

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

A Program for an All-Staff Seminar or
Retreat of a Church and/or Christian School

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Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

As we begin our reflection on this subject, we need to consider a few essential prolegomena, i.e. prefatory principles.

1. Speaking the truth in love is from God's Word. (Ephesians 4:15) It is also most effective.
2. Sound (Biblically based) theory is valuable and important. Applying Immanuel Kant: ***While theory without practicality is empty, practicality without theory is blind.*** (Why I suggested you read John Cooper's essay on America's greatest idol first)

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3. The German-American social psychologist Kurt Lewin thus observed that ***there's nothing so practical as a good theory, to which I add...and sound, Biblically-based historic Christian theology, which is also very practical***, especially when one carefully examines and follows the implications and applications.

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4. To maximize our ability to think carefully about the theme of our focus and its related subjects, and thereby to minimize the need to take notes, I've put this PowerPoint presentation in sentence outline form, and anyone who would like to have it can e-mail me or download it for free on my Web site. My contact information card is at your table. (I'm not selling anything; it's all free!) ☺

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5. I warmly invite you to ask me any questions or make any comments you'd like about any aspect of the subject before us.

You are also welcome to ask me anything else in our plenary sessions or individually at break times, at lunch, or after we conclude.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

As we begin our reflection on this subject, we need to consider a few prolegomena.

Sociologically, culture means the beliefs, customs, and ways of life of a particular society. In his insightful article, "God, Reason, and Our Civilizational Crisis," Samuel Gregg adds the most important dimension of culture.

6. Gregg points out, "The word 'culture' is derived from the Latin *cultus*, which broadly means 'religious customs' or 'rites.' This illustrates that religion, in the sense of views about the Divine, is truly at the heart of any culture. A particular religion's concept of the Divine thus cannot help but profoundly influence the societies in which that faith prevails."
- + The implications of this principle are especially far reaching in Islam which, since its founding by Muhammed, has always been a political entity as well as a religion. ***Never forget this aspect of Islam.***

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"The way that a culture understands the nature of God shapes its conception of man, reason, and society. Though this presents enormous challenges for the Islamic world, it also has significant implications for the sustainability of Western civilization." (Samuel Gregg, *God, Reason, and Our Civilizational Crisis*)

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A practical application of this principle:

To whom would you rather live next door? To a person who thinks the divine is somebody who's sitting in a rocker somewhere up in the atmosphere, detached from what is occurring on earth and recalling earlier eons when he sowed wild oats himself and winks at sin today?

Or to person who believes that God is most holy, who loves the people he's created, and who will hold accountable and bring to justice those who harm his people?

What will Saturday nights be like in your neighborhood with each viewpoint operative?

A Beginning Question:

**DOES OUR VIEW OF THE CULTURE
AFFECT OUR ABILITY TO SPEAK THE
TRUTH IN LOVE IN TODAY'S CULTURE?**

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Four Views of the Culture

1. "The culture is 'headed to hell in a handbasket.' The world is only going to get worse; don't waste your time with fruitless efforts that will only prolong the Lord from returning sooner."

Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- a. The Greek wording of John 3:16—"For loved God the world, that the Son the only begotten he gave...." is significant for the meaning of the text.
 - 1) The grammar of the Greek, mentioning love first, emphasizes the love God has of the world including its cultures, though obviously not their evil, even though *cosmos* (world) in John's Greek includes its evil, just as we can love a person but not everything he or she does.

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Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- 2) Notice that Jesus is *monogene*, only begotten, of the same substance, one with the Father—not at all the same as "one and only Son." This essential aspect of his relationship to the Father and to the Holy Spirit is vital in speaking with Muslims as well as Jehovah's Witnesses and other unitarians.
 - + Thus as the outstanding educator Sara Little urged, we need to teach the language of the Christian Christian community, especially that which is in the Bible. It's not too hard.
 - + If we can require students to know deoxyribonucleic acid DNA), we can teach them only begotten, which is far more important.

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Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- 3) The good in cultures will be included in the new heaven and the new earth. (Isaiah 60, Revelation 21:24-27)
- b. Without the above knowledge, how motivated is someone with this first view to engage the culture and to speak the truth in love?

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Four Views of the Culture

2. The culture is what it is. We need to adapt to the culture lest the church is perceived as a dinosaur and behind the times. If especially teens and young adults can see that we are “with it” they’ll be less likely to reject the church and come on board.

Biblical Comparison or Contrast

This view of the culture contrasts with God's Word and with logic. Many texts throughout the Bible contrast God's will for his people with the surrounding culture. The major motif (theme) running throughout Scripture of the holy, that of God and what he requires of his people, and related concepts involves being separate to God and uncommon.

