

Christian Witness in the Public Square—Increasing Your Comfort Level to Speak the Truth in Love: Is Pleasing the Lord Your Highest Priority?

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Introduction

1. The following curriculum is designed for several purposes. Certain applications will need modification in countries where individual freedom is limited. All Bible texts quoted are from the NIV, unless otherwise indicated. For further information on many of the subjects below, see the accompanying documents with the same title, one a [lecture/discussion](#) and the other an abbreviated, [abridged, handout of the lecture/discussion](#), which can be used as a note-taking guide for attendees of the lecture/discussion.
 - a. The curriculum can be used for a minicourse on this subject.
 - b. The subject matter can be used as a lecture/discussion presentation. Since research reveals that the lecture/discussion method is preferred by adults, that is the main method used in this program.
 - c. In whole or in part it can also be included as a unit in a larger course, e.g., on communication together with such related subjects as conflict resolution, the [diffusion of innovations](#), and/or [marriage](#).
2. As a stand-alone minicourse, it can be taught in a variety of formats:
 - a. It can be taught as a weekly course, likely for two to four sessions, depending on the length of time available, how much discussion occurs, and how much the teacher wants to add, e.g., to address additional needs of his or her class.
 - b. It can be presented as a weekend seminar, e.g., Friday evening, Saturday morning.
 - c. It can be taught in an abbreviated one-session special class, especially with an accompanying handout, preferably in a sentence outline as follows.
 - d. It can be included in an ongoing affinity class, e.g., that is part of the Sunday School or weekday evening program and taught by the regular teacher of that class.
3. It can and should be taught to all age groups. Of course, for younger children, it should be adapted to their needs, e.g., the applications pertaining to bullying.
 - a. All the following information should be presented to youth and adult groups.
 - b. Selected aspects of the information, e.g., preparing for and dealing with bullies, should be included in children's classes and other ministries in age appropriate ways. For example, we need to teach *everyone*, including children, beginning at an early age, as well as

teenagers and adults, that it is OK to not be liked by everyone; in fact, that is not a Biblical goal and should never be our goal. Read the following verses:

- 1) Romans 12:2, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” (NASB)
- 2) “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12) Luke records that Jesus also said, “leap for joy.” (6:23) Remember as well that Jesus added, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you...” (Luke 6:26; cf. James 4:4). For one reason for Jesus’ strong statement in 6:26, albeit with a different application, see the principle he explained in another context: “whoever is not against us is for us.” (Mark 9:40) Hence, if we are not opposing the world’s evil and its perpetrators, we are perceived as being for, and at least allowing and thus supporting, that evil and those perpetrators (cf. Leviticus 19:17), just the opposite of our calling to be holy (i.e., set apart) and to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ that alone together with the work of the Holy Spirit in the minds and hearts of those who hear, can change the world in accord with God’s Word and will.
 - The Greek word for holy, ἅγιος [*hagios*], means set apart, i.e., set apart from that which is sinful and evil and set apart to God. Furthermore, as God is holy, he calls us to be holy. (Leviticus 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:15; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2) Speaking through Peter, the Holy Spirit also says we should be so separated to God that we are “as aliens and strangers in the world.” (1 Peter 2:11) *Hagios* is also the root of the Biblical word, saint. In the Bible, all believers are saints. Consider what thoughtful Roman Catholic theologian, Patrick Coffin frequently urges: “Be a saint; what else is there?!” Recognizing that our speaking the truth in the love of Christ is so different from what the world calls “love,” we are seen to be as aliens...which is good and pleases God.
- 3) The divinely inspired Apostle Paul said, “If it is possible, as far as it depends upon you, live at peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:18) Nevertheless, make clear the crucial distinction between living at peace with everyone and being liked by everyone. The former is sometimes possible for a time in some places; the latter is neither possible nor desirable. If we are liked by the world, the Biblical word for which includes all the sin and evil and those opposed to God and his Word and will, if we are liked by those who hate the Lord, then we are not pleasing God as we ought and are living in peril. (Luke 6:26)
- 4) When we are trying to live as Jesus taught, and even commanded, many people in the world will not like us; indeed, many will hate us. At those times, we should remember these words of Jesus, be greatly comforted by his words, and rejoice! We must make our goal pleasing the Lord. (2 Corinthians 5:9) If we do that, we will

please enough people whose opinion counts as worthy to have the true friends in Christ we need.

Needs of the Learners:

1. *Felt Needs* (needs the attendees have of which they are already aware): The teacher should begin the lesson with this question:
 - a. Have you ever wished you could tell someone something you wanted him or her to know, but you were either afraid of how that person would react, or you were uncertain how to make your point most effectively, especially in public settings?
 - b. Next, if this is a multisession class, explain to the participants that during this time together, that question is the subject on which we'll focus. Distribute a 3x5 card to each person, and ask the students what they would like to learn in this class about to how to feel more comfortable in telling others what they want them to know. Mention that they don't have to sign their name if they don't want to do so.
 - c. Then be sure to include what they want to learn in the most applicable parts of this lesson or course. By including their felt needs, you facilitate their continued attendance and engagement in the subject matter you are presenting and increasing the likelihood of their receptivity and use of what you want them to know and do.
 - d. See also the paper, [*Great Questions of Life: Felt Needs to Address in Christian Education*](#).
2. *Unfelt Needs* (needs the attendees have of which they are unaware): All the students need to learn the Biblical teaching on, and how to develop and implement, the following competencies:
 - a. an understanding of, ability to explain, and courage to apply this lesson's Bible passages;
 - b. an understanding of, and ability to explain, how and why the Lord's people need to speak the truth in love in their families, in the church, to others in the community, and to government officials (in countries that permit such contact and communication);
 - c. development of a comfort level high enough to enable them to speak the truth in love in these contexts and the motivation to do so;
 - d. an awareness that God is always present, able, and willing to help them (1) to speak the truth in love in all contexts and (2) to have, and grow in, the strength to do so.
 - e. Add any more unfelt needs you can think of with your previous knowledge of the students, their family backgrounds, and/or the church, culture, community, state, and country.

Goal:

The purpose of this class is to help people learn the importance of, and basic principles for, speaking the truth of God's Word in a loving manner in a variety of contexts. The primary application will be to apply these principles to addressing the current issues in society today and to help the attendees develop their comfort level in doing so effectively despite opposition. Those who attend will learn the Biblical base of engaging the public square in order to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world our Lord Jesus Christ has called and equipped us to be and to learn how to seek the peace and prosperity of the community where God leads, or has led, us.

Objectives:

The following are examples of what are called [performance, behavioral, or Level III objectives](#) for each of the three domains of human learning: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The teacher or speaker should feel free to add to or substitute such performance objectives for each domain that will meet the needs of his or her students. The crucial importance of behavioral objectives is that both the teacher and the students have measurable assurance that the students have learned and are doing what the teacher has been teaching. In accord with the Word of God, it is not enough to know something; we need to act on it. (See, e.g., Matthew 7:20-23; Ephesians 2:10; James 2:14-26)

1. *Cognitive* Objective: At the end of this class, each person will identify and verbally mention in a small group at least three actions he or she can and will take to engage the public square.
2. *Affective* Objective: At the end of the class, at least 75% of the attendees will write "Yes" on a 3x5 card that they feel more comfortable in speaking the truth in love somewhere in the public square.
3. *Behavioral* Objectives:
 - a. For Older Teens and Adults: After the next election, at least 98% of the class will email or text me that (not how) they have voted.
 - b. For Children, Teens and Adults: Within three months after this class, at least 75% will tell me via email, text, phone, or in person that they have
 - 1) included the importance of doing what pleases God in at least one conversation with unrelated friends
 - 2) and that they have accomplished at least one of the cognitive objectives they identified.

Materials Needed:

1. A Bible for each participant; *The NIV Study Bible* is recommended but not required.

2. At least two 3 x 5 file cards for each participant.
3. Digital projector **or** flipchart (and at least two markers) **or** overhead projector (and at least two water soluble markers) **or** chalkboard (and at least two pieces of chalk and an eraser).

Presentation: Lecture/Discussion

1. Present and explain the objectives for this class. Ask if there are any questions.
2. As Christians, we are called to be “the [not a] salt of the earth” and “the [not a] light of the world,” (Matthew 5:13-16), as the world sees Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world (John 8:12), in us. We are also to “seek the peace and prosperity” of the city where God leads us (Jeremiah 29:7), and always “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15) In Jeremiah 29:7, notice that the Hebrew verb translated “seek” is *וַיִּשְׁׁרְוּ* (*wēdiršû*), and in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) it is *ζητήσατε* (*zētēsate*), both of which are in the second person plural (everyone) and in the imperative (a command) mood. The verb in the Greek is in the active voice. This is not something we can dismiss if we don’t feel like it or sit back and “let George do it.”

Christians, guided by the Holy Spirit, are especially well-equipped and well-positioned to speak the truth in love and are called to do so; it is not about hate at all, a point we need to recognize and emphasize. See also passages such as Romans 13:8-11 and Acts 17:16-34; 18:9. We must also not sin by omission; cf. Leviticus 5:1; 19:17.

- a. Notice the additional insights from Biblically based historic Christian theology, as in the quote below from Dr. Anthony A. Hoekema, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Theological Seminary, in his excellent book on eschatology, *The Bible and the Future*. He previously explained the significance of the Greek word, *καινός* (*kainos*) for new, indicating continuity. He addressed this continuity in comments on Revelation 21. For example, in 21:1, the new heaven (the word for new here is *kainos*, new in nature or quality; i.e., renewed, not brand new which is designated by another word, *νέος*, *neos*, new in time or in origin) and the new (*kainos*) earth thus indicate continuity, as do verses 24-26. He states that in 21:3 with no sin on the new (*kainos*) earth the dwelling place of God will be with his people, thus the new (*kainos*) heaven and new (*kainos*) earth will be united. “Since,” Hoekema explains, “where God dwells, there heaven is, we conclude that in the life to come heaven and earth will no longer be separated, as they are now, but will be merged. Believers will therefore continue to be in heaven as they continue to live on the new earth.” (Pp. 284-285)

He then makes this encouraging and compelling application:

“The doctrine of the new earth should give us hope, courage, and optimism in a day of widespread despair. Though evil is rampant in this world, it is comforting to know that Christ has won the final victory. Whereas ecologists often picture the future of this earth in gloomy terms, it is encouraging to know that some day God will create a glorious new earth on which the ecological problems which now plague us will no longer exist. This

does not imply that we need do nothing about these problems, but it does mean that we work for solutions to these problems, not with a feeling of despair, but in the confidence of hope.

