

Christian Witness in the Public Square—Increasing Your Comfort Level to Speak the Truth in Love: Is Pleasing God Your Highest Priority?  
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1. 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 [שׁוּרָה] (*wēdiršú*), imperative mood, a command] the peace and prosperity” of the city where God leads us (Jeremiah 29:7), and always “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15) 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. See other passages also, e.g., Romans 13:8-11.... Also, we must not sin by omission; cf. Leviticus 5:1; 19:17.
  - a. These are Biblical bases for followers of Christ Jesus to engage the public square.
    - 1) Such engagement is part of our calling God has given us. For the additional information in this and the following sections, see the unabridged presentation on the Current Issues page (<https://fromacorntoak12.com/current-issues/>) of my secure and free [WordPress Website](#).
      - a) If the only opinion people hear on current issues is an unbiblical one that is counterproductive to our society, and thus to the church and our families, that is the way too many people will think *and act*. We must not let that occur.
      - b) Since evil is progressive, when it is unopposed it grows; while some don’t like the term, it is true that failing to oppose evil is in fact definitely a slippery slope.
        - In this evil age, we must prepare our minds and hearts that we’ll be persecuted by those motivated by Satan and his demonic forces... Yet, when such persecution comes, remember our Lord’s words: “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great...” (Matthew 5:10-12 NASB) We’re in good company!
    - 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. 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 helps to first 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, cf., e.g., my [fact sheet on homosexuality](#).
      - b) 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.
      - c) We also need to keep in mind that many, some even say most, people are not persuaded by facts. They’re primarily persuaded by this love God revealed and enables that shows we genuinely care about them, and which tries to build and maintain a relationship with them, or at least they perceive we care about their well-being.

- b. 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. We do this proclamation in many ways.
- 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 daily pray and work for the extension and nurture of God’s kingdom; moreover, this is the only hope of our and all other countries. In the Bible, God’s kingdom is the rule of God in human minds and hearts. The extension of the kingdom (regeneration) occurs through witnessing and evangelism, and the nurture of the kingdom occurs through maturing in Christ (sanctification). For more on these subjects see the PowerPoint presentation, [Essential Christianity: Historic Christian Systematic Theology—With a Focus on Its Very Practical Dimensions](#).
2. We must reject the unrealistic and unbiblical idea that we, and our children and grandchildren, have to be liked by everybody. 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!
- a. We need to incorporate these realities into our identity, our understanding of who we are based in Christ.
  - b. *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.*
  - c. *Your life has great value, no matter what anyone 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! The Holy Spirit dwells within you. This reality in Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and regularly reinforced in the church, 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.*
    - People can say whatever they want to about me; it will not affect my view of myself. I have value, worth, and well-being, not because of what others think of me but because of what God thinks of me, and his love for me and all others, especially those who believe in and obey Christ Jesus, is certain, proven by Jesus’ life, suffering, death, and resurrection.
  - d. 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. (Cf., Isaiah 51:7-8). “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 and other communities 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!

3. Remember that we're not responsible for how others process what we say and do, when we speak the truth in love. They'll have to give account for what they do and fail to do.
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," a reminder that behind all the conflict in our society is the spiritual warfare we're in (e.g., Ephesians 6:10-18). 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 and frame the narrative.
  - 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, (Luke adds that Jesus also said, "leap for joy")...." (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. This separation from the sin and evil of the world and separation to God is the essence of the Biblical word holy. (1 Peter 1:16) Indeed, you want to please God, not the world that follows Satan, the "prince of this world" (John 16:11) whom Jesus exposed as "a liar and the father of lies." (John 8:44)
    - 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 sometimes occurs 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. "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!**
    - 3) 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 other human beings think 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 GREAT!
  - c. The trend of ignoring God is largely facilitated by a multilateral disengagement of Christians. Many Christians ignore very important realities involved in elections. For example:
    - 1) Unconscionably, many Christians, intentionally, don't even vote. Neglecting this important means to seek the peace and prosperity of their city, ignores the reality that many elections historically have been won or lost by only one vote.
    - 2) Consider carefully what your vote means. Your vote indicates your view of which candidate will *best function* in that office. It does *not* mean that you like everything that candidate has said, done, stood for, or promoted. People need to...base their decision NOT on the name-recognition, personality, or perceived character of the candidates but on the candidates' track record and 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.

5. Let's consider 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.
    - 2) Grandparents, teach your children and grandchildren (e.g., Deuteronomy 4:9. Notice: no age limit.)—over time; not just “one and done.” BE SURE to teach them also Luke 6:26.
      - a) **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.** This Biblical truth is simple, profound, and amazing! Try it. Today!
      - b) Prepare for opposition with prayer and by comforting yourself with these and other words from Jesus and the rest of his Word: Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 6:23; Matthew 7:13; John 16:33; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5; Psalm 121; 2 Timothy 1:12 (Sing the great hymn with that refrain.); James 4:4.
        - **Reshape your worldview pertaining to who Christians are; 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 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.** Pleasing God first makes it doable.
      - c) Prepare for opposition by developing positive and loving responses to their hostility. Become informed on the issue you are addressing. See, e.g., the Current Issues page at <https://fromacorntoak12.com/current-issues/>. Include both God's Word and careful science. With secular people, it is helpful to early on include 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's unexamined, ill-informed, and misleading talking points to accuse us of hate, another example of the logical fallacy, *argumentum ad hominem*, i.e., attacking the person and leaving his or her rationale untouched.
    - d. Write out and call in an anonymous comment to the *Reporter-Herald* RH Line at (970) 635-3637.
    - d. Sign online and other petitions that gather your beliefs and opinions together with tens of thousands of others...See the list on [the full, unabridged, presentation](#) of this document.
    - e. Write a letter to the editor of the local newspaper.
    - f. Post informed comments on social media, e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Parler.
    - g. Talk with your child's teachers and, if need be, school administrators and the school board.
    - h. Write a letter to, email, or phone the president and/or CEO of a company.
    - i. Attend an official meeting, e.g., city council and/or school board, in person or online, e.g., Zoom. Also, consider attending “Meet and Greet” sessions hosted by incumbents and candidates.
    - j. Teach, encourage, and support young people to do the above. [View this example](#) of how a conservative group of teenagers addressed the school board, speaking the truth in love.
    - k. Pray for the Lord to raise up people pleasing to him to run for public office...consider if you should run for such office.
    - l. Offer to meet periodically with a like-minded group about what you can do together, including coordinating individual efforts focusing on specific aspects of your work.