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Biblical Comparison or Contrast

“Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine” of Babylon (1:8), and he defied the decree of Persian King Darius to not pray to God. (6:10)

The meaning of the church in its very name, is seen in the translation of the Greek word, *ekklesia*, literally “those who are called out” (Gk. *ek*, out of + *kaleo*, to call). Peter says we are “aliens and strangers” to the world. (1 Peter 2:11)

Paul says, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.” (Romans 12:2)

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Biblical Comparison or Contrast

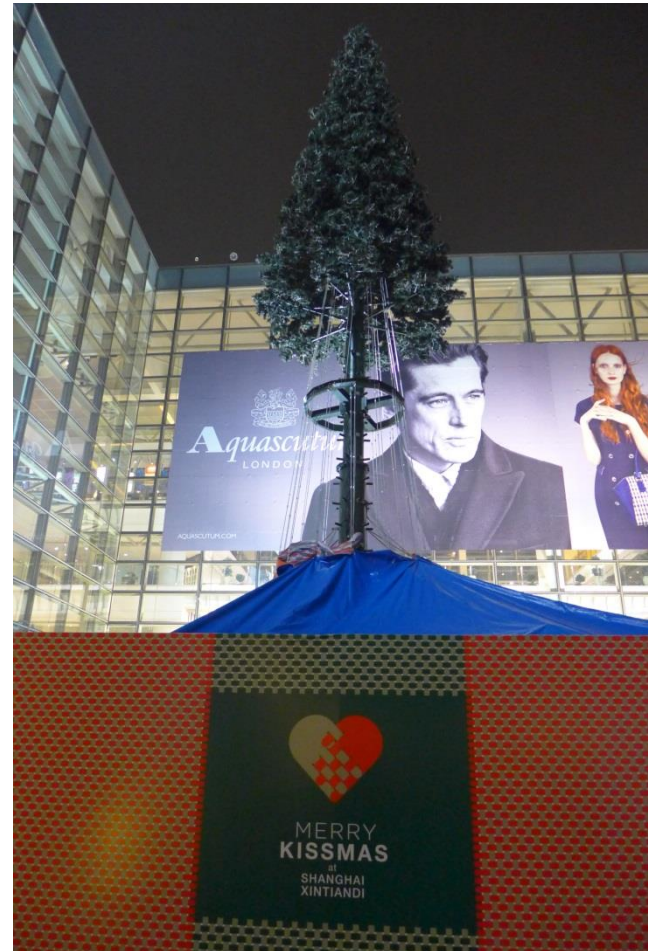
We can explain especially to those who don't accept the Bible as their authority that such a view of culture is illogical.

This view commits the naturalistic fallacy: it is illogical to move from is to ought. Just because something is, it does not logically follow ipso facto that it ought to be that way.

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A related form of this second view is seen in other cultures admiring ours and adopting Western culture without discernment. From Shanghai, just one of many examples of the adoption of Western values in China

- “Kissmas”
- Dress
- Airbrushing of male and female models Westernizing their facial features
- Urge people in other countries and in this country to be very discerning about what Western values they adopt; some are consistent with the Biblical foundation on which the U. S. was built, but other values are contrary to God's Word, are demonically motivated, and should be rejected. (1 John 4:1-6)



Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Four Views of the Culture

Biblical Comparison or Contrast

3. The culture can be transformed: we are to bring about the Kingdom of God already in this age. See the excellent document from the International Christian Network, "World Evangelization or World Transformation?"

- a. This view contrasts with the Biblical view of God's kingdom.
 - 1) The kingdom of God is already here but not in its fullest sense until Christ returns. The kingdom of God is the rule of God in human hearts and minds. (Luke 17:20-21; Romans 8:22-24a)
 - 2) "Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world....'" (John 18:36)
 - 3) "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit...." (Romans 14:17)

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Four Views of the Culture

Biblical Comparison or Contrast

3. The culture can be transformed: we are to bring about the Kingdom of God already in this age.

- b. This view contrasts with the Biblical view of sin and its pervasive and profound effects. (Genesis 3:14-19; Deuteronomy 31:29; Judges 2:19; Psalm 14:1; 51:1-5; 53:3; 73:8; Jeremiah 17:9; Ezekiel 16:47; Hosea 5:3; Matthew 17:17; Acts 2:40; Romans 3:23; 6:19; 7:18; 8:3-13; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Galatians 5:13-24; Ephesians 4:22; 1 Timothy 6:5; 2 Timothy 3:8; Titus 1:15; 3:11; 2 Peter 2:10)

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Biblical Comparison or Contrast

c. Before bearing fruit the corrupt nature must be changed, and the new nature only comes through being born again by the work of the Holy Spirit. (John 3:3-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3) In fact Jesus says that no one can see (3:3) much less enter (3:5) the kingdom of God except through the work of the Holy Spirit.