“...there will be continuity as well as discontinuity between this age and the next, and between this earth and the new earth. This point is extremely important. As citizens of God’s kingdom, we may not just write off the present earth as a total loss, or rejoice in its deterioration. We must indeed be working for a better world now. Our efforts to bring the kingdom of Christ into fuller manifestation are of eternal significance. Our Christian life today, our struggles against sin—both individual and institutional—our mission work, our attempt to develop and promote a distinctively Christian culture, have value not only for this world but even for the world to come.

“As we live on this earth, we are preparing for life on God’s new earth. Through our kingdom service the building materials for that new earth are now being gathered. Bibles are being translated, peoples are being evangelized, believers are being renewed, and cultures are being transformed. Only eternity will reveal the full significance of what has been done for Christ here.

“At the beginning of history God created the heavens and the earth. At the end of history we see the new heavens and the new earth, which will far surpass in splendor all that we have seen before. At the center of history is the Lamb that was slain, the first-born from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. Someday we shall cast all our crowns before him, ‘lost in wonder, love, and praise.’” (Pp. 286-287)

Notice the application for our work urging Christians to engage the public square, in particular the importance, rationale, encouragement, and eternal outcomes of our doing so. Our work now has eternal significance! God will not only remember and reward *but use* the good work we do here in this first phase of our lives on the original earth but also in the new heaven and the new earth.

How’s that for a solid basis for establishing an unshakable sense of importance, self-worth, and dignity?! People do not have to wonder whether life is worth living; here is the strongest evidence that it is! At this writing the four top problems people face are stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Think about how the Biblical worldview Hoekema explained would lift the spirits of those who are struggling with these as well as the other problems of this age and give them great and sustainable hope! Consider the implications for teaching, preaching, pastoral care, and serving God in the public square.

- b. The above and these that follow are all Biblical bases for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus to engage the public square. Only as Christians do so will people be aware of and begin to perceive reality in its fullness, that is with a Biblical worldview.
 - 1) Such engagement is part of our calling God has given us.

- a) God is the Owner of all his creation. (Psalm 24:1-2; 50:10-12; Job 41:11b; Ephesians 1:20-23) He has placed us here on earth to be stewards of his creation and to care for it. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15)
 - b) We see this calling clearly in the Greek word for church in the Bible: ἐκκλησία (*ekklēsia*). The word comes from two Greek words: ἐκ (*ek*), from, out of + καλέω (*kaleō*), call, summon, invite → literally, [the ones] called out [by the Lord]). Out of what has the church been called? Out of the world's darkness, but serving God in the world, "[living] such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." (Cf. Romans 12:2; 1 Peter 2:9-12; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10) Thus, in the Bible, the word church never means or refers to a building but to people called by God to proclaim his Word and to function according to, i.e. to obey, his Word. (John 14:21)
 - c) If we don't speak out the truth in love, who will? Certainly not the atheists (those who say there is no God) or even the agnostics (those who say they don't know whether there is a God or not), and also all other non-Christians will not proclaim the truth of God's Word and will.
- 2) Engaging the public square involves speaking out in community venues (e.g., through media and in meetings), where we present a cogent rationale for public policy that is in accord with God's Word and will, promoting policies that will produce peace and prosperity and opposing policies that are demonic and counterproductive to the peace and prosperity of the community, culture, county, state, nation, and world.
 - 3) We speak and write from a Christian worldview perspective. Thereby, we include the wisdom on the issues that we have uniquely as a result of our relationship with God (e.g., Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; Ephesians 4:11-17), including the education and experience God has Providentially given us. We begin with common ground, but we don't provide only a secular humanitarianism. For example, an engineer can effectively influence decisions made on city council matters related to his or her field of expertise. A nurse and physician can bring truth and loving compassion to what abortion is all about that is not being fully disclosed in public education and the media. In these ways, too, we are being the salt of this part of the earth and the light of this part of the world, and likely, especially with the Internet, much if not all of the rest of the world as well.
 - 4) When we speak out in the public square, we need to mention Christ. However, when we do, we must speak the truth in love.
 - a) To be most effective in proactively disarming the automatic but illogical accusations and talking points of being hateful, it is helpful to state the premise of what we are advocating: the command of Christ to his followers to love all people, and this [that we are advocating] is done out of love for the people who are affected. In the presentation we need to explain how what we are advocating

is an act of love. When I stated this premise in the preface of my presentation pertaining to LGBTQ+ at the city council, several people made nasty and false accusations against me, but their typical accusation of hate was not one of them.

- b) Having said that, it is now incumbent upon us to not speak harshly and especially not with foul language. “Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice [*κακία, kakia*, badness, ill will].” (Ephesians 4:29-31) All such behavior undermines our claim to speak the truth in love as followers of Christ, who did not act that way, and doing so exposes us to plausible accusations of hypocrisy, which Jesus condemned. See also 5:4.
 - c) If we can genuinely speak the truth in love (defined by the Apostle Paul as being patient, kind, does not boast, and is not arrogant, rude, self-seeking, or easily angered [1 Corinthians 13:4-5]), we’ll strengthen our argument, earn the right to be heard, and most importantly be a strong witness for Jesus Christ that will be remembered as standing out as significantly different from the hostility so rampant in the public square today.
 - d) We also need to keep in mind that many, some even say most, people are not persuaded by facts. They are primarily persuaded by this love God revealed through Paul that shows we genuinely care about them and which builds and maintains a relationship with them. People are more receptive to those with whom they have a caring relationship, or at least those they perceive care about them, including their well-being. Recall what Jesus said when he sent out the twelve apostles to search for and stay with a worthy person, who would be receptive to the Gospel of Christ, and stay at that person’s home. (Matthew 10:11)
- c. Of course, the greatest way we can “seek the peace and prosperity” of the city to which God has brought us, and to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, is to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which the Holy Spirit uses to transform human hearts and minds. As will be discussed further below, we do this proclamation in many ways.
- 1) Theologically, this proclamation results in what is called regeneration and sanctification. Regeneration is the new birth in Christ, being born again, by the work of the Holy Spirit. (Cf., e.g., John 3:3ff.; 1 Corinthians 12:3) Sanctification is the growth in Christlikeness, the cooperation of the regenerated believer in Christ with the Holy Spirit, as the Spirit facilitates the believer’s maturity in Christ. (Cf., e.g., Ephesians 4:11-16ff.)
 - 2) The most effective way to make this proclamation and to “seek the peace and prosperity” of the city or other community to which God has brought us is to pray and

work for the extension and nurture of God's kingdom. In the Bible, God's kingdom is the rule of God in human minds and hearts. The extension of the kingdom occurs through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, and the nurture of the kingdom occurs through sanctification. For more on these subjects see the PowerPoint presentation, [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).

a) Such extension and nurture of the kingdom of God is the only hope of any country throughout the world.

- 1- As important as elections are, and not at all to be minimized, who is elected President, governor, mayor, representative, senator, or what laws are passed, will not produce the greatest peace and prosperity of our city, culture, county, state, province or country. Elected officials, other authorities, and laws, will not change human hearts and minds; only the Holy Spirit, sent by God the Father and God the Son, Jesus Christ, can change (regeneration) and facilitate the maturity (sanctification) of human hearts and minds.

Certainly some elected officials and some laws will be far more effective than others, so elections should be taken very seriously, and every Christian who is able to do so, even with help, must vote. (This is one of many ways that those near the end of life can still sense that their life has meaning, purpose, and importance. Many elections have been won by only one vote, and many others by only two or three votes. Further, elections have consequences, typically extensive, far-reaching, and long-lasting consequences. For example, the lengthy trend in increasing crime in New York City was dramatically interrupted and reversed with the election of a new mayor and the support he needed. When he left office the upward trend in crime reemerged.

- 2- However, even under the effective mayor and his cohort, crime was unacceptably high. By far the most effective way to reduce crime, and all other counterproductive social ills, is to recognize the source of these ills, evil and sin, calling them what they are as revealed in God's Word, and actively working toward facilitating the extension and nurture of God's kingdom. Until human hearts and minds are changed and nurtured, criminals will find the means to drastically reduce the peace and prosperity of the city and all other environs.
- 3- One important means of facilitating the extension and nurture of God's kingdom is to actively speak the truth in love to local, county, state, and national governmental representatives, urging them to never approve legislation of any kind that will limit religious freedom and to pray for God's necessary help to accomplish this effort. Throughout the United States and the rest of the world, government, including court, officials on all levels are considering, enacting, and upholding legislation that limits and even

eliminates religious freedom. Think about the far-reaching implications of that loss of religious freedom to speak the truth in love!

- For just one example, consider the many cases of bakers, Website designers, florists, and other Christian businesspeople who are very willing to sell, and for decades have sold, their regular products and services to LGBTQ+ people (What business owner who needs to stay in and grow his or her business, including paying employees and other expenses, would not serve as many customers as possible?) but who draw the line when prohomosexual activists ask them to use their business to make a special message on a cake, Website, floral arrangement, etc. that is contrary to and promotes behavior and a lifestyle that is opposed to God's Word and will. The activists then sue the Christian to take away his or her religious freedom to remain faithful to and honor by obeying God in all he or she does. The activists are on record as intending to always continue to harass and sue these brothers and sisters in Christ. How is that fair and just?

