behavior that has always been considered to be wrong cannot suddenly become right even if society has accepted it. Your behavior should be determined by what your parents have taught you and what you know deep inside you to be right and wrong even if it contradicts the behavior practiced by your friends or society in general."

1. What is the message from Martin Luther King Jr.?

2. What is your opinion concerning it?

3. What are the guidelines he suggests using when deciding if a behavior is right or wrong?

4. How does this message apply to sexual activity?

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GROUP #2: Vaclav Havel

Former President of Czechoslovakia

Open Letters. Selected Writings, 1965-1990

(Paul Wilson, ed. New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1991)

Discussing the changes in moral attitudes in society, he cautions us about the future. His suggestions:

We need to "raise our sights a little above our limited perspective in order to realize with horror how hastily we are all abandoning positions which only yesterday we refused to desert." (He is referring to sexual activity on a "casual basis".) What social conscience only yesterday regarded as improper is today casually excused; tomorrow it will eventually be thought natural, and the day after we may consider it model behavior. What yesterday we thought could never happen, today we accept with astonishment as a fact of life." (paraphrase)

1. What was the message of President Havel?

2. If a particular behavior is condoned by society in general, does that make it right or okay?

3. How can a behavior that was morally wrong yesterday be morally okay today or tomorrow?

4. How does this message apply to sexual activity?