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3. The culture can be transformed: we are to bring about the Kingdom of God already in this age.

d. This view contrasts with the Biblical teaching about who Jesus Christ is by emphasizing his humanity over his divinity and presenting him as a model to follow rather than the divine only begotten Son of God, who is the way, truth, and life and the only way to the Father. (John 3:16; 14:6; Romans 10:9; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4)

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Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- e. How motivated is someone with this view to speak the truth in love about the primary and most essential aspect of the kingdom of God and of our calling, i.e., proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ which changes human nature...AND ALONE PROVIDES HUMAN BEINGS' MOST REALISTIC HOPE, for which everyone longs (Augustine: God made us, and our hearts are restless until they find their rest in him) and which many sense, such as the Lesbian I quote in my book, *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love*.

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture? Here is a lesbian's perspective.

When the word "homosexual" is mentioned in the church, we hold our breaths and sit in fear...Rarely do we hear any words of hope...To those of you who would change the church to accept the gay community and its lifestyle: you give us no hope at all. To those of us who know God's word and will not dilute it to fit our desires, we ask you to read John's letter to the church in Pergamum. "I have a few things against you: You have people there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin by eating food sacrificed to idols and by committing sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans. Repent therefore!" You are willing to compromise the word of God to be politically correct. We are not deceived..."He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches."

She longs to hear the truth...albeit in love.

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Four Views of the Culture

3. The culture can be transformed: we are to bring about the Kingdom of God already in this age.

Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- f. “This tendency [to recommit the error of the Social Gospel Movement in the early 20th century is] bound to lead to a cooling off of evangelistic zeal.” (“World Evangelism or World Transformation?” International Christian Network , 2013, p. 7)
- g. Therefore, we must not fail to include in our conversation with people the whole truth, the most essential truth about Christ. But not necessarily in the first comments we make.

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Four Views of the Culture

4. The world (cosmos) and its cultures are separated from but loved by God, who calls his people, the church, to proclaim God's plan of salvation that is only in Jesus Christ. In this way only is the kingdom of God extended and nurtured.

Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- a. "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor." (Matthew 11:4-5; cf. Isaiah 35:3-5)
- b. ***Healing, feeding the poor, and other humanitarian efforts (which can pass away) are effective means to a greater end, but not an effective end in themselves.***
- c. The greatest hope for any culture is **both** the extension and nurture of God's kingdom.

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4. The world (cosmos) and its cultures are separated from but loved by God, who calls his people, the church, to proclaim God's plan of salvation that is only in Jesus Christ. In this way only is the kingdom of God extended and nurtured.

Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- d. We should try to include the Gospel of Christ in our conversations, but we need to begin where people are and "earn the right to be heard."
 - + Remember the word love (*agape*) in Ephesians 4:15 (speak the truth in love) is defined in 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 includes being patient, kind, not rude.
 - + We listen, actively.
 - + At first we appeal to the standards they and we use, e.g., science (true science being part of God's general revelation) and logic.

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Biblical Comparison or Contrast

- e. Keep in mind that the greatest hope for any culture is **both** the extension and nurture of God's kingdom.
 - + Extension involves regeneration (the new nature necessary for salvation and firm hope).
 - + Nurture involves sanctification (maturity in Christ necessary for effective service). Without nurture people remain spiritual infants.

What Does God's Word Say to Help Us
Speak the Truth in Love in Our Culture?

**FOR ENGAGING THE CULTURE IN
GENERAL, SEE JEREMIAH 29:1-13.**

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Questions

The culture of Babylon was characterized by a wealthy, prosperous, and powerful city of ca. 7,000,000. Their religion was polytheistic, the gods being personifications of various forces of nature, local, and limited, none being all powerful. Noted for much immorality.

1. What is God's will as to how his people view the culture?
2. What is God's will as to how his people engage the culture?
3. Many other Bible texts offer related teaching on this subject. Do any come to mind? See the Current Issues page on my Web site at www.fromacorntooak12.com.

Task

What answers to the questions pertaining *in general* to our engaging the culture does God give us in Jeremiah 29:1-13?

- Notice especially the highlighted verses.
- Which of the above four views of culture does the LORD indicate is his will for his people?