- b) Please join me in prayer each day that God extends and nurtures his kingdom throughout the United States and the rest of the world. I also mention certain other countries in particular as their special needs come to my attention.
3. We must reject the unrealistic and unbiblical idea that we, and our children and grandchildren, have to be liked by everybody. This misinformed and misguided attempt to be popular with everyone is unrealistic, because it fails to recognize and deal with the fact and the implications that all humans “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Romans 3:23; 1 Kings 8:46)
- a. Adam and Eve’s sin was no light matter. Far to the contrary, their sin corrupted human nature, and a tragically and extensively serious cosmic catastrophe occurred. Sin resulted in a four-fold disharmony in God’s perfect creation:
 - 1) A disharmony, resulting in a separation, between now sinful man and God who is not only holy, but holy, holy, holy (the Hebrew manner of saying Most Holy), who will have nothing to do with sin and will not allow it in his presence. (Genesis 3:8; Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8) Because of his great love (1 John 4:8; John 3:16), God immediately instituted his marvelous plan of salvation in Christ, at such great cost to himself in the most wonderful demonstration of love ever, so those who believe in him could enter the presence of God. (Genesis 3:15; John 14:6; Matthew 27:51; Hebrews 9:24-28)
 - 2) A disharmony between and among human beings themselves. (Genesis 3:12; 4:8) Sinful people, who are opposed to God, his Word, and his will, will not like us, and we should not try to please them in order to be liked by them; in order to do so, which is impossible, we would have to do what they like, which would mean disobeying

God. That is not an option for believers in and followers of Christ Jesus. (Cf. also John 14:21)

Therefore, if we please the world, that means we are holding to values that are not pleasing, and even disobedient, to God. Remember what Jesus said, “Woe to you when all men speak well of you [his disciples (v. 20)]...” (Luke 6:26)

A caveat: I am talking here about not prioritizing pleasing people to the extent of developing a mentality of worrying about what others think of one so much that he or she is willing to wrongly disobey God by giving in to the unbiblical values, rationale (including rationalizations), flawed logic, temptations, and wrongdoing of those others, thus bringing on that condemnation Jesus mentioned in Luke 6:26. Neither am I talking about an attitude of uncaring, even hostile, disregard of other people, which fosters disharmony and by definition is not love. The Apostle Paul said, “...I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.” (1 Corinthians 10:33)

There is no contradiction here of what Jesus said, or of what I’m saying, for the context of what Paul was stating clearly indicates that he is trying himself and commanding us to govern our decision-making and actions to facilitate *as much as possible* a loving and harmonious relationship with people that will help them be receptive to what we have to say and give us the basis for an effective proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ so that they may be saved. As always in interpreting a text, consider the context: Nowhere in God’s Word, including in all of Paul’s writings, do we read that he or any other apostle or prophet would even consider, much less advocate, and much less do, anything against God’s will, for any reason, including to please someone who wants him to disobey the Lord. There is no caving for those of us in Christ.

Note well one other key difference between what Paul is saying about pleasing people and what many do to please others: motivation. As I was indicating above, we should never try to please others with the ultimate goal that they will like and think well of us, thus trying to please others for our own “good.” That is where we get into tragic trouble. (Luke 6:26) On the contrary, Paul’s motivation for trying to please everybody in every way possible (the meaning of “try”) is clearly stated and explained in the next sentence: “For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.” The “try,” i.e., “as much as possible,” ends when others require disobedience to God in exchange for their being pleased and “speaking well of” us.

In the one case, people try to please others in order to be liked by the others. Never good. It’s self-oriented and selfish as well as disobedient. In Paul’s case, and ours’, “try” to please others, i.e., “as much as possible” for their sake: to reach them for their salvation. It’s other-oriented. (Cf. 1 Corinthians 9:22)

In the next verse, 1 Corinthians 11:1, which in Paul's original letter followed immediately after 10:33 and did not start a new chapter, the Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, commands us to "Follow [γίνεσθε, *gínesthe*, second person plural imperative] my example, as I follow the example of Christ." So we take seriously trying to please people as much as possible but with the motivation and objective of doing so to lead them to Christ, never to make them "speak well of" us. (Luke 6:26). Notice how this frees us from the oppression of trying to be liked by everybody and frees us to serve the Lord more effectively.

- 3) A disharmony within each individual. (1 Samuel 1:15; 1 Kings 21:5) See below, e.g., on bullies.
 - 4) A disharmony throughout all creation. (Romans 8:20-23)
- b. We must make pleasing God our greatest desire, objective, and accomplishment. (See e.g., 2 Corinthians 5:9) When we do so, we will displease the world and be rejected by the world. Jesus was too, and he gives us all we need to overcome such rejection. (Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 6:22-23; John 16:33) **We must keep asking ourselves this question: Who am I most trying to please?** And relatedly, Whose opinion matters most to me? If the answer is God, then we'll also please our spouse, and God will also give us all the other friends, true friends, we need. If anyone rejects you because you are trying to please God, that person isn't the friend you need anyway. For certain!
- 1) We need to incorporate these realities into our identity, our understanding of who we are based in Christ.
 - 2) *This is the rock-solid, and our strongest, basis for being able to reject the world's view of us and to see ourselves as having worth, dignity, value, and being loved by God, whose opinion of us counts infinitely more than the opinion of others. When bullies rebuke, reject, and say all manner of evil against us falsely, especially on account of our relationship with Jesus, we can ignore and forget what the bullies of the world say, recognizing it is not true, and it does not define us. Christ Jesus defines us. We need to teach our children, grandchildren, and others that Christ loves us and makes us worthy. If we please God, we will please enough others whose opinions count most.*
 - 3) How do we please God? See these answers from his Word: Romans 8:8; Galatians 1:10; Colossians 1:9-14, esp. v. 10; 1 Thessalonians 4:1; Hebrews 11:6; 13:15-16.
 - 4) See also John 14:21. If you are using this curriculum in a multi-session context, ask the class to form groups of four and respond to the questions that follow.

Careful social science research reveals that the optimum number of people in a small group is four, perceived as being large enough for the likelihood that something significant will be said, and small enough to facilitate wanting to talk. That is the number where most people feel comfortable in speaking. For every number over four, more people feel less comfortable in sharing what they are thinking, and they are thus less inclined to participate in the group discussion. One or two groups may need to have only three people in them.

The teacher should appoint one person in each small group to be the Recorder who lists the responses of the group members. Telling the groups to appoint their own Recorder wastes too much time and emotional energy for some. Use one of the enjoyable, fast, and informative ways of selecting the Recorder.

One way to appoint the Recorder is to say that the Recorder will be the group member whose birthday is closest to today, or the one who lives farthest away. After a specified amount of time, reconvene as a large group. The lists can be given to the teacher or, if enough time permits, the Recorders can each mention one response that was given in their group. After each Recorder has mentioned one, the first Recorder can specify a second comment that was mentioned in his or her group. The Recorders can then report one each in turn until all the responses of each group have been disclosed. Do not have the reporters state all the responses that were mentioned in their group all at once, so other reporters will have something to say that their group stated. This is a basic principle in the debriefing of all small group tasks.

Regarding the Recorders, be careful of the term you use for this responsibility. You will find it easier and quicker to select someone willing to undertake this task, if you do not ask him or her to be the “leader” of the small group. The word leader is a scary concept for many people, possibly including the one(s) whose birthday is closest to today or who live the farthest away. Many people don’t want to be referred to as the leader, which is a responsibility involving certain abilities and gifts, even a calling, that they intuitively don’t feel they have. However, these same people, even though they may not feel qualified to be a leader, and certainly not the leader, even of a small group, typically will agree to be the Recorder for the small group.

List on a projection screen, writing board, or flip chart, the responses of the recorders. Add any comments you want to make. Invite the input of others in the class.

Ask the groups to read the above Scripture texts and then list their answers to these two questions. Ask them to take 10-15 minutes in the small groups and then report back to the group as a whole. Monitor the groups’ progress; when most groups are finished, ask them to reassemble as a whole group and receive the reports from their Recorders.

- a) In these texts, what is God saying in answer to this question (about how we please God)?

- b) What is the “bottom line,” the key part of what God sees as pleasing to him? (Look for an answer that expresses God’s will that we faithfully obey his commands. Cf., e.g., James 2:14-26; Matthew 7:15-23) Can we put it in one sentence? Write on the projection screen, board, or flipchart as the class constructs the sentence(s).
- c) Summary: as we daily walk with God, faithfully trying to obey him, demonstrating our love for him as we do, we can be sure of his all-sufficient help, including enabling us to grow in our encouragement, strength, comfort level, and ability to speak the truth in love on the matters we engage everywhere, including in the public square. Just ask him. I frequently have times when I don’t know what I should do or say about a matter, and I offer a brief prayer to God, saying, “Heavenly Father, I don’t know what to do about this matter, please help me, or please give me the wisdom and the words I need that are best in your sight.” Often, I have the answer to my prayer even before I finish articulating the question! He is always there for us!
- c. We need to help people understand the psychology of the bully. It is he or she, not you, who are lacking. The bully has a low image of him- or herself, and he or she feels that by attacking others, verbally, physically, or socially, in the attempt to diminish or defeat them, he or she is building him- or herself up. It never helps them for long; that’s why in their weakness and confusion they keep trying. What to do? With this knowledge, do NOT accept what the bully says about you; reject all he or she says about you and try to reach out, speaking the truth in love, to defuse the attacks. Don’t let the bully frame the narrative; you reset the narrative in accord with the above.
- **DISCUSS**: What can you say to the bully in order to begin such a conversation, either now or at a better time?
- After input from the group, if no one has mentioned it, offer this example as a possible response: “You know, saying mean things about me isn’t going to help you feel better about yourself for very long. I can help you overcome that problem. Let’s talk when you’re ready.” A loving reply is a sign of strength, the strength you have in and from Jesus Christ. Then, if time permits, tell him or her about the rock-solid basis for valuing him- or herself, a rock-solid basis that no one can destroy, that God has provided in Christ Jesus and bearing the image of God (*op cit.*). If you need more help, offer to introduce the bully to your pastor, or, if the bully is a student, to your church’s children’s or youth leader. In any case, such a response will likely decrease if not stop his or her bullying of you, because of the strength you’ve demonstrated, especially with God’s involvement. Since bullies are inherently weak, they fear strength and need to pick on people they perceive as weaker than they are.
- d. *Your life has great value, no matter what any other person says about you, and you have a solid basis for viewing yourself as valuable and having dignity because you are made in God’s image, he loves you, and Christ even died a horrible death for you, that you can*

have eternal life with him, beginning now! And you have strength, great strength, due to your faith in Jesus Christ; thus, the Holy Spirit dwells within you. This reality in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and regularly reinforced in the church, which is the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27), gives us strength and support to speak the truth in love and feel ever more comfortable doing so.

