



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.

Looking Foolish vs. Looking Evil

Carl R. Trueman writes: “The older generation who matured in the shadow of the Battle for the Bible assumed that it would be Christian doctrine—belief in the Incarnation, the Resurrection, the miracles—that would be the fault line within the churches and the reason why the outside world would repudiate Christianity. That generation thus lived in a world where such things played no role in actual membership in wider society. They might make Christians look foolish, but they did not make us look evil. And in that world Christians could compensate for their perceived foolishness by combining Christian orthodoxy with a certain cultural savvy and sophistication.

“But those days are over, and that leadership is ill-equipped for what is now happening. Being mocked for believing in miracles is much easier to handle than being hated as a bigot. And it is now obvious the Christian position on the key issues of membership in society today—those of sexual identity, gender, abortion—cannot but implicate one in public debates and will merit the title of bigot. Being literate and urbane, being able to mix a good martini Vesper—such things simply will not compensate for the rejection of whatever identity, act, or right progressive