¹ This is the text of the letter that the prophet Jeremiah sent from Jerusalem to the surviving elders among the exiles and to the priests, the prophets and all the other people Nebuchadnezzar had carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. ² (This was after King Jehoiachin and the queen mother, the court officials and the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem, the craftsmen and the artisans had gone into exile from Jerusalem.)

³ He entrusted the letter to Elasah son of Shaphan and to Gemariah son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent to King Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. It said: ⁴ This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵ "Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶ Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. ⁷ Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." ⁸ Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: "Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. ⁹ They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them," declares the LORD.

¹⁰ This is what the LORD says: "When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. ¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. ¹² Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. ¹³ You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:1-13)

What Does God's Word Say to Help Us
Speak the Truth in Love in Our Culture?

**FOR ENGAGING THE CULTURE WITH
SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS SEE JOHN 4:1-42.**

Background information for Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman recorded in John 4:1-42

Samaria is the name of a mountain, city, and region 42 miles N. of Jerusalem. When King Solomon died, the kingdom of Israel was divided into the Northern Kingdom, called Israel, and by synecdoche, Samaria. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah. The Northern Kingdom quickly became apostate, and when God judged Israel by the conquering nation of Assyria (in 721 B. C.), the Assyrians brought in many pagan people who intermarried with the remaining Israelites who became known as the Samaritans, who held to the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) but had other religious distinctions apart from the Jews.

God also judged Judah for its own apostasy in 586 B. C. by using Babylon, which exiled the Jews (the term coming from Judah) to Babylon for 70 years. When the Jews returned from exile, they continued to reject the Samaritans, who they viewed as apostate and foreigners, forgetting Genesis 12:1-3, the message of Jonah, and the main mission message of the Old Testament.

Thus there was much animosity between Jews and Samaritans. Moreover, rabbis would not speak with Samaritans. Rarely if ever would one speak in public with a woman. (Notice v. 27.)

Background information for Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman recorded in John 4:1-42

This woman was also a divorcee (five times, v. 18). Further, she was cohabiting with a sixth man who she hadn't married. Biblical scholars observe that when Jesus pointed out these truths, the woman didn't like the way the conversation was going and, changing the subject (v. 19), began to argue about worship, a subject of keen controversy between Samaritans and Jews.

Samaritans maintained that "this mountain," Mount Gerizim, was especially sacred and the one where proper worship was to be offered. The Samaritans had built a temple on Mount Gerizim (ca. 400 B. C.), which the Jews destroyed in 128 B. C. thus increasing the animosity between the two groups.

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

As we read John 4:1-42, look for answers in the text to these questions:

1. What is God's will as to how his people view the culture? Notice verses 9, 42.
2. What is God's will as to how his people engage individuals within the culture?

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Jacob's Well (John 14:6)
today where Jesus spoke
with the Samaritan woman.
Notice:

- Verse 11 “the well is deep.”
- See all the rope needed to lower the bucket.
- The time it took water poured from a cup to reach the water in the well was four seconds!
(Hear the splash.)



Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

Another important truth for engaging individuals with the Gospel is seen in this video.

- Atheists and other critics of the Bible say there is nothing outside the Bible to corroborate what is in the Bible.
- Here is one of many. Of course the Bible doesn't need proof; it can stand on its own, but tell them about this ancient archaeological site or even show it to them.



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- The hills of Samaria, in particular Mount Gerizim, the context of Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. Jacob lived ca. 1900 B. C.
- The last hill in the video is Mount Ebal.



Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Questions

1. What is God's will as to how his people view the culture?
Notice verses 9, 42.
2. What is God's will as to how his people engage individuals within the culture?

Task

What answers to the questions pertaining to speaking the truth in love ***specifically with individuals*** in our culture can we identify, and use ourselves, in Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well? Be specific; think of actual individuals.

- Work in small groups with others who teach the same ages you teach.
- Which of the above four views of culture does the LORD indicate is his will for his people? Cite at least three reasons for your answer.

Does our view of the culture affect our ability to speak the truth in love in today's culture?

Questions

1. What is God's will as to how his people view the culture?
Notice verses 9, 42.
2. What is God's will as to how his people engage individuals within the culture?

Task

Which of the above four views of culture does the LORD indicate is his will for his people? Cite at least three reasons for your answer. Did you think of these?

1. Jesus' conversation with a despised person.
2. Jesus showed love to this person. (How? See 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.)
3. Jesus began with a material need but led to much more.
4. Jesus proclaimed the Gospel to her.

DISCUSS: What Impediments to Speaking the Truth in Love Can You Identify?