- e. To help you feel comfortable in speaking the truth in love, and to increase your comfort level, remember what the Lord said to Paul (and also to us) in the very secular and pagan city of Corinth.

“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.” (Acts 18:10-11)

He also has many people in this city or other community where we are. And many of them do and will come forward when we speak up; often people need someone else to begin the discussion before they become comfortable in speaking and acting accordingly. Don't be afraid to be that person!

- 4. We are in a crucial time in our country's history. We have a very important opportunity to seek the peace and prosperity of our city and wherever else God has led us.
 - a. People are trying to “get God out of the discussion” or “remove God from the discussion.” Little man cannot remove Almighty God who is everywhere present, sovereign, and the sole owner of all his creation. Yet these people can ignore and disobey God...to their peril. We can't let them set the parameters of the discussion.
 - b. Neither can we let them silence us and the proclamation of God and his Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we don't proclaim the Triune God and his mighty acts in Christ, who will? Also, we don't want to displease God who has called us to witness to Christ and to the Triune God; we want to please God. Some people don't want to hear this Good News, and some of those will insult us, persecute us, and falsely say all kinds of evil against us because of our identity with Christ Jesus (Matthew 5:11), but when we are so insulted, that's GREAT! For Jesus himself said, “Blessed are you” when this occurs; indeed he also said, “Rejoice and be glad, (remember Luke adds that he also said, “leap for joy”) for great is your reward in heaven....” (5:12)
 - 1) Transform such rejection by the world into a badge of honor. Again, reframe your perspective and the narrative: You have been given the gift of tangible evidence that you are not acceptable to those opposed to God, because you are identifying with God, not the world. Indeed, you want to please God, not the world that follows “the prince of this world.” (John 16:11)
 - 2) To increase our comfort level to speak the truth in love to others, including in public, we need to reshape our perspective, to view the hostility that is occurring against us in the light of what Jesus said: This is all good; it is ***not*** bad. Forget what we've heard

before, namely that we have to please everybody in order to be liked by every one—that is neither possible, nor desirable, NOR PLEASING TO GOD.

- 3) “Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets,” Jesus said. (Luke 6:26) **Think about that!**
 - 4) I have, and here’s what I’ve decided and where I stand: I care *infinitely* more about what Jesus thinks of me than what anyone else thinks of me. In the judgment, when I stand face to face with the Lord, how far do you think it’s going to get me if I say, “But Lord, look at all the thousands of people who like me?!” If someone doesn’t like me because I’ve spoken the truth in love about Jesus and the application of his Word, THAT’S JUST GREAT! ARE YOU WITH ME?!
- c. It comes down to this: How seriously do we take God and his Word? In fact, is God our highest priority? We prove the answer to that question to ourselves and to others (God already knows) by how we function in matters such as this one.
 - If you find it hard to speak in public, begin by speaking in your family. If even that’s hard, as it is for some people, **pray**: Meditate on the matter and ask God for his help to do so; he will help you. And then begin doing it. He also helps in process; as you are talking with people, silently ask God for the words, the courage, and all else you need.
 - d. Too many families are not daily reading the Bible and praying, and are not, at least weekly, attending corporate worship in a church home pleasing to God, wherein his Word is faithfully and truthfully proclaimed. If any of that is true for you, talk about it with your family and how you can begin making that vitally important change. Invite their input in the discussion. Remember Hebrews 10:23-25.
 - Do NOT make the mistake that causes many Christians to stumble: Do NOT say, “I don’t know enough yet.” The answer: Tell them what you do know, and keep reading God’s Word each day; pray each day; and worship with the church each week. You’ll learn quickly. ALSO: Remember that learning is a life-long process. No solely human person knows everything; we all need to keep learning, most of all the Word of God. One of my seminary mentors put it well in one of the most outstanding sermons I ever heard; the essence of his sermon was in the title: “Saturate Yourself with the Scriptures.” Then, as opportunities arise, tell people what you do know.
 - e. Government, including government schools, are teaching a secular humanistic and postmodern worldview: via their curricula and their teachers. Thus, there is an ignorance of [the Biblical and Christian basis of the United States](#).
 - f. This trend is largely caused and facilitated by a multilateral disengagement of Christians.
 - 1) Many Christians are afraid, or don’t know how, to speak out and address the public square.

- 2) Many Christians fail to consider several very important realities involved in elections. For just a few examples:
- a) Unconscionably, in countries which allow citizens to vote, including in the United States, many Christians, intentionally, don't even vote. They're misinformed and wrongly think their vote doesn't matter. Compounding this tragic irresponsibility and culpability (e.g., neglecting this important means to seek the peace and prosperity of their city), is the reality that many elections historically, including in recent times, are won or lost by only a few votes, and some by only one vote.
 - b) Don't trust the pre-election polls. Numerous Christians and others do not realize that many if not most polls are not conducted according to careful science (e.g., unrepresentative sampling), are biased (e.g., to please the sponsor, "follow the money"), and are intentionally misleading. Many prove to be wrong, as shown in the subsequent election. Reading flawed polling data, many Christians conclude that their candidate or issue is going to lose, so they don't bother to vote, which is exactly the purpose of some polls that are conducted by one side to discourage the other.
 - c) Numerous Christians listen to only one source of information for their news. Journalism has radically changed in the last 40 years. Much journalism today intentionally presents a biased indoctrination rather than objective information. This errant reporting occurs in several ways, to cite just a few: by slanting the truth; by false statements, including misquoting; and by deliberately omitting key information.
- 3) Thus, many Christians don't have the information they need. As part of the church education ministry, we should provide information, especially around election times, of what the candidates believe about, and their track record on, issues that God has clearly taught in his Word. We should urge and help Christians to pray, seeking God's guidance on the candidates and issues that come before them in each election.
- 4) Those of us in the church education ministry should provide information, especially around election times, that includes a description of the theological spectrum along which Christians function, and where we should be on that spectrum.
- a) A considerable number of conservative Christians hold to the seriously mistaken view that if they do nothing, not even vote, that will hasten the terrible end times prophecy of how bad life here on earth will become prior to Jesus' return; they think that if they aid in that decline, it will bring the Lord back sooner! Notice that this orientation is diametrically opposed to the Bible's teaching, including the above Scripture references.

Other Christians on that end of the spectrum maintain that "politics is messy and evil," and they don't want any part of it. Well, that's characteristic of life this

side of glory, but we don't have to engage in evil while actively fighting it. We need to remind these fellow believers that we are, indeed, in a spiritual warfare, but God has given us the equipment to win, if we engage the battle! (Ephesians 6:10-18)

- DISCUSS: What will you say to a fellow Christian who says, "I'm not going to get involved; it doesn't do any good, and, since the Bible says things are going to get really bad before Jesus returns, it's better to not get involved and just let everything go really bad so that Jesus will return earlier." (This is a view that, sadly, some especially certain Evangelical Christians espouse. What do these Scriptures say to them and to us?)

- b) In the healthy balanced middle are those who daily read God's Word, pray, and live in accord with Scripture. In this way, we are equipped to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world in Christ, and to effectively seek the peace and prosperity of the city, or wherever else, God has brought us. As the Holy Spirit informs and guides us in accord with his inspired Word, we develop the wisdom that enables us to vote and act otherwise more and more closely in accord with God's will.

- c) On the other end of the spectrum, Christians, who are either ignorant of Biblical teaching, or trying to change Scripture to accommodate to the culture (thus unaware of or ignoring texts such as Romans 12:2), often due to personal reasons (e.g., having a loved one who is living contrary to God's Word) behave in opposition to God's Word and will. Such behavior includes activism advocating issues contrary to the Bible, and voting accordingly. They need to hear the truth in love; who will inform them?

- 5) We need to include educational opportunities, such as that offered in my home church, where the associate pastor held two panel sessions, one in July and one in October, dealing with a recent election to be held in November. Such information should include at least the following:
 - a) People need to have a Christian understanding of the key principles of voting, e.g., to base their decision NOT on the name-recognition, personality, or perceived character of the candidates (much less the looks of the candidate, which an astoundingly large number of people use to determine who receives their vote!) but on the candidates' statements of what they will do if elected, i.e., which of these statements will be best for the country and the rest of God's world.
 - 1- Pertaining to candidates statements, it is essential to remember that many people, and most candidates for public office, will tell you anything you want to hear. So how do you tell what they say is genuinely what they will do? Again, track record is illuminating and informative: check their record. Does what they say they will do if elected match what they have actually done, and said, in the past?

- 2- Too many people value a person because of his or her “looks.” Human beings pay too much attention to and wrongly esteem, follow, and vote for people just because they are handsome, good looking, popular, have gained status, and are leaders, even when they want nothing to do with God or obeying his will.
 - a- Referring to some of those people, Jesus said, “They have their reward in full.” (Matthew 6:2, 5, 16)
 - b- When the LORD sent the Prophet Samuel to anoint one of the sons of Jesse as king, he said to Samuel as the prophet considered Eliab, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)
- 3- When at election time, we are considering the candidate for President, and other leaders for whom we will vote, we can’t look into their heart as the LORD can, but we can tell a lot about a person’s heart by looking at his or her track record pertaining to vital issues; what he or she has been doing in the past is a strong indicator of what he or she will do in the future pertaining to important matters. We should choose those who will likely do the best for the city or other community, county, state, province, country, and thus for the Triune God, who is the only owner of all his creation.
- 4- An old adage is helpful to discern what a candidate will do if elected: “Follow the money.” From what sources is the money funding his or her campaign coming? What organizations and wealthy people are backing the candidate, and what do they typically stand for and support? These organizations and wealthy people expect candidate compliance with their wishes; they want something for all their money. Since the candidates are dependent upon such organizations and people, they will vote in your state capitol, in congress, and make executive decisions here in the U. S. in the White House.
- 5- Pertaining to the President, which factions of the candidate’s party will apply the most pressure to pass the President’s agenda? To whom will the President have to give in and compromise? Is that faction’s agenda compatible with your values and desires for this country?
- 6- Obtain further details from organizations identified below for accurate and trustworthy information about the candidates that will not come from their campaign committee or the news media.
 - b) True and fair [information on the most important issues](#) and what the candidates say they will do, as well as what they have done, should be presented in such church educational offerings, especially on issues and candidate positions

pertaining to moral and spiritual matters, which the Bible clearly addresses, directly and/or in principle, e.g., freedom of religion, abortion, LGBTQ+, and cohabitation, among others. Applicable and sound science, which is a part of God's general revelation (e.g., Romans 1:18 ff.), should also be included.

