

Christians Engaging the Public Square  
“The Need and Calling of Christians to Engage the Public Square”

Abridged Version

Rev. Edward D. Seely, Th.M., Ph.D.

One of the greatest of the many concerns being articulated today, individually and corporately, is identity. For example, one person, a woman who told U. S. Senators she couldn't define what a woman is, now sits as a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States.

Concerning identity, many people find their identity in one of many political parties, e.g., in alphabetical order: Democrats, Independents, Republicans, and a host of splinter parties. All these people are in the public square. We cannot engage the public square without addressing these people. **But here's the key principle for us as Christians:** We do not address them as Democrats, Republicans, Independents, or any other political entity; that is not our purpose. We address them in Christ and in love, focusing on the issue under consideration, sometimes affirming and supporting them and sometimes opposing them, depending on how their stand compares or contrasts with God's Word and will according to his special revelation in the Bible and his corresponding general revelation, which in part contains sound, which is always supportive, science. Empirical research that carefully follows the scientific method does not contradict God's Word when both are rightly interpreted according to historically validated hermeneutical (i.e., interpretative) principles.

This is a key part of our identity as Christians. Yet, as we engage the public square, we must keep in mind that a growing number of people, at least temporarily, don't know who, or even what, they are.

**But not us:** the Lord Jesus Christ has given us our identity. As Christians, we are called to be his followers. He tells us that we are (a reference to our very being) “**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.

Recall also what God said, as recorded in Jeremiah 29:7, where the LORD, speaking through this true prophet, whom he has called, tells the leaders of Jerusalem and Judah to do something very important. He says, “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.”<sup>8</sup>Yes, this is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Do not let the prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to the dreams you encourage them to have. <sup>9</sup>They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,’ declares the LORD.” Sound familiar?

The LORD is sending them into exile because of their destructive disobedience that hindered rather than helped fulfill their calling in God's plan of redemption. In this text God tells them, “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.”

We recall how the Apostle Peter said that we, too, are aliens. He writes, “I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. <sup>12</sup>Live

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.” (1 Peter 2:11-12)

Concerning the exiles to Babylon, think about how the LORD’S command to seek the prosperity of their new city sounded to them. How many do you think replied to Jeremiah, “Did you get that right? Are you talking about Babylon?! And Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, the guy who treated us as he did in the horrific war we just lost? You mean the LORD is telling us to seek his and their peace and prosperity?”

We must remember and act on three very significant statements the LORD is making in this passage.

**First**, keep in mind that the original Hebrew word seek, *וַיִּדְרְשׁוּ* (*wēdiršû*), is a verb in the imperative mood, i.e., a command; they had to “seek the peace and prosperity” of the city to which God led them. (Jeremiah 29:7)

Let’s consider how this command applies to us. In Christ we have become New Testament Israel and been brought into the new covenant (as we see in such texts as Galatians 3:26-29); thus, we’ve been given the same mission, and are also to “seek the peace and prosperity” of the city where God leads us. There is no option in this text. Notice in this passage what the LORD, speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, is NOT saying:

- “I hope you’ll try to fit this into your busy schedule.”
- Or, “Here’s something to consider when you’re bored.”
- Neither is he begging us with a flaccid plea, like “Please try to do this.”

Not at all! The imperative clearly communicates: DO IT.

How? That’s what we’re addressing in this new ministry, Christians Engaging the Public Square, and we’ll take some significant steps forward to do so tonight.

**Second**, don’t fail to read on. Don’t miss the reward for obeying God. Pray to the LORD for the city, “because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jeremiah 29:7)

**Third**, “[do] not let the false prophets and diviners among you deceive you. Do not listen to [them].... They are prophesying lies to you in my name. I have not sent them,” declares the LORD.” (Jeremiah 29:8,9) Today, as in Jeremiah’s time and when Jesus was physically on earth in his first advent, there are now also false prophets the Lord has not sent.

Jesus told us how to recognize them: “You will know them by their fruit.” (Matthew 7:15-23) Be constantly alert; help others to know about and watch for them, and oppose them.

God’s Word is the basic framework and the light in which we need to address the issues before us in this meeting tonight and all those we engage as we leave these doors.

As we pursue our calling to engage the public square, we are to always do so “speaking the truth in love.” (Ephesians 4:15) Especially with the Holy Spirit’s involvement, our engagement with a loving demeanor is disarming; it’s a lot harder for the opposition to accuse us of hate, and it greatly helps to give us a hearing.

In concluding these observations, I ask a multifaceted question: “When Christians, the only ones in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, do not speak up, as we have been seeing far too much for over half a century, how can our culture and country survive; how can we accomplish the high and holy calling God has given us; and how can we please him?” (2 Corinthians 5:9)

### For Further Information

All the documents on the following Websites are trustworthy and free. The Websites are secure.

1. Christians Engaging the Public Square Website at <https://publicsquarechristians.org>.
2. Edward Seely: How Can Churches Facilitate Education Leading to Maturity in Christ Worldwide? at <https://seelyedward.academia.edu/research>
3. From Acorn to Oak 12 at <https://fromacorntooak12.com/>.