List Impediments

1. For example: Wanting to be liked by everyone.
2. Another impediment:

What can we say in response?

1. To someone who wants to be liked by everyone:
 - a. "I'd rather be liked by God."
 - b. "Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted." (2 Timothy 3:12)
 - c. "Keeping God's commands is what counts." (1 Corinthians 7:19)
 - d. Jesus said, "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets." (Luke 6:26)
- 2.

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**FOCUS ON ONE OF THREE CURRENT
ISSUES YOU WILL LIKELY ENCOUNTER.**

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

1. Islam and Its Already Pervasive Presence in Our Society and Influence in Our Culture: Some truths to engage in love.

- a. Read the recommended resources identified below pertaining to this subject.
- b. Remember what one missionary to Muslims has said: many Muslims in your neighborhood are experiencing culture shock, are lonely, being half a world away from their home, and are very open to receiving love.

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1. Islam and Its Already Pervasive Presence in Our Society and Influence in Our Culture: Some truths to engage in love.

- c. Keep in mind that many are here on a mission. Islam has goals of domination worldwide and in the U. S.
- d. Islam's mission is not to assimilate into a culture but to subject it to Islam and to Sharia Law.
- e. Is this true of all Muslims? It is for those who take their religion seriously, who are Muslim in more than name only.
 - + Read their literature, especially the Qur'an and the Hadith.

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1. Islam and Its Already Pervasive Presence in Our Society and Influence in Our Culture: Some truths to engage in love.

f. Never forget two realities:

- 1- The most profound and pervasive is the spiritual war with Satan and his demonic spiritual and human followers.
- 2- Nominal Muslims many of whom are nice people, some of whom I've worked with in the Middle East, can be and have been radicalized by the fiery rhetoric of passionate imams in the Mosques and in the public square.

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1. Islam and Its Already Pervasive Presence in Our Society and Influence in Our Culture: Some truths to engage in love.

g. What can we do? Our nation's only hope, as well as that of all other nations, is to extend and nurture the kingdom of God, the rule of God in human hearts by speaking the truth in love whenever we have the opportunity. PRAY.

- + **Do not be afraid**. Another major motif throughout the whole Bible is God's comforting command to not be afraid to do his will as he is calling us to do. (E.g., Deuteronomy 31:6; Isaiah 41:10; Matthew 10:28; Acts 18:9-10)
- + "One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: 'Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.'"

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2. Heterosexual Moral Mores and Matters: Some truths to engage in love in connection with the recommended readings.

a. Speaking the truth in love about **abortion**:

- 1- Psalm 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:5
- 2- The baby in the womb is not “just an appendage” of his or her mother. The baby has his or her own unique DNA distinct from both biological parents.
- 3- The baby has its own heartbeat in 18 days and pumps blood in 21 days, brainwaves in 40 days, and fingerprints in just 14 weeks.
- 4- Abortion is thus infanticide. Since it is planned, i.e., premeditated, it fits the definition of murder one. Avoid deceptive and diversionary redefinitions that distort the truth and destroy lives, adults as well as babies.

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2. Heterosexual Moral Mores and Matters:
Some truths to engage in love in connection with the recommended readings.

a. Speaking the truth in love about **abortion**:

5- Mention the danger to women, for they are not told.

6- Refer to the gross and unconscionable disclosures about Planned Parenthood and the abortion industry. Follow the money.

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2. Heterosexual Moral Mores and Matters: Some truths to engage in love in connection with the recommended readings.

a. Speaking the truth in love about **abortion**:

7- For all: be loving. "Love is patient... kind...not rude...not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-7) WE CAN DO THIS!

8- For someone considering an abortion: offer emotional and other support including prolife services.

9- For someone who has had an abortion: remember the hurt lasts; offer grace and forgiveness in Christ and, as Jesus said, "Go and sin no more." (Ephesians 2:8-10; John 8: 11.)

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2. Heterosexual Moral Mores and Matters:
Some truths to engage in love in connection with the recommended readings.

- b. Speaking the truth in love about cohabitation, a rapidly growing phenomenon in our culture:
- 1- It is not God's will.
(Genesis 2:24,
Matthew 19:5-6,
John 4:17-18,
Ephesians 5:3)
 - 2- The science does not support cohabiting.