- c) Such presentations should begin and end in prayer for God's guidance among and through us and the rest of the community, county, state, province, and country. Pray also for God's help in other key elections and governmental changes throughout the world.
- d) One method of presenting information should be avoided in the church: a debate in which advocates of opposing sides speak on a panel. What usually occurs in such a setting is that Christians, typically wanting to be nice, hospitable, and polite, are unwilling or unable to ask the tough questions that expose unbiblical positions of panel advocates on the issue being addressed. They don't want to embarrass the guest, when actually such a person who is advocating a position contrary to God's Word should be embarrassed as the truth is brought to light concerning his or her contradiction of Scripture. As mentioned elsewhere herein, when a crowd thinks someone is being publicly mistreated, their sympathies go to the person they perceive as the "victim," *even if he or she is wrong on the issues*. Failing to discern between substantive disagreement and personal attack (the common canard that "If you disagree with me you hate me."), the panel discussion becomes inconclusive and even counterproductive. The result is that people leave without the incorrect information being disclosed and addressed and without correct information on the issue(s) being presented and effectively advocated. Worse, the attendees are misled, which is catastrophic concerning those matters God has clearly revealed in his Word, e.g., [LGBTQ+](#), [abortion](#), [cohabitation](#).

Of course, this phenomenon does not mean panels should never be employed as a method of conveying information and facilitating discussion; they can be used effectively. However, if a panel is used in this context, the panelists who elucidate the viewpoints opposed to Scripture should be fellow believers in Christ who truthfully state the opposing positions, citing accurate sources, and clearly indicating that this is "their" not "my" position. Then the personality issues in the resulting discussion can be separated out, and the facts of the issues can be the rightful focus, without psychosocial dynamics superseding, distorting, and setting aside facts as well as confusing the conversation and decision-making.

For Biblical references that include the principles on which to base this method of teaching, consider God's will for his people in the Old Covenant, where he told them to be separate (the essential meaning of holy and holiness) from the pagan nations whose beliefs and practices were contrary to God's Word and will. When God led his people to the land he promised to give them, he told them to destroy the pagan nations that were already in the land as a punishment for the extensive, extremely vile, and horrific evil of the pagans and a protection for God's people.

(Deuteronomy 7-8) God's plan was to give his people this land in which they could learn his Word, mature and grow in their relationship with him, and understand their high and holy calling to bring the good news and blessing of his plan of redemption for everyone to the whole world. (Genesis 12:3) He knew, and told his people, that if they lived with the pagans, the unbelievers would be a snare to them and their mission. God said, "You must destroy all the peoples the LORD your God gives over to you. Do not look on them with pity and do not serve their gods, for that will be a snare to you." (Deuteronomy 7:16)

In the New Covenant in Christ Jesus, the principle of separation in the context of learning and maturing in God's Word and will remains. "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?...Therefore come out from them and be separate, says the Lord." (2 Corinthians 6:14-15)

Many other Scripture passages can be adduced to state God's will for his people to not put themselves in the position of having their/our understanding of God's Word weakened, distorted, or contradicted by pagans or those who call themselves Christians but actively disregard or disbelieve God's Word on specific subjects. Carefully attend to what the Apostle Paul wrote:

I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—¹⁰not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. (1 Corinthians 5:9-11)

And, extending the principle, certainly do not put such a man or woman in a teaching position on a debate panel. For example, if you are presenting a program on the correct interpretation of the Bible's teaching about LGBTQ+ issues, you will not present the truthful teaching of God's Word on those passages pertaining to such issues. LGBTQ+ advocates opposed to those Biblical passages will insist on their own reinterpretations that actually contradict God's Word. Faced with strong counterarguments that discredit and disprove their position, such as in Chapter One of the e-book, [*What Is God's Will Concerning Homosexuality? Help for Church Leaders and Others to Speak the Truth in Love*](#), many pro-LGBTQ+ activists are also trying to argue that certain books, such as at least some of Paul's letters, and specific passages in other books should be removed from the Bible. Far from educating attendees, strengthening them in God's Word and will, and equipping them to teach and witness for the Lord, the inclusion of people on a panel who disregard and disavow the Bible's teaching fails to instruct, strengthen, empower,

and equip God's people to serve him as he has called us to do, specifically being Christ's witnesses, speaking the truth in love, and seeking the peace and prosperity of the city or other community to which God has led us.

On moral and spiritual issues where the Bible speaks clearly, the matter is settled. There should be no debate, only explanation and proclamation. Yet, as the Apostle Paul has also written, there are "disputable matters" (Romans 14:1ff.) on which true Christians can interpret certain Bible passages differently and reverently "agree to disagree" in love. In heaven God will clarify any such matter that now remains unclear.

Another use of the panel, pertaining to nonbiblical issues, would be to have different people make presentations on the several related aspects of the issues being addressed. For example in a local election where one of the ballot issues is to vote for or against a bond proposal for a new fire station, it would be helpful for someone with first-hand knowledge of the issue to be on the panel, such as a retired fire fighter or a fire commissioner. That person could present the reasons why such a new station is needed and address the objections. Of course, opportunities should be provided for attendees to ask all the tough questions, but now they have the opportunity to hear from the inside what the situation really is, so they can vote in an informed manner that will help seek the peace and prosperity of the city or other community to which God has led them and which belongs to Him.

- 6) Fewer Christians, and still fewer mature Christians, run for public office; the gap is too often filled by non-Christians who have a significantly different worldview from that of God's revealed Word and thus that of Biblically-based Christians. Therefore, we should
 - a) pray that God raises up strong and mature Christians to serve in public office;
 - b) encourage certain Christians to consider running for specific seats in local, state, and national government; and
 - c) affirm, embolden, and support, especially in prayer but in other tangible ways as well, such Christians who do decide to seek public office.
5. Here are several other helpful ways to increase our strength and ability to speak out and be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, engaging the public square in our service of, and a witness for, Christ Jesus.
 - a. Begin with this basic premise and frame of reference: Don't ever be afraid of being the only one to take a stand on something. You have God with you; he will supply all you need, and he will bless your speaking the truth in love in accord with the calling he has given you to do so.
 - b. Pick your comfort level. Start at home.

- 1) Become informed. Read both sides of the issues, e.g., a daily newspaper (most of which rely on the Associated Press and other wire services for their national and international news that provide the liberal and Left-wing perspective) and also conservative Christian news sources. Do the same with TV news and commentary. Consider also [EWTN](#), a conservative Roman Catholic international station that has thorough and fair coverage of news on both radio and TV. Magazines containing truthful news include [WORLD](#) and [Decision](#).
 - 2) Parents, teach your children (e.g., Deuteronomy 6:4 ff.)—over time; not just “one and done.” The Hebrew word, *נָשַׁן* (*shānan*), translated impress (NIV), or teach diligently (NASB, KJV), in verse seven means repeat. We are to do this teaching of these commandments regularly. This teaching can be done in many ways, including, as Martin Luther emphasized, with music containing key Bible verses. Sing the great hymns of the Christian faith, and some of the newer songs, at suppertime or whenever your family meets for daily family devotions. (Ephesians 5:19) Teach them also Luke 6:26.
 - 3) Grandparents, teach your grandchildren (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:9)—over time; not just “one and done.” Teach them also Luke 6:26.
 - 4) Use symbols of the Christian faith outside and inside your home, such as the cross. Visual aids have always been valuable tools for teaching and have been used throughout the Bible and church history. Symbols are great discussion starters, informers, and reminders. Make the sign of the cross after prayer for a meal and on a necklace or lapel pin.
 - 5) Talk with extended family.
- c. Start broadening your sphere of influence. But first prepare: “Do your homework!”
- 1) Read God’s Word and pray every day. Pray while you are reading the newspaper and/or reading and viewing other news sources.
 - 2) Shape your worldview with the Biblical principle to make pleasing God your greatest desire, objective, and accomplishment. (2 Corinthians 5:9)
 - a) Teach, and regularly review, that principle with your family. In your family prayer times pray that you all will do so each day.
 - b) Keep in mind, and help your family keep in mind, that *if you please God most of all, the people whose opinions count most will be with you*. God will give you enough friends, true friends. Further, *they should be your best friends, the people who, in addition to our family, influence our opinions and decision-making*. Remember the old Spanish proverb: “Tell me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

- c) **Making pleasing God your highest priority will both free and empower you to increase your comfort level to speak the truth in love to all people**, e.g., to your spouse, your children, parents, the church, neighbors, fellow workers, community leaders, and the rest of the world. This Biblical truth is simple, profound, and amazing! Try it. Today!
- d) Prepare for opposition with prayer and by comforting yourself with these and other words from Jesus and the rest of his Word.
- 1- Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 6:23
 - 2- Matthew 7:13, ““Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it.””
 - 3- John 16:33
 - 4- 2 Corinthians 10:3-5
 - 5- Psalm 121
 - 6- 2 Timothy 1:12 (Sing the great hymn with that refrain.)
 - 7- James 4:4
 - 8- **Reshape your worldview pertaining to who we followers of Christ are; what the post-Fall (of Adam and Eve) world is really like; and our calling to be holy.**
 - a- The Greek word for holy, ἅγιος [*hagios*], means set apart, i.e., set apart from that which is sinful and evil and set apart to God. Furthermore, as God is holy, he calls us to be holy. (Leviticus 11:44-45; 1 Peter 1:15-16; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:2) Speaking through Peter, the Holy Spirit also says we should be so separated to God that we are “as aliens and strangers in the world.” (1 Peter 2:11) Recognizing that our speaking the truth in the love of Christ is so different from what the world calls “love,” we are seen to be as aliens...which is good and pleases God.
 - b- **Our calling to be holy to God includes caring for his creation (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:15), including the city and any other community to which he leads us; and in that light adjust your perspective on personal opposition and hostility toward you. View it all positively. When people falsely and harshly oppose you, that is great evidence, assurance, and comfort that you are seen as aligned with Christ Jesus as you identify with him and not the world. Such opposition is an encouraging indication we are pleasing God and not those who oppose him.**

Pleasing God first and foremost is the key to viewing, being comfortable with, and responding well to the opposition we face. That key makes it doable.

