



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.

Why Are So Many Dying of Despair?

Aaron Kheriaty is an Associate Professor of psychiatry and director of the Medical Ethics Program at the University of California Irvine School of Medicine. In his essay for *First Things* entitled “Dying of Despair,” he details the disturbing trend in the U.S. of increased suicide and drug related deaths. The numbers are so high that overall life expectancy in the U.S. has begun to decline.

The incidence of depression is increasing among youth, beginning as young as age 12. In the U.S. depression is now the most common serious mental or medical health disorder. As depression has increased in the U.S., so has suicide. Among adolescents and young adults, suicide is the second leading cause of death. Why?

Some reasons include increased loneliness in a Facebook world; a weakened family; high divorce rates and low marriage rates; and even the loss of jobs that build pride in honest, hard labor. Suicide among adolescents is just as common among the wealthy as it is the poor.

Among the practicing religious, however, suicide rates have not increased. Those who attend any religious service once a week or more are five times less likely to commit suicide. It is important to note that the *practice* of religion—not self-affiliation with a church or religious belief—is crucial.

Let’s narrow this down to Christianity. People who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior are people of hope. In the manner of the saints who

have gone before them, Christians can daily bear the crosses of life as they follow Jesus. Also, church attendance helps to protect people from loneliness and despair. Christians are more than saints and sinners. They are brothers and sisters in Christ who can abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. (Source: Marcus Roberts writing for Mercatornet 9-8-17)

What can we do? Invite friends, family members, and neighbors to your home for a meal and time of fellowship. Tell what Christ has done and what this means! Explain why you go to church and how important a “church family” is to you.

Please pray for courage to share the hope that is within you... in Jesus’ name.

Abolishing Marriage

During a recent panel discussion on marriage, Israeli parliamentarian and feminist Merav Michaeli stated that marriage is essentially “a tool that was made to dominate women for the sake of reproduction.” She continued, saying that marriage also leads to child sex abuse: “The core family as we know it, unfortunately, is the less safe, the least safe place for children ... in the Western world and in more traditional societies even more so.”

Instead of traditional marriage, Michaeli proposes two default arrangements: 1) Adults who commit to caring for children which might mean the child has “more than two parents” who aren’t “necessarily ... his biological parents, or her biological parents; and 2) A shared household in which the state regulates some of the social and financial consequences.

Feminist Michaeli is among a growing number of unbiblical thinkers who believes that we should not just “cancel marriage,” but “deconstruct in order to build something new.”

She concludes, “So if we aspire for equality between men and women we cannot sustain this institution that was created and designed to give

men control and possession over women and children. We must cancel marriage. There is no point in trying to change it from within, for this is the nature of it.

"We must cancel marriage, so we can have a new dream, or better yet, many kinds of new dreams. And until then, create your own agreements, have your own arrangements, but, needless to say, don't get married." (Source: Michael Cook writing for Mercatornet, 9-12-17)

What can we do? People may want to shape a utopian culture, but that which is not of God will be harmful to men, women, and children. People of God need to ask the questions that help friends and neighbors think even as they show why marriage designed by God for one man and one woman is the best for children and society in general. Visit thepublicdiscourse.com and the heritagefoundation.com to read what Ryan T. Anderson has shared with Lutherans and other Christians about marriage and ethics.

Please pray for husbands, wives, and the children God entrusts to their care... in Jesus' name.

Sex Education, Faith & Practice

The origin of sex education is not biblical, but humanist. Sex education is founded on the belief that "sexuality" is central to our being. But this is not God's language. Sexuality (or being sexually intimate) is not the sum total of who we are as male or female persons. Focusing on ourselves as sexual beings bestows the wrong identity and purpose for life.

Bestowing the wrong identity, we put ourselves in God's place. When we identify ourselves as "sexual beings," we may be tempted to give ourselves freedoms that God does not, to trust our own reason and desires, and to, in fact, worship and serve ourselves rather than God (Romans 1:24-25). In time, sexual identity influences everything in society... even religion.

There is spiritual danger in choosing to identify ourselves as sexual beings. We are male or female creations of God. As baptized believers in Jesus Christ, we are God's children and heirs. But when we call ourselves what He does not, when we focus

on ourselves as "sexual beings" and not His children, then our wrong identity shapes our behavior. Wrong behavior changes our attitude toward God. A changed attitude toward God can dangerously tempt us to put ourselves in the place of God; to even become our own god, a god who defines "self" and "sexuality" as being supreme. Contemporary sex education (and Christian varieties that define human beings as fundamentally "sexual") raises the sensual and earthly nature to a level higher than our true and eternal identity in Jesus Christ.

What are the signs of sexuality becoming a false god? These signs are present when one begins to think: 1) It is who I am, 2) It is what I do, 3) It is my right, 4) It determines my preferences and lifestyle, 5) It gives me value, and 6) It is my glory. The essence of idolatry is worshiping something God made and not God Himself. (Source: Excerpts from *The Failure of Sex Education in the Church: Mistaken Identity, Compromised Purity* by Linda Bartlett)

What can we do? For the sake of children and grandchildren, familiarize yourself with the history of sex education in the U.S. In addition to the book above, read *You're Teaching My Child What?* and *Unprotected* by Miriam Grossman, M.D. or visit www.drjudithreisman.com Dialogue with parents, pastors, and teachers about ways to mentor modesty, purity, and biblical manhood and womanhood. Remember: Our sensuality is perishable, but our inheritance as sons and daughters of God in Christ is not (1 Peter 1:4).

Please pray for discernment and courage to live distinctively different from the world... in Jesus' name.

Caring for Our Neighbors

Hurricanes Harvey and Irma as well as wildfires in the west have changed the lives of individuals, families, and whole communities. To give online, visit lcms.org/Harvey and lcms.org/Irma or mail checks payable to LCMS, P.O. Box 66861, St. Louis, MO, 63166-6861. Memo the affected area you would like to help.

Please pray that the Lord have mercy on all who are weary and discouraged... in Jesus' name.