Cohabitation Unsupported by Science

As David Popenoe and Barbara Dafoe Whitehead wrote in their report for The National Marriage Project at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, “it is especially important for [young adults] to know what contributes to marital success and what may threaten it. Yet many young people do not know the basic facts about cohabitation and its risks. Nor are parents, teachers, clergy and others who instruct the young in matters of sex, love and marriage well acquainted with the social science evidence.” In a recent update they conclude that **“no positive contribution of cohabitation to marriage has ever been found.”** [Emphasis mine]

Of course that result is to be expected. When God tells us not to do something, it is for our own good. Therefore, we would expect to see empirical observation of the benefits of following God’s law, and we do see that in a vast amount of research that has been carefully done according to the established scientific method. In their report Popenoe and Whitehead write the following.

The belief that living together before marriage is a useful way “to find out whether you really get along,” and thus a way to avoid a bad marriage and an eventual divorce, is now widespread among young people. But the available data on the effects of cohabitation contradict this belief. There is no evidence that those who decide to cohabit before marriage will have a stronger marriage than those who don’t live together, and some evidence to suggest that those who live together before marriage are more likely to break up after marriage. (Quote from my essay, “Is Cohabitation an Option for God’s People,” located at www.fromacorntoOak12.com/marriage.)

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

2. Heterosexual Moral Mores and Matters: Some truths to engage in love in connection with the recommended readings.

- b. Speaking the truth in love about cohabitation:
 - 3- Emphasize prevention. Proactively communicate the facts with caring, concern, and love.
 - 4- In both prevention and therapy (speaking after the fact), remember how Jesus spoke with the cohabiting Samaritan woman.
 - 5- Explain that cohabiting couples experience much more violence in their relationships than do married couples.
 - 6- Explain that cohabiting couples experience much more insecurity than married couples and are much more inclined to break up.
 - 7. Children in cohabiting households suffer significant negative effects.
 - 8. For the research documentation of the above facts and much else on cohabitation see the Marriage page at www.fromacorntoOak12.com.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

3. Homosexuality: Some truths to engage in love.

- a. In God's Word we need to begin with creation, where we see that homosexuality is not in God's plan for marriage or any other aspect of life.
- b. God calls homosexuality *tô'ēbâ*, detestable, abomination, to be abhorred.
- c. It is *tô'ēbâ* in God's sight, because it is a rebellion against his will.
- d. Since God's special revelation discloses that homosexuality is not in his will for people, we would expect to see his general revelation, including true science, showing some reasons why God condemns this practice. And we do.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

3. Homosexuality: Some truths to engage in love.

- e. Science gives additional reasons why homosexuality is *tô'ēbâ*. Homosexuals are not at all "gay."
 - + They are typically very promiscuous.
 - + It is an extremely unhealthy lifestyle.
 - + Much violence occurs in homosexuality.
 - + For much further information, including how to speak the truth in love about God's will concerning homosexuality and because we want to help people avoid or leave a lethal lifestyle, see my book, *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love* at www.fromacorn12.com.
 - + We can offer to homosexuals strong evidence that **they can have hope.**

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love Pertaining to Muslims in Today's Culture?

- Meet in a group of four who work with the same age group you do.
- Select a recorder for your group: the person whose birthday is closest to today.
- From your reading, from what we've discussed today, and from your discussion, list what your group identifies as effective ways to speak the truth in love pertaining to the issue of Islam.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love Pertaining to Heterosexual Moral Matters in Today's Culture?

- Meet in groups of four who work with the same age group you do.
- Select a recorder for your group: the person whose birthday is closest to today.
- From your reading, from what we've discussed today, and from your discussion, list what your group identifies as effective ways to speak the truth in love pertaining to the issue of heterosexual moral mores and matters. Since time is limited, select one issue on which to focus your discussion, e.g., abortion, cohabitation, divorce effects on children.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love Pertaining to Homosexuality in Today's Culture?

- Meet in groups of four who work with the same age group you do.
- Select a recorder for your group: the person whose birthday is closest to today.
- From your reading, from what we've discussed today, and from your discussion, list what your group identifies as effective ways to speak the truth in love pertaining to the issue of homosexuality.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

Debriefing Our Focus Group Study

- Recorders report to the plenary group key aspects of the issue on which they focused that are necessary in order to speak the truth in love most effectively pertaining to that issue.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love in Today's Culture?

Reality Practice

- Form groups of three, preferably according to the age groups with which you work.
- Engaging the scenario for your issue, each person will have a two minute turn to speak the truth in love from all three perspectives in the scenario.
- The person in your group who lives the farthest from the church will be the Christian in the scenario. The person who lives the closest to the church will be the observer.
- At the end of two minutes the observer will express what he or she thought the Christian said that was helpful and then offer any suggestion that came to mind as to what else the Christian could have said to effectively speak the truth in love. The others can respond as well. Try to finish in three minutes.
- Next rotate roles. Observer becomes the Christian; the Christian takes the role of the person with the issue; the person with the issue becomes the observer. Repeat the process and then one more time so each person has an opportunity to participate in all three perspectives.
- Debrief the reality practice activity in the whole group.