- e) Prepare for opposition by developing positive and loving responses to their hostility. Remember, the Apostle Paul revealed that offending the world comes with identifying with Jesus Christ as our only Lord and Savior. (Romans 9:33; Galatians 5:11; 1 Corinthians 3:18-20) Those who are of the world, whose hearts and minds have not been changed by faith in Jesus Christ, do not have “eyes to see” and “ears to hear.” (Matthew 13:14-15) We should expect that they will oppose us and yet still do the unexpected and present a Christlike witness: treat them well by speaking the truth in love, thereby disarming and discrediting any unwise, undocumented, and pejorative opposition to us. (A caveat: we are talking here about others who wrongfully oppose us with unbiblical beliefs that are contrary to God’s Word and will; we are not talking about the legitimate disagreement concerning “disputable matters” Christians can have with one another. Cf., e.g., Romans 14:1 ff.) Nor are we talking about legitimate criticism when, due to our own sinfulness, regrettably, we say and do something that is unkind and unloving.

We do not intentionally try to alienate people of the world we are trying to win for Christ; that would be unwise and counterproductive to the mission the Lord has given us. However, we need to expect and remember that when people are opposed with the truth, even when spoken in love, they often respond in anger; their argument cannot withstand the Word of God, so they react out of their weakness by all they have left: to attack. Since they cannot credibly discredit a Biblical truth, they attack the person bringing that truth, which in the field of logic is a logical fallacy called *argumentum ad hominem*, literally, argue against or attack the human, specifically his or her character; it is illogical, because calling us names and abusing us in other ways leaves our argument untouched, failing to address the content and logic of our reasoning.

For example, consider the following responses to typical pushback such as these statements.

- 1- “You are offending me.” Or, “You are offending all these other people.”

Answer: “Be careful; that sword cuts both ways. For example, what do you say to people who respond, ‘I’m offended that biological males can be in my daughter’s restroom!’ How is it just or fair to allow biological males, who can never change their DNA with which they were born and never remove their XY chromosome, no matter how they identify or what they call themselves, and who even in puberty have 15 times the aggression-producing testosterone than any female of any age, to enter female restrooms and locker rooms, where many have abused the girls and women in their own rooms, resulting in school girls dangerously not hydrating themselves, going without breakfast,

and wearing their gym clothes under their regular school clothes, so they don't have to use their own restrooms and locker rooms?"

Moreover, if I speak the truth in love, and someone, or even others are offended, who has the problem? If what I say pleases God, and others are not pleased, who needs to change?

- 2- "You are homophobic [or xenophobic, or 'fill-in-the-blank phobic']."

Answer: "I would like to help you with your reasoning. You just used what in the field of logic, a subfield of philosophy, is called a logical fallacy. The field of logic has established a long list of logical fallacies, most of which have Latin names; the one you just used is called *argumentum ad hominem*, i.e., an argument or attack against a human being. Doing so is illogical, because attacking the character of a person leaves his or her argument untouched; you have tried, without evidence, to attack his or her personality instead of addressing the points he or she is making, which is not logical. Further, when you attack people in public, the sympathies of objective observers tend to go to the person they perceive as being attacked, so you also lose their possible support. Therefore, you'll help yourself look better if you avoid name calling and instead present solid evidence from a reputable source that addresses the other person's argument **not** his or her personality."

If that explanation is not enough, or the person continues to make such an accusation, you could also say, "That sword cuts both ways. Someone could say, 'It sounds like you are heterophobic. What is it you fear about my argument?' Furthermore, such accusations commit another fallacy in logic: the fallacy of the unsound premise. The fact is, no solely human being can read the mind and heart of another; we don't know what is going on inside another person's thought processes and rationale without him or her telling us."

- 3- If you are verbally attacked in public, keep in mind especially the point about the sympathies of the observers going with the person they perceive as the victim of such attacks. I have experienced this personally; I was verbally attacked in front of a large church congregation of several hundred people. Knowing this psychosocial reality, I listened carefully to what this sister in the Lord had to say in opposition to a sermon I had delivered, then kindly replied to her that I still maintained what I had said, but I invited her to visit with me sometime in my office and conclude our conversation there, so we could continue with the purpose of the present congregational meeting and not hold up and sidetrack all these other people. Many people told me as they were leaving the place where that confrontation occurred, that the person who verbally attacked me was clearly wrong in doing so, and they affirmed how I responded to her. In some such cases you may not need to say anything, which can even strengthen your position. Remember how Jesus did not comment during certain phases of his trials (e.g., Matthew 26:62-63; 27:12-14).

(The subsequent meeting in my office resulted in my being able to help this person overcome her underlying problems, and she became a productive member of the church and community. On another occasion, she even asked me for a recommendation for a position she was seeking, and I gladly did so, because I truly thought she was well qualified. She was hired, and years later I also helped her attain acceptance to another appointment.)

- 3) Become informed on the issue you are addressing. See, e.g., the Current Issues page at <https://fromacorntoak12.com/current-issues/>.
 - a) Document what you are saying, or be prepared to do so if challenged.
 - b) Include both God’s Word and careful science. With secular people, it is helpful to start with sound science, which is not usually reported in the so-called “mainstream media,” but much of which is available on the Current Issues page and other pages on that Website, <https://fromacorntoak12.com/>. Early on in your presentation, include also that as a Christian you are following the Lord Jesus Christ’s command to love all people. (This helps proactively to restrain the automatic reaction of the opposition to accuse us of hate, another example of the illogical *argumentum ad hominem* and is rendered without any data from careful, or any other, science. Such people try to establish the narrative and reason that “If you disagree with me, you hate me”—an unsupported and illogical conclusion. We should not buy into and let them establish that narrative without challenging their unwarranted assumption, which assumption is another logical fallacy.)
 - c) In the discussion, we should reframe the narrative. One way to do that is by inserting questions and statements such as the following:
 - 1- Do you know that the Founders of our country based their philosophy of government on the involvement of God in our decision-making? For example, in the United States we have three branches of government to provide checks and balances on each other, because the Founders had a Biblical anthropology, including a view of the sinfulness of human nature, which requires provisions for protecting the populace from the basic sinful nature of those in the government, whose sin is empowered by government positions.
 - 2- The Founders thus recognized, as stated in the Declaration of Independence, that the country had to function under God for many reasons, including to have a moral base that would sustain the republic. This is also why we say the words, “under God,” when reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, and why our nation’s motto, “In God We Trust,” is visible every time we handle U. S. currency, important reminders of vital aspects of our nation, necessary for successfully functioning as a republic. If God is ignored, there is no ultimate criterion and rationale for righteousness or for appeal and reconciliation of

moral and other disharmony. The standard of judgment is no longer a criterion reference with appeal to God and his Word; it becomes a norm reference, where government is by polling the populace, and polling is notoriously flawed, due to human sinfulness and deviations from and distortions of the scientific method to produce the results expected from those sources funding the polls.

- 3- For just one example of the need for God in such matters, if one only appeals to a secular human norm-reference to base an opinion about homosexuality, whether it is right or wrong, and how to treat homosexual people, on what basis can that appeal be sustained? Arguing only on a secular human basis, especially in this age of widespread postmodernism, one set of opinions on a moral issue is difficult to offset another set of opinions on that same issue. The matter becomes a stalemate as they each say, “Who are you to tell me I’m wrong in how I want to look at and treat these people?!” similar to a “he said, she said” situation. We need to appeal to a higher authority, which is the spiritual basis of our country’s founding.

Thus, we love, care for, try to help, and respect homosexual people, as well as those who are struggling with same-sex attraction, and treat them well, because they, too, bear the image of God, some aspects of which are the capabilities to love, to reason, and to have freedom of choice. We respect LGBTQ+ people, not at all because of their behavior but because they, too, bear the image of God. The Biblical term, “image of God,” (e.g., Genesis 1:26-28) refers to God’s creating human beings in such a way that he has given us some of his own attributes, albeit in finite and limited form, which he possesses in infinite and unlimited form; other examples include being a living being, and the capabilities of knowledge and wisdom, which in us are genuine yet finite and limited, but which are infinite and unlimited in God. For a more complete explanation, see Edward D. Seely, [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions, including God’s Answers to Our Great Questions of Life—for Now and Eternity.](#)

Nevertheless, that does not mean we respect and condone homosexuals’ values and behaviors that are counterproductive to their and society’s well-being, including those values and behaviors that are [extremely unhealthy, violent, and psychologically, sociologically, and spiritually harmful.](#)

Recognizing the importance of including God in such matters, the current 2019 Colorado state law HB 19-1032, pertaining to school sex education curricula, not only permits but encourages such deliberation. Section 2. 22-1-128 states,

(7) (a) Nothing in subsection (6) OR (6.5) of this section shall be interpreted to prohibit discussion of health, moral, ethical, or

religious values as they pertain to comprehensive human sexuality, healthy relationships, or family formation. SUCH DISCUSSION IS ENCOURAGED. [The uppercase emphasis is in the law.]

- 4) View all of this subject in the light of God's revelation that behind this reality is the unseen spiritual warfare in which the church is engaged. (Ephesians 6:10-18, et al.) This reality is why in Christian theology the church here on earth is called the church militant in contrast to the church in heaven, fellow believers in and followers of the Lord Jesus Christ who are now with Him in heaven, who are called the church triumphant.
- d. Some newspapers allow, and publish, anonymous comments by callers to their paper. If you live in such a location, write down a comment and call it in to the anonymous phone number your newspaper provides.
 - e. Sign online and other petitions that gather your beliefs and opinions together with tens of thousands of others and send them to government and other officials (of course in countries that permit such communication) who can implement what you are asking them to do. Begin with those, especially online, that do not require your home address, which gives the petition sponsor the ability to send you unwanted mail and sell or pass your address along to many others. Some of the most accurate organizations that are supplying petitions to quickly sign, and are providing much valuable news and other vital information, which the "mainstream media" ignore, include the following:
 - 1) Act for America (ACT), <https://www.actforamerica.org/>. In addition to much crucial information on general issues, this organization speaks the truth about Islam. Pertaining to Islam, which, due to the teachings of the Qur'an and the Hadith, is becoming a growing and significant issue in the West and elsewhere, see also the work of Rev. Bassam Madany at www.unashamedofthegospel.org and his academic Website at <https://bassammichaelmadany.academia.edu>. An introduction to Rev. Madany and some of his key writings is at <https://fromacorntoak12.com/christian-response-to-the-global-challenges-of-islam/>.
 - 2) Alliance Defending Freedom, <https://adflegal.org/about-us> is the world's largest legal organization committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, marriage and family, parental rights, and the sanctity of life. They defend people in Congress, state legislatures, and courtrooms across the country—all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court as needed.
 - 3) American Family Association (AFA), <https://www.afa.net/activism/contact-officials/>. AFA also adds a feature that lets you add one or more sentences to the suggested letter they include for a fast signature if you agree with their original letter.
 - 4) American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ), <https://aclj.org/>.

