



Christian Citizenship

“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13-16). One way to be salty and let our light shine is by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God’s kingdom gives us the responsibility to proclaim God’s Word and care for our neighbors. We are called to engage the “public square” with our message of Christ’s mercy for all. Please pray for God’s will to be done... in Jesus’ name.

Fathers Needed

We “must put the needs of our children ahead of our own self-interest,” writes Doug Mainwaring. When it comes to fatherhood, “men need to *be* men.”

Mainwaring explains, “Men who divorce, men who marry other men in order to raise children, or who anonymously sell their sperm—all follow in Esau’s footsteps. Except it is not our own birthrights we are trading for a mere bowl of soup. It is our children’s. We do so callously, selling their greatest treasure—growing up with their biological parents, with an intact biological family—very cheaply.”

The world, says Mainwaring, doesn’t need men to “selfishly take whatever we want, especially if the price is the welfare of our children. Men are supposed to do the *opposite*: men are meant to protect their children from unhappiness, loneliness, and other threats. Real men don’t victimize their own children for their own benefit. They protect, they shield, absorbing stress and hardship rather than deflecting it onto their children. Men stand in the breach.”

To be a father means to relinquish certain dreams or yearnings and become less self-focused. But there is little encouragement or support for fatherhood in this culture that undermines marriage, family, and even gender in every conceivable way. “Fatherhood,” says Mainwaring, “is under relentless, violent attack. It is up to us men to courageously fight back.” He explains, “Our children ... don’t need superheroes; just quiet, unsung, ordinary, everyday heroes who answer to the name ‘Daddy’—not spoken over a phone, but

whispered into our ears as they safely and contentedly rest in our arms.” (Source: “May I Please Speak to My Daddy?” by Doug Mainwaring, *Mercatornet.net* 4-7-17)

What can we do? Fatherhood, like motherhood, is a vocation. God calls earthly fathers to reflect what God does as a father. God invites us to pray, “Our Father,” and, in like manner, He wants earthly fathers to be available to their children and listen to them. Earthly fathers, unlike God, are imperfect; nevertheless, they can endeavor to provide daily needs, biblical teaching, protection, and God-pleasing authority. As congregations and neighbors, we can encourage fathers in their vitally important vocation with our prayers, appreciation, and reminders that God chooses to exercise His Fatherhood through earthly, sin-tainted, and repentant fathers who see their children as Jesus does. A helpful resource is *Family Vocation* by Gene Edward Veith and Mary Moerbe.

Please pray for godly, selfless, protective, and persevering fathers ... in Jesus’ name.

13 Reasons Why

A popular Netflix series titled “13 Reasons Why” focuses on a high-school student’s suicide and the taped messages she leaves behind telling 13 people it was their fault. Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford cautions teens and young adults about watching this series because it is “very explicit and graphic with intense, extreme profanity and vulgar language.” Alcohol and drug use are “portrayed as a regular and active part of high-school life.” Moreover, it “normalizes and portrays teenage sexual acts as well as teenage homosexual relationships” and “violence is vividly depicted.”

The story, says Rev. Woodford, “is devoid of faith” and ends with “no closure, no sense of justice and no resolution. Even worse, there is no hopefulness or optimism, no guidance and no direction forward.” With that in mind, Rev. Woodford has written *Faith, Hope and Love: A Threefold*

Response to 13 Reasons Why. The five chapters of this free, on-line study guide examine the Christian's "baptismal identity" that enables them to live in faith, hope and love; Satan's lies and the absence of faith; finding hope during affliction; the selfishness of suicide and what the Bible says about suicide; and love—God's love for us as well as finding "true love." Jesus Christ, writes Rev. Woodford, equips us "to meet life's challenges and address life's difficult questions with faith, hope and love." (Source: *reporter.lcms.org*)

What can we do? Make use of this study guide in the home, with other parents, in high school Bible study, or with your youth group. Download by visiting *lcms.org/13-reasons-why*.

Please pray for young people to see themselves as God does... in Jesus' name.

Teen Sex and Depression

Meg Meeker, M.D., is a pediatrician, mom, author, and authority on parenting, teens and children's health. Most people, she says, are aware of the physical repercussions of teen sex such as the fact that teenagers make up one-third of the U.S. population, but carry 50 percent of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Teen depression, however, can be as devastating as any STD.

The correlation, Dr. Meeker says, between STDs and depression is startling. "Depression occurs when a teen experiences un-grieved losses—hurts that have been buried in their psyche, festering like abscesses. When a teen doesn't deal with a traumatic or hurtful event, he ends up stuffing it and the negative emotions come out sideways. He becomes angry, withdrawn and depressed."

Dr. Meeker explains that "teenagers don't have the psychological or cognitive maturity to handle sex, regardless of what adults in our culture say. And they certainly can't handle sex with multiple partners." The misconceptions of parents don't help. Boys are more than "vats of hormones" and girls won't be "safe" if they just use "precaution." Boys have "minds, hearts and spirits and treating them otherwise is wrong ... most girls don't want to be sexually active but have no one to counsel them how to postpone sex ... finally, terms like 'precautions' and 'safe' are meaningless. How is a

teen to avoid hurt if he has sex, bonds to a girl and then breaks up? And ... condoms don't protect equally against different diseases, so being 'safe' is nonsense." (Source: "Teenagers and the STD nobody is talking about," *mercatornet.net* 5/31/17)

What can we do? Visit www.megmeekermid.com and learn why Dr. Meeker wants parents to equip children for a lifelong, one man/one woman marriage and help them get there as emotionally unscathed as possible. A resource for Lutheran parents to use in helping their child resist a sexual identity and, instead, live out their baptismal identity is *The Failure of Sex Education in the Church: Mistaken Identity, Compromised Purity* (Amazon).

Please pray for parents to help children resist the deception of the world... in Jesus' name.

Dignity Therapy

People who are dying fear pain, but they fear loss of dignity perhaps even more. For this reason, Dr. Harvey Max Chochinov, a Canadian psychiatrist, has written *Dignity Therapy*. Preserving dignity at the end of life weakens the case for euthanasia or physician-assisted suicide. Mr. G serves as an example. At 68, he was dying of cancer and wanted Dr. Chochinov to "press the button right now" (translation: be euthanized). But when offered dignity therapy in the form of recording his thoughts and feelings for the benefit of his surviving family, he no longer wanted the button pushed "right now." (Source: "If you have the 'why' of living, you can find the 'how,'" Margaret Somerville, *Mercatornet.net*, 6-6-17.)

What can we do? It's too easy for a dying person to experience loss of dignity because they feel burdensome to loved ones, and without meaning, purpose, and hope. But, in the words of concentration camp survivor Victor Frankel, when you have a "why" to live you can find a "how." Why do we have purpose even in dying? Because we are God's beloved vessels for His use in every circumstance. How, then, do we maintain dignity? Through respect, kindness, touch, conversation, compassion (meaning: "to suffer with"), help with writing a journal, Scripture reading, and spoken prayer.

Please pray for dignity... in Jesus Christ.