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love Pertaining to Muslims in Today's Culture?

Reality Practice Scenario

Dick and Marvin are having a discussion over the backyard fence about the economic problems of our country. Marv observes that we need more not less immigrants to sustain our workforce and our Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid, and other entitlement programs. Dick says, "Yeah, but I think we have to be careful; not all immigrants have our country's best interests at heart." "What do you mean?" asks Marv. "Well," Dick replies, "I'm reading a lot about Islam and its goals, and I'm concerned." "Aah! That's no big deal," avers Marv. "All religions are the same. They all worship the same God, and Islam is essentially a peaceful religion except for a few radicals." How should Dick reply?

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love Pertaining to Muslims in Today's Culture?

Alternate Reality Practice Scenario

Maha and her husband Muhammad, who are Muslims, move in next door to Sue and Jim, who are Christians. Sue and Jim invite Maha and Muhammad to their home for a backyard cookout complete with smoores! The subject of discussion turns to religion, and Maha tells Sue that Islam teaches they don't need a savior, since Islam doesn't believe in sin, and that Jesus did not die on the cross; God wouldn't have him suffer like that. "But even so," Maha says, "The Qur'an teaches that Jesus isn't divine; God doesn't have a son." How should Sue reply to Maha?

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love Pertaining to Heterosexual Moral Matters in Today's Culture?

Reality Practice Scenario

Sam's having lunch with a friend, Pete. Pete notices that Sam's not his usual jovial self; in fact he's not even smiling let alone kidding around. Pete asks Sam if he's feeling OK. "Yeah, I'm OK," Sam replies, "but I'm concerned about my daughter; she's talking about moving in with her boyfriend." "Is that all?" Pete replies. "What's so bad about that? Everybody's doing it today." What is bothering Sam, for whom this matter is especially heavy since he's a Christian? And what should he say to Pete? What should he say to his daughter? And to her boyfriend? (The last two questions also may be used as a reality practice scenario.)

Living out Our Faith: How Do We Speak the Truth in Love Pertaining to Homosexuality in Today's Culture?

Reality Practice Scenario

A non-Christian, Kelly, is doing some work for Sue out in her backyard. It's a hot day and Sue brings her a cool soft drink; they begin having a conversation together. In the course of the conversation Kelly tells Sue that she and the church should welcome homosexuals and same-sex "marriage," since it is now the law, and since polls indicate that most people in our culture don't see anything wrong with homosexuality; therefore, if the church doesn't "keep up with the times," that is compromise with the culture, the church will lose members and influence in the social forum. What should Sue say?

Recommended Resources for Further Reading and Reflection

Key Aspects of Culture and Our Call to Engage the Culture

“Pleasure: The Greatest Idol of Our Time” by John Cooper at <http://www.calvinseminary.edu/wp-content/uploads/forums/Forum%2010-14.pdf>

“God, Reason, and Our Civilizational Crisis” by Samuel Gregg at http://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2015/03/14516/?utm_source=The+Witherspoon+Institute&utm_campaign=4dc6a2ede7-RSS_EMAIL_CAMPAIGN&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_15ce6af37b-4dc6a2ede7-84093705

“World Evangelization or World Transformation? A call to revive the Biblical understanding of evangelism” a declaration from the symposium of the International Christian Network (ICN) at <http://www.ikbg.net/pdf/The-Tuebingen-Call-of-Pentecost-2013-On-Missions.pdf>

Recommended Resources for Further Reading and Reflection

Resources for Speaking the Truth in Love as We Live out Our Faith While Engaging Three Contemporary Issues in Our Culture

1. Islam and Its Already Pervasive Presence in Our Society and Influence in Our Culture

- “The Trinitarian Confession in View of the Monotheistic Faith in Islam” (See the attached document.)
- “Here’s Why Somali Refugees Are Moving to Cheyenne, Wyoming, Prepare to Be Shocked” by Pamela Geller at <http://pamelageller.com/2014/11/heres-why-somali-muslim-refugees-are-moving-to-cheyenne-wy-prepare-to-be-shocked.html/> [EDS Note: I’m including this article for its information on a widespread but little known current development in our culture, not for disparaging any organization or urging political pursuit on this particular aspect of the issue.]
- “Muslim Immigration” by Pamela Geller at http://pamelageller.com/atlas_shrugsmuslim-immigration/
- “Arabic: Most Common Language of Refugees in America” by Pamela Geller at <http://pamelageller.com/2015/08/arabic-most-common-language-of-refugees-in-america.html/>