- 5) Dr. James Dobson Family Institute, <https://www.drjamesdobson.org/>
 - 6) Family Research Council (FRC), <https://www.frc.org/>
 - 7) Family Research Council Action, https://frc.quorum.us/action_center/
 - 8) Family Policy Alliance, <https://familypolicyalliance.com/>. This organization also offers free online educational events.
 - 9) Focus on the Family, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/>
 - 10) One Million Moms, <https://onemillionmoms.com/current-campaigns/>.
 - 11) Tradition, Family, Property (TRP), Return to Order (A conservative Roman Catholic organization that is especially alert to Satanism and other aspects of spiritual warfare in media, in businesses, and elsewhere), <https://www.returntoorder.org/petition>
 - 12) Washington Watch, <https://washingtonwatch.org/>
- f. In the United States and other free countries, write a letter or email to, or phone, the appropriate representative in your district, e.g., your ward city council person, school board, state legislator (house representative or senator), U. S. House Representative and/or U. S. Senator, and the President. In other free countries, write to such leaders where you live.
 - g. Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.
 - h. Post informed comments on social media, e.g., Facebook, Twitter.
 - i. Talk with your child’s teachers and, if need be, school administrators.
 - 1) “Speaking the truth in love,” clearly and forthrightly, beginning with any affirmations and expressions of appreciation that you can truthfully make (in order to talk within a positive framework and facilitate the teacher’s or administrator’s receptivity to what you have to say), helps to address all concerns. Doing so also informs them that you rationally discern that (usually) there is at least some good in their work in addition to the concerns you have; you don’t “paint with too wide a brush,” thus giving you credibility in the eyes of the teacher and others. Use prepared notes to help you remember what you want to say and to include all you want to say in as short a timeframe as you are given.
 - 2) Watch for, and be prepared to respond to, any indication of the modern view of teachers as having the authority to function “in loco parentis,” i.e., in place of the parent. This is the idea that parents can’t tell the school personnel what they can and cannot teach their own children. That view is wrong. Historically, until the latter part of the 20th century, teachers been seen, even by themselves, as public servants. Now,

many see themselves as there to be served, not as a servant. I remember hearing even atheist and agnostic professors in the College of Education at Michigan State University not only pointing out this 180° change but illustrating it this way in the words of one: “When public education was instituted, teachers saw themselves as public servants. Now they see themselves as authorities who should be served; they order the children around, like “Hey, kid, go down to the storage room and bring back a bag of pencils” or “Hey, kid, go here and do this!” When even non-Christians see the complete turnaround from our historic Christian values, which also has many ramifications, we need to speak up, especially when our children’s, i.e., God’s children’s, wellbeing is negatively affected. If the teacher is a non-Christian, he or she needs to be informed of these realities. Don’t be afraid to do so; it is our responsibility to do so. God has put his children under our care to help them have the start in life they need in order to be, grow in, and serve the Lord most effectively in his sight. Keep in mind also that the teachers and the school board work for, and are accountable to, the citizens who pay the teachers’ salary and elect the board. We are hiring math teachers to teach math; reading teachers to teach reading; science teachers to teach science; not their political ideology. They should be responsive to parents’ concerns; if they don’t respond, take your concerns to the next level and on up until your concerns are addressed properly. But do it all speaking the truth in love in order to be most effective and please the Lord.

- 3) Be prepared to address non-curricular teacher indoctrination and bias. Also be prepared to adjudicate such challenging situations as bullying, not only from their peers but sometimes from a teacher. Your child needs your help.
- 4) If you are too uncomfortable in such meetings with the teacher(s) and/or administrator(s), ask your spouse or a friend to join you. Try to have the conversation with no more than two, you and one other person. While a witness is sometimes helpful and even at times needed, too many others in addition to yourself, will unnecessarily put the teacher or administrator in a mode of defensiveness and obstruction that is counterproductive. This is why Jesus said the first step we should use to start out resolving conflicts is speaking with the offending person one-to-one. Then, if need be, take the next steps that involve more than one other person. (Matthew 18:15 ff.) Even though the context in which Jesus was speaking, and the point he was making, pertains to the church, God’s redeemed people whose hearts and minds have been transformed by the Holy Spirit, this basic communication principle can be applied to others as well.

j. Talk with friends and trustworthy acquaintances.

- 1) Consciously consider intentional conversations in a variety of venues.
 - a) Talk over the backyard fence.
 - b) Talk over the water cooler at work.

- c) Talk out on the golf course or at lunch.
- 2) Consciously consider and employ communication techniques.
- a) Raise questions. With their preconceived positions on issues, people can blow off propositional statements we make; but they can't blow off questions we raise. Human learning research explains why. Mentally healthy people want to be and remain comfortable; they don't like discomfort. Physiologists refer to the state of homeostasis, a stabilized balance among all the elements of life they perceive. This stability includes maintaining a mental state of equilibrium; as long as they are comfortable, they feel fine and are inclined to pursue their current perspectives. Humans receive constant input from all around them, and to comfortably process that input, they use their mental filters, that have been shaped by sources they trust, to quickly mentally file that which they want to keep and discard what doesn't fit their worldview and other understandings they've developed. So, when we make a statement about a matter they've previously decided to reject, out it goes—simply and easily.

But when we raise a question that they can't answer with the previous understanding they've constructed, that they can't easily put into their mental file system, including their trash file, that causes them discomfort, which mentally healthy people do not like. Therefore, they are motivated to continue to think about and try to resolve this question, even long after our conversation with them, and even if they haven't admitted we have a point with our question. Questions are thus powerful means of communicating truths and inviting further reflection after you and the other person(s) conclude your conversation. Most significantly, notice how often Jesus used questions in his teaching.

- b) Include in your talking with others terms that are referred to as “conversational gambits” in the academic field of communication, i.e., brief expressions that can lead to further discussion. Work on including such spiritual gambits as the following, which shape the tone of the conversation and inform people of a Biblical truth in a loving way.

- 1- Lord willing. For example, “I'll see you next Tuesday, Lord willing.” (See James 4:15).
- 2- Provisionally. Avoid the word “luck,” which attributes something good to chance. Since God the Father is the giver of “every good and perfect gift,” how can we offend God by attributing one of his good gifts to happenstance? Substitute the word Provisional for luck. For example, “Provisionally, I made it home through that ice storm with no accidents or other trouble.” Many Christians also use the word “blessed” in a similar way, as a substitute for the inaccurate, unappreciative, and disregarding word luck.
- 3- As you become used to structuring your language in a more conscious Biblical mentality and worldview, you'll not only feel more comfortable slipping such

words, terms, and concepts into conversations, but you'll find, with God's help, that you are able to say more and more, both in response to people's questions about those terms and in further thoughts the Lord brings to your mind in those conversations.

- k. Write a letter to, email, or phone the president and/or CEO of a company, and the chairperson of the board, and urge him or her to not engage in nontraditional moral issues or, if he or she already has, to withdraw that support, and "caving into" the pressure of activists to take stands, for controversial issues.
 - 1) Include in your letter, email, or phone call a reference to strong science that demonstrates the exceedingly unhealthy, frequently violent, and physically, emotionally, socially, and spiritually dangerous results of such immorality as LGBTQ+, abortion, and cohabitation. Remind those to whom you write that the Founders of our country insisted on the necessity of basing our country on Biblical morality, otherwise there is no way to discern and uphold right from wrong or to adjudicate moral, as well as many other, disputes. In accord with effective communication techniques, begin with the strong science (emphasize the need to discern valid science from flawed science), where there is common ground, but don't fail to include a reference to God's Word, the Bible, adding that the Founding Fathers of our country quoted from the Bible far more than any other source. The [Current Issues page](#) of my general Website, and also my [academic Website](#), contain fact sheets and other documented information on these subjects that you can use.
 - 2) Assure the president and/or CEO, and chair of the board, that many of their customers do not hold to such nontraditional and counterproductive positions. Since the heads of companies are acutely concerned about public opinion, your message will be taken seriously. When they only hear from activist nontraditionalists, that constitute often only a relatively small but loud number, they wrongly cave into their demands to avoid controversy, of which they want no part.
 - 3) Give the company leaders a suggested reply to use the next time they are approached with activist demands. Suggest they reply to the activists, "What does this you are demanding have to do with our business of supplying our customers with the best product we can produce? Do you know that there are many others who do not hold to your position on this moral matter? We're a business, not an educational institution."
 - 4) In a separate section of that letter, or another letter, ask the chair of the board to very carefully vet those who are being considered, and especially any who have applied, for positions on the board. Many LGBTQ+ activists are seeking board positions in order to change the direction of the company. If you own stock in that company, be sure to mention that fact as well. If you know of other stock holders in that company, ask them to also write.

