



# 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.**

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## The Rewiring of Childhood

*The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt is receiving a lot of attention, and well it should. Published in 2024, Haidt explains that “the great rewiring of childhood, in which the phone-based childhood replaced the play-based childhood, is the major cause of the international epidemic of adolescent mental illness.”

Academy of Ideas, a subscription resource, believes the message of Haidt so important that it has created a video, *The Great Rewiring of Childhood*, free of charge on YouTube, complete with transcript. Quotes from Haidt in the video include the following:

“Gen Z became the first generation in history to go through puberty with a portal in their pockets that called them away from the people nearby and into an alternative universe that was exciting, addictive, unstable, and—as I will show—unsuitable for children and adolescents.”

“. . . [S]ocial media harms adolescents...the rapid movement of adolescent social life onto social media platforms was a cause, not just a correlate, of the increase in depression, anxiety...and other mental health problems that began in the early 2010s.”

“Many parents were relieved to find that a smartphone or tablet could keep a child happily engaged and quiet for hours. Was this safe? Nobody knew, but because everyone else was doing it, everyone just assumed that it must be okay.”

“When we gave children and adolescents smartphones in the early 2010s, we gave companies the ability to...[train] them like rats during their most sensitive years of brain rewiring. Those companies developed addictive apps that sculpted some very deep pathways

in our children’s brains...By designing a firehose of addictive content that entered through kids’ eyes and ears, and by displacing physical play and in-person socializing, these companies have rewired childhood and changed human development on an almost unimaginable scale.”

“This is the great irony of social media: the more you immerse yourself in it, the more lonely and depressed you become.”

“...[S]ocial media exposes girls to hundreds or even thousands of images every day, many of which feature girls too good to be true, with perfect bodies living perfect lives. Exposure to so many images is sure to have a negative effect on comparison machines...The more time a girl spends on social media, the more likely she is to be depressed.”

Regarding an American boy who retreated from the world into his room at age 12, Haidt remarks, “Luca, however, found an online world just vivid enough to keep his mind from starving. Ten years later, he still plays video games and surfs the web all night. He sleeps all day.” (<https://academyofideas.com/> 1-23-2025)

**What can we do?** Begin by watching the video from Academy of Ideas entitled *The Great Rewiring of Childhood* [here](#)

<https://academyofideas.com/2025/01/great-rewiring-of-childhood-smartphones-and-social-media/> or [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G42xfVmngHY)

Order copies of *The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt. Gather parents together for a book study. (Editor’s Note: This is a secular book; however, Haidt offers much for the Christian parent to consider.)

**Please pray** for parents and children as they navigate today’s world... in Jesus’ name.

## Doctrine of God & Expressive Individualism

“There can be little doubt,” writes Carl R. Trueman, “that we live in an age where the individual is sovereign. Whether it is commercials selling products on the basis of how they will make us feel or parents suing schools for refusing to allow their children to

attend class dressed in any way they choose, ours is a world where individual rights and demands carry a peculiar weight. And the result is that our institutions, particularly our voluntary institutions, are more like boutiques competing for customers in the marketplace of self-fulfillment. Colleges sell themselves on the basis of allowing students to find themselves and reach their potential. And churches promote their programs as sources of personal happiness and well-being. Religious and irreligious, we are all expressive individuals now, seeing the purpose of life as feeling good and anything that hinders that as being evil."

The question, Trueman writes, "of how to counter this and to recapture the New Testament's vision of the Church as a body of believers who find their identity not in themselves but in love of God and of each other is a pressing but difficult one, made more so by the fact that our problem is in part the result of something we all consider good. Freedom of religion is a wonderful thing. Who wants to live under a regime where simply gathering together in the Lord's name might merit prosecution, incarceration, or even death? It is good to worship without fear of reprisals." He continues, "Yet, when there is religious freedom, there is religious choice; and where there is religious choice, congregants are always in danger of tilting towards being customers, and churches towards being spiritual boutiques, presenting themselves as the answer to particular needs or desires. Add to that mix a normative notion of selfhood that places the individual and his or her needs—"felt" needs, to use the modern phrase—at the center of life, and the stage is set for precisely the kind of religion we have today."

As Christians, Trueman wonders, "how do we break from this seductive cage in which we find ourselves and in which too often we enjoy being confined? And how do we persuade the rising generation that Christianity is not simply one possible option available for finding happiness and satisfaction in this life but rather is the very meaning of life itself?"

Trueman suggests that "one vital part of the answer is to be found in that most difficult and yet glorious of Christian teachings, the doctrine of God, particularly the doctrine of God as He is in Himself. If patriotism leads individuals to see themselves (and if necessary, sacrifice themselves) in light of a larger, greater reality, that of the nation, so Christians stand or fall by whether they see the God they worship as truly greater than themselves. A God who is simply man writ large is no more worthy of devotion, and no more

captivating to the imagination, than a sports hero or a movie star. Only as our imaginations are taken captive by a vision of God in His glory will we see any change in the wider malaise of modernity which afflicts our religious institutions." (Excerpted from *Divine Therapy* by Carl R. Trueman on the *Doctrine of God & Expressive Individualism*, *Touchstone Magazine (A Journal of Mere Christianity)*.) Trueman is Professor of Biblical and Religious Studies at Grove City College in Pennsylvania, and has a Ph.D. in Church History from the University of Aberdeen.

**What can we do?** Trueman says there is nothing we can do to escape this "era in which expressive individualism and the cult of the therapeutic are the very cultural air we breathe." We can, however, remind ourselves that a glorious picture of God—that which is dramatically revealed in biblical history and dogmatically articulated by the greatest theologians of the Christian tradition—has led to some of the most compelling doxology of the Church throughout the ages. And that attractive vision, combining as it does the good, the beautiful, and the true is still compelling." Young Christians "may have no choice but to be customers in the marketplace of religion, which the Constitution guarantees, but the magnificence of the Bible story, set against the transcendence of the Bible's God, is still compelling. Those who aspire to teach in the Church need to grasp this vision of God for themselves and then communicate its power to those they pastor [and mentor]." We can resist "confusing the needs of ourselves as creatures with the meaning of life." We can be "overwhelmed by a vision of a great God at the center of all things."

**Please pray** to see beyond self... in Jesus' name.

## Future Humans

Are you ready for questions from your children and grandchildren? The book *Future Humans* was written by Tom Jackson to help children consider "how the future might look for humans." He asks: "Can we improve the human body? Could we live forever? Is it even right to try these things?" Chapters in the book include Personal Identity, Living Together, Medical Powers, Cosmetic Procedures, Smart and Stupid Drugs, Genetic Modifications, Clones, Aging and Death, Nanotechnology, Bioprinting, Cyborg Enhancements, Robotics, AI, and Post-human Species. (Editor's Note: The book embraces the theory of evolution.)

**What can we do?** Christians need to prepare for the questions that are coming. Pray for godly answers.