Recommended Resources for Further Reading and Reflection

Resources for Speaking the Truth in Love as We Live out Our Faith While Engaging Three Contemporary Issues in Our Culture

1. Islam and Its Already Pervasive Presence in Our Society and Influence in Our Culture

- *The Bible and Islam: Sharing God's Word with a Muslim, A Basic Guide* by Bassam Madany at http://www.unashamedofthegospel.org/bible_islam_online.cfm
- *The Missiology of Kamil Abdul Messiah: A Syrian Convert from Islam to Christianity* by Bassam M. Madany, a moving story of the missionary efforts of a young martyr. Both of the above books available in print by writing to bashir2824@msn.com and also located at <http://www.unashamedofthegospel.org/editoruploads/files/The%20Missiology%20of%20Kamil%20Abdul%20Messiah%2025%20May%2C%202015.pdf>
- A trustworthy resource on Islam is three Web sites of a friend, Rev. Bassam Madany, a native of Lebanon who grew up in Syria with his family who were refugees, and who by God's grace proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Middle East over the air waves of the radio program, the Back to God Hour, for almost 40 years. In retirement he is still actively engaged in the subject of Islam and effective witness for Jesus Christ to Muslims.
 - www.unashamedofthegospel.org This is his own Web site.
 - <https://independent.academia.edu/BassamMichaelMadany> This is a Web site for which he writes highly insightful and informative academic essays on Islam.
 - www.answering-islam.org Access his articles by clicking on the Home page and the button on the left side labeled "Individual Authors." Click on Rev. Bassam M. Madany for articles he has written on the religious aspects of Islam. See also the articles by Jacob Thomas on the political aspects of Islam.

Recommended Resources for Further Reading and Reflection

Resources for Speaking the Truth in Love as We Live out Our Faith While Engaging Three Contemporary Issues in Our Culture

1. Islam and Its Already Pervasive Presence in Our Society and Influence in Our Culture

- *What Every Christian Needs to Know about Sharing the Gospel with Muslims* by Roland Clarke at http://www.answering-islam.org/authors/clarke/sharing_gospel_intro.html
- *The Goslar Message: The Cross of Jesus Christ – The Center of Salvation: Why people receive forgiveness of sins and redemption on the basis the Cross* at <http://www.ikbg.net/pdf/TheGoslarMessage.pdf>
- For further information see this excellent book: [God's Kingdom and the Utopian Error: Discerning the Biblical Kingdom of God from Its Political Counterfeits](#) by Peter P. J. Beyerhaus (April 1992)

Recommended Resources for Further Reading and Reflection

Resources for Speaking the Truth in Love as We Live out Our Faith While Engaging Three Contemporary Issues in Our Culture

2. Heterosexual Moral Mores and Matters

- Abortion and the Recent Planned Parenthood Disclosures
<http://www.frc.org/abortion>
- “Why Are Sexual Sins So Significant?” by Edward D. Seely, a sermon on Leviticus 18:1-5 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-20. Located at
<http://www.fromacorntoak12.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Sermon-Why-Are-Sexual-Sins-So-Significant.pdf>
- “Is Cohabitation an Option for God’s People?” by Edward D. Seely, a look at the science showing why God’s way is by far the best. Located at
<http://www.fromacorntoak12.com/marriage/>
- “Is Divorce Harmful to Children?” by Edward D. Seely, a look at the science showing why God’s will is for people to remain married. Located at
<http://www.fromacorntoak12.com/marriage/>
- Pornography, Its Rapid Spread and Effects <http://www.frc.org/pornography>
- Abstinence and Sexual Health <http://www.frc.org/abstinence-and-sexual-health>

Recommended Resources for Further Reading and Reflection

Resources for Speaking the Truth in Love as We Live out Our Faith While Engaging Three Contemporary Issues in Our Culture

3. Homosexuality

- *What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love* by Edward D. Seely. Located at <http://www.fromacorntooak12.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Homosexuality-What-Is-Gods-Will-Concerning-Homosexuality.pdf> Use the "Find" feature to quickly locate any subject, e.g., culture, hospitality, transgender.
- *Bearing Their Burden (Galatians 6:1-2): Speaking the Truth in Love to People Burdened by Homosexuality* by Tom Eckstein (Lulu.com Publishing, 2010)
- *What Does the Bible Really Teach about Homosexuality?* by Kevin DeYoung (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2015)