1. Attend an official meeting, e.g., city council and/or school board, in person or online. Also, consider attending “Meet and Greet” sessions hosted by incumbents and candidates.
 - 1) Before you go to the meeting, pray, asking God to give you the peace, strength, and all else you need. He will do so! You, a believer in and follower of Christ Jesus, don’t have to pray for him to be there or to go with you, because he’s already there and with you (e.g., Joshua 1:5; Matthew 28:20; Hebrews 13:5), but you can pray that he keeps you aware of his constant presence and all-sufficient help, and he will!
 - 2) Invite one or more friends to go with you to such meetings. Friends not only provide support, but more than one, and even several, impress public officials. However, agree ahead of time to speak and act in a Christlike manner. Such a manner is essential for an effective witness for Christ, and acting in this manner is also disarming and can, with the help of the Holy Spirit, facilitate receptivity of the officials to listen to what you have to say. You’ll also stand out as being significantly different, and be appreciated, for the way you treat them, especially in this age of much hostility and anger. Keep in mind that they too, even those who are confused and holding to very unbiblical views, still bear the image of God and hold an office that is part of the government structure God has established to provide peace and order. (Romans 13:1-8; 1 Timothy 2:1-4)
 - 3) Speak the truth in love. Again, remember that special Bible word for love, ἀγάπη (*agapē*), is defined as being patient and kind; not boastful, arrogant, rude, self-seeking, easily angered; does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth; and always protects, trusts, hopes, perseveres, and never fails, no matter what opposition we encounter anywhere, including the public square. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8) Love functions with maturity; we no longer talk, think, or reason as children. As adults, we put childish ways behind us. (13:11) With God’s help, for which we pray, we can do this! Indeed, we must in order to be effective in our witness for Christ and in our work in the public square.
 - 4) Begin by appealing to a common source of authoritative information, careful science and/or logic, and then include related Scripture from God’s Word, explaining what in the Word is so vital.
 - a) Careful science (part of what is referred to in historic Christian theology as God’s general revelation [e.g., Romans 1:18 ff.]) and God’s Word (in theology called God’s special revelation) always agree.
 - b) Keep in mind much of what purports to be science is flawed, therefore bogus, science. We must be able to explain the difference between sound science and flawed science. If you aren’t too familiar yet with sound science, keep in mind that if something appears in print that purports to come from science, and it contradicts the Bible, it is not true science; it is flawed science.

- 5) Be prepared for negative reaction. Remember such texts as Matthew 5:11-12 and Luke 6:22-23.
- 6) Listen carefully and respond with love. Keep in mind that the people who are reacting to what you say are
 - a) people who bear God’s image and are thereby worthy of our love, e.g., kindness and caring;
 - b) are people who have been ill-informed and misled, even deceived;
 - c) are people who are often hurting—they lack the strength to acknowledge they need to change and the ability to do so;
 - d) so they feel threatened with the truth; not having a strong argument, they lash out, typically resorting to *argumentum ad hominem*, in an attempt to defend themselves from the threat we have posed.
 - e) Therefore, have compassion on them. These are people God would like to have in his kingdom. If we speak the truth in love, doing so is, with the help of the Holy Spirit, compelling. They may find in you the true help and hope they will never find in the (secular) world. They may never admit it, but the Holy Spirit can use the truth you have spoken in love to accomplish his purposes in those people and in others.
 - f) Offer to continue the conversation.
 - g) Responding in this manner, speaking the truth in love, in itself disproves the illogical accusations leveled against us. For those who do at least a fair amount of careful thinking, it is hard to call one a bigot who speaks the truth in love and acts accordingly.
- m. Teach, encourage, and support young people to do the above.
 - 1) [View this example](https://secure.anedot.com/turning-point-usa/high-school-chapter-donate?source_code=RPOST22352) of how a conservative group of teenagers is persevering to establish a conservative group in their public school and how the president of the organization addressed the school board, speaking the truth in love. (https://secure.anedot.com/turning-point-usa/high-school-chapter-donate?source_code=RPOST22352, Accessed 9/23/2021)
 - a) While this is an organization that is not necessarily a Christian organization, this brief video (3:41) shows how young people, and others, can speak out truthfully, lovingly, and effectively.
 - b) DISCUSS: What can we learn from how these teenagers, and their 12th grade president did so well? After reports from the small groups, or responses from the

group as a whole, are listed on the projection screen, add any of the following not mentioned:

- 1- They persevered and were not deterred by the expected and nasty opposition.
 - 2- They did their “homework;” i.e., they were well prepared with the facts to effectively dispute the invalid and false narrative of the opposition, even of the official school personnel.
 - 3- They pointed out the illogical and hypocritical argument of the opposition, showing how their opponents’ obstruction is counter to what they profess: “tolerance and acceptance for all.”
 - 4- They chose an articulate, pleasant, unflappable, and strong young woman to be the club’s president and spokesperson. Being a woman and a Latina, makes it more difficult for the opposition to use their biased standard charges of the group’s principles being “just a bunch of hateful racist white men,” “white supremacists,” and additional ad hominem and other logical fallacies.
 - 5- The teenagers wisely solicited, linked, and worked with their parents and the national organization (Turning Point USA) of which their chapter is a part.
 - 6- The teens and their parents attended and showed strong support of the young teen president as she spoke, taking their case before highest judicatory in the school system, the school board.
- 2) Add other similar organizations, such as the [Leadership Institute](#) (LI), the mission of which includes establishing such groups on every four-year college and university campus in the United States. (They have now reached well over half their goal and have chapters on campuses in all 50 states.) The LI has produced many effective resources and many powerful and helpful anecdotes of how their principles have proven successful on higher level education campuses. Use these resources in your own education ministry. A caveat: since the Institute is a secular and conservative organization, they do have some partisan references on their Website, but for Christian ministry purposes, overlook those and focus on their highly useful principles that you can apply to speaking the truth in love, even in secular settings, part of the public square the Lord has called us to address.
- n. Pray for the Lord to raise up people pleasing to him to run for public office. Many who do not please God are seeking public office on all levels, bringing their values with them, and working to indoctrinate their constituents, including students at school for those who run for the school board. Our city or other community, county, state, province, and nation need people with a commitment to Biblical values and our national and state constitutions to run for all offices, judicatories, and boards. In the United States such people are especially needed if our country is to continue as the Founders framed it and

as we know and value it. Consider, in prayer and talking with others, helping them run for office. Or, consider if you should run for such office.

- 1) Typically this involvement begins with, but should not necessarily be limited to, starting at a more basic level, such as school board or city council, and then moving to higher office in the future.
 - 2) Attend their town hall or “meet and greet” meetings.
 - 3) Put one or more of their yard signs in your yard during the pre-election campaign.
 - 4) Check for a reliable source of information to help people who are considering running for office. Include for example the following:
 - a) Ask incumbents for their advice, such as those you observe are doing well and have been successful.
 - b) Check into organizations such as Leveraging Local Leaders in Northern Colorado, that exist to recruit and train a pool of leaders to run for local office who will help resolve community issues. See www.leveraginglocalleaders.com.
 - o. Make phone calls to talk radio shows. Since you will typically have only a very brief time to talk, and to help you feel more comfortable, pray, write out what you want to say, and then just reply to the host’s comments or questions as the Lord leads.
 - p. Talk with friends about organizing a letter-writing group to contact government representatives, company CEOs, school superintendents, newspapers (for the letters-to-the-editor or guest editorial sections), and others about important matters.
6. Author Virginia Allen points out that “Making changes in K-12 education will require courage,” and she quotes a very involved parent who adds, and “until we find more courage, we are not winning this fight.” (*The Daily Signal*) The above resources should, and with God’s help will, increase your comfort level and the courage to speak the truth in love. Remember Jesus words, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33) Notice that the original Greek word translated “overcome” is νενίκηκα (*nenikēka*), “I have conquered.” Jesus, the Lord, indeed the whole triune God, is almighty and sovereign; of what is there to be afraid?! Let’s ask him what he would have us do!

Discussion

7. Reflection and Decision-making:
 - a. Form groups of four.

- b. Each person think to himself or herself for one minute and identify at least three actions he or she can take to engage the public square, including helping others to do so, and bring the mind of Christ to a particular issue. Then ask the groups to list and discuss what each member has said.
 - c. Monitor the small groups' progress. When most have finished, ask them to reconvene as a large group and debrief as previously done.
8. Discussion in the group as a whole: Ask, "From what you have heard and thought of, what else comes to your mind that we can add to the list we've developed in this class for what we can do to speak the truth in love in the public square?"
 9. For any of the cognitive and affective objectives you have not as yet observed the stated behavior, distribute file cards as needed, and ask the students to give you the stipulated responses. For this evaluation to determine whether the objectives have been accomplished, be sure to ask them to sign their name on each card. Or, you can verbally ask the class, corporately in session or selected representative individuals, and/or those about whom you have a special concern, in or outside the class (especially outside and individually for those about whom you are concerned in order to avoid embarrassment and to facilitate their responses), to do the behaviors specified in the objectives. Review the instruction as needed, for any objectives that are not accomplished as you intend them to be. Doing so in class, will help those who need the remedial help and be a good memory refresher and reinforcer for those who have accomplished the objectives.
 10. Close the session in prayer.

Resources

Allen, Virginia, "[New Group Equips Parents With 7 Tools to Combat Wokeness in K-12 Education,](https://www.dailysignal.com/2021/10/08/new-group-equips-parents-with-7-tools-to-combat-wokeness-in-k-12-education/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_tok=ODI0LU1IVC0zMDQAAAGAEsW-6JZJIU27XilBu39Tkg333U8mZNpYhM_s2TsIFSQYeCXx1ssDTSTvusoPh1nSr2ZQbeZgWZ3wFlrVeLGp4d08VWcEjszkwX31jv5sVLpH6g)" *Daily Signal, The*, October 8, 2021. https://www.dailysignal.com/2021/10/08/new-group-equips-parents-with-7-tools-to-combat-wokeness-in-k-12-education/?utm_source=TDS_Email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=MorningBell&mkt_tok=ODI0LU1IVC0zMDQAAAGAEsW-6JZJIU27XilBu39Tkg333U8mZNpYhM_s2TsIFSQYeCXx1ssDTSTvusoPh1nSr2ZQbeZgWZ3wFlrVeLGp4d08VWcEjszkwX31jv5sVLpH6g

Colson Center for Christian Worldview <https://www.colsoncenter.org/>

[Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology with a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](http://www.edwardseely.com) on the Website www.edwardseely.com. See also the related pages on this Website, including the [Current Issues](#) page.

Parents Unite <https://www.parentsunite.org/about-us>

Seely, Edward D., [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology with a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](http://www.edwardseely.com) on the Website www.edwardseely.com. See also the related pages on this Website, including the [Current Issues](#) page.

Seely, Edward D., [What Does the Bible Say about a Christian's Moral Responsibility in the Culture](#)

See other resources in the above text.