



Christian Citizenship

Matthew 5:16 says that we should give evidence of our heavenly citizenship by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God's kingdom gives us the responsibility to speak and act as a moral compass for society. This means that we are often called to engage the "public square" with our message of Christ's mercy for all. We are called to do what is morally right. We are called to use God's Word to make a difference in the world. Please pray for God's will to be done... in Jesus' name.

Battle for Hearts and Minds

Perhaps we haven't given it much thought. Perhaps we are too busy trying to make a living or take care of our family. But, we should make no mistake. We are in the midst of a battle for the hearts and minds of every man, woman, and child.

Satan, the world, and our own sinful flesh daily tempt each one of us to do whatever seems right in our own eyes. Satan is well aware that our lower nature always wants to rule our higher nature so he is busy. The devil is not a make-believe figure. During His earthly ministry, Jesus did battle with Satan who lied and deceived by twisting God's Word. But, Jesus knew the Word. He was faithful to use the Light of God's Word to expose darkness. That Word is our weapon today in the battle between good and evil.

Using God's Word in our country today is not popular. When Christians speak about creation, they are considered "dull" by evolutionists who call themselves "brights." When Christian photographers choose not to photograph the wedding of two women, they suffer the financial burden of a lawsuit. When a Christian, family-owned company refuses to pay for abortion-causing drugs for its employees as directed by the federal health care mandate, that family is confronted with the possibility of a million dollar per day fine. As Christians, we could be tempted to say, "Woe is us. All is lost."

But, is it? We live in one of the very few countries where debate and persuasion are still allowed and still have influence on whether citizens live under freedom or tyranny. While we still have opportunity we need to speak up for what is right and against what is wrong according to the God who made us.

How can we best do battle in a culture that is changing before our very eyes? First, we must know God's Word and contrast it with the words of the media, textbooks, politicians, counselors, teachers, and, yes, even popular ministers. Second, we must ask ourselves: From where do we get our information? How are our minds molded and our preferences formed? Third, are we too willing to give up rights and liberties granted by God so that we can feel more secure under the hand of the government?

Many Christians lived in Germany prior to WWII. They worshipped on Sunday and catechized their children. Even so, it became too easy to call evil things "good." Hitler, one of the greatest liars of modern history, said ". . . people will believe a big lie sooner than a little one; and if you repeat it frequently enough people will sooner or later believe it."

To make a positive difference in our culture today, we must be faithful in seeking wisdom. In Christ "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (Colossians 2:3). Therefore, "see to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy or empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ" (v. 8).

Then, do not forget. We fight not flesh and blood, but "spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12) who wage war for our souls and the souls of our children. So, put on "the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day..." (v. 13). With the Word of God – and wherever He has placed us – we can affect behavior, policies, laws, education, family life, and neighborhoods to the glory of Jesus Christ and the benefit of civilization. (Suggested reading: *How Evil Works* by David Kupelian and *A Free People's Suicide* by Oz Guinness)

PLEASE PRAY . . . for courage to speak God's Word of Truth so that generations will know how to build a culture of life, morality, justice and liberty. . . Amen.

How Do We Justify Abortion Apathy?

The Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre caught the attention of most Americans. It should. The brutal killing of students and teachers was a

national wound. It should be. Parents and families mourned the loss of 26 human beings whose lives were cut short. We all should. Sandy Hook was horrific.

On this 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, 54 million other deaths should also capture our attention. Be felt as a national wound. Bring us to our knees in mourning. But, 3,500 preborn babies are aborted every day in this country and people act as if nothing is happening. An evil of monumental proportions is taking place before our very eyes, yet people who call themselves by Christ's name appear unmoved and indifferent.

Rolley Haggard, writing for *Breakpoint*, observes that apathy and silence on abortion are evidence of a theological problem. He notes that some will argue that Scripture is silent on abortion; after all, the term does not appear once in the Old or New Testament. Nor are there any commands to "vote pro-life" or "peacefully demonstrate in front of Planned Parenthood." So, some Christians actually believe they have discerned the "letter of the law" and are obeying it by keeping silent.

But, asks Haggard, what about the "spirit of the law"? The purpose and intent of the law? St. Paul was inspired to write, "He who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the law. If there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. The whole Law is fulfilled in one word, in the statement, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Bear one another's burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ" (Romans 13:8-10; Galatians 5:14; 6:2).

Haggard begs the question of us all: Can we hear and believe God's commandment to love our neighbor and still maintain passivity on abortion? "The sober reality," Haggard writes, "is that 'he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen' (1 John 4:20). Modern technology allows us to see inside the womb. Having seen, can we un-see? Are we not compelled to speak of what we have seen?"

It's possible, Haggard writes, that our error in not speaking has been an honest one. "Perhaps our embrace of the letter rather than the *spirit* of the law has been unwitting. Perhaps. This much is certain: 'When a man who is honestly mistaken hears the truth, he will either quit being mistaken, or cease to be

honest.'" (Note: This quote is often attributed to Abraham Lincoln).

As Lutherans who believe in *Sola Scriptura*, how do we respond? When we see babies (woven together in the womb by God's own hands - Psalm 139:3-16) being denied their God-given right to life, how do we respond? When we know that the majority of abortions are done for convenience (not the life and health of the mother), how do we respond? When we know that abortion says "no" to a new generation of creativity and hope, how do we respond? (*Editor's appreciation to Rolley Haggard, "Brilliant Darkness," www.breakpoint.org 1/23/2013*)

PLEASE PRAY . . .*that we see evil for what it is, resist it, speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, and offer alternatives of life and hope to mothers . . . in Jesus' name.*

The Debate Continues, but What Does the Evidence Prove?

There are more books written by atheists wanting to disprove God than ever before. One has to wonder why people who don't believe God exists want to write about Him. There are a few other questions that need to be asked in the ongoing debate between believers on the Lord Jesus Christ and non-believers.

Biblical Christians believe that sex is for one man and one woman in the faithfulness of marriage and for the benefit of children and society. Atheists, most generally, support sexual liberation and freedom from archaic Biblical morality. "My body, my right," claim most atheists. With the present culture in mind, which of these beliefs creates a healthier, more hopeful and stable society?

According to economist Arthur C. Brooks, those who believe in God and go to church are more likely to volunteer, give to charity, and donate blood than those who do not believe in God. With the present culture in mind, which of these beliefs creates a better society?

It is Christians who started hospitals, hospice care, orphanages, and soup kitchens. Search the yellow pages in any city phone book or google "atheist homes for children with leukemia" or "atheists support for people with alzheimers." What do you find?

PLEASE PRAY . . .*for courage to engage friends and family with God's Word for life, sexuality, marriage, health care, ethics and citizenship . . . Amen.*