

Times have changed, but standards shouldn't

by Mark Pavilons

There's no question we're living in interesting times.

The oft-heard phrase "when I was your age ..." still holds true today. And yes, I did walk through three-foot-high snow drifts to catch my bus in rural Caledon back in the day.

There's no denying that the world, society, technology, have all experienced a whirlwind of changes in the past couple of decades.

Heck, in the last 100 years (just two generations ago), we've enjoyed everything from running water and telephones, to central heating, A/C and video games.

I can still remember, with a smidgen of fondness, our rotary dial landline at our home. I remember the first flip phones, fax machines, LCD watches and TV remotes.

I also remember riding a bike down a dirt road and just hanging out in the back 40, enjoying minnows nibbling my toes in the Humber River. I remember learning to drive stick in my dad's 1973 VW Beetle. I recall trying to make music by blowing a blade of grass between my thumbs.

Computers went from 0 to a 50% adoption rate in just five years. Since the 1990s, things have exploded, to the point where things like podcasts, social media and self-driving contrivances are commonplace.

It's funny, you know, that as our technological prowess has grown exponentially, our frail humanity has shown its weakness.

The pandemic revealed that, despite our knowledge and medical advancements, we succumbed to a simple, albeit nasty, virus. With all the might and brainpower of the human race, the world was paralyzed by a bug.

Strong countries, social safeguards, health care and our once vibrant economy, all took a beating.

Dreams, and entire lives, were lost in the past two years.

The fastest cellular network on the planet won't cure that.

While I like my iPhone and Roomba vacuum, I still enjoy face-to-face conversations. I do like rolling up my sleeves and cleaning and cooking from scratch, albeit with a few new gizmos. I find an air fryer and rice cooker invaluable!

Human beings pride ourselves on our resourcefulness and resilience. We adapt, change, grow and learn.

As crazy as the world gets sometimes, it's nice to know that people haven't changed.

Or have they?

Jimmy Carter once said while we must adjust to changing times, we still have to hold to unchanging principles.

And S. Truett Cathy said we need to be reminded that the important things in our world haven't changed, and the important things will not change if we keep our priorities in proper order.

Ah, there's the rub.

Despite the fact there are many reasons for optimism in the future, we're still plagued by inherent weaknesses ??reed, hate, violence, bias and ignorance.

I find that often, it's one step forward, two steps back.

Kim Dotcom said the very powerful and the very stupid have one thing in common:??Instead of changing their views to fit the facts, they try to change the facts to fit their views.?

Alas, some of our brethren have given in to some rather unscrupulous behaviour.

Today, more than ever before in our past, our world is filled with scammers, tricksters, fakers, con artists and thieves.

Every day, calls and emails promise fame and fortune, only to milk the unsuspecting out of their hard-earned money. Seniors are preyed upon for their gullibility. Regular people are often conned into ?that sure thing? or ?guaranteed investment.?

There are more lottery games, online gambling sites and ways to spend your money than any time in our history. That's what technology has given us, and for our sins, we accept them with open arms.

We are a society of consumers, time-wasters and protestors. We grow fat on our gluttony.

And our faith is being tested. Congregations are dwindling, and many churches face dropping attendance. And all the while, TV evangelists and animated preachers are finding new audiences online, and new ways to pass the collection plate.

I really wouldn't want to live in society where the flavour of the month is all we talk about; where the newest and latest reigns supreme. I would hate to be part of a system where people take a back seat to things and money.

What happened to wholesome compassion, good manners, politeness and paying it forward?

We call things ?old school.??What's so ?old? about laughing at a clean joke, or listening to music on the radio that doesn't have to be bleeped out?

When I was a kid, we would never think of stealing or shoplifting. We respected our elders and often said please and thank you.

I?really wonder what some of our youth would do if the F-bomb was removed from modern vocabulary.

It's more common than vowels on Wheel of Fortune.

Yes, we're all under stress, physically and mentally. Many of us are financially stretched. Enjoying retirement is a dream for many Canadians.

But smiles are free. Taking the time to let someone ahead in line, or holding a door open, don't cost a thing.

Saying thank you to a cashier or ?have a good day? in an email take little effort.

I don't know a lot about karma, but what I do know is that we can't survive, and thrive, without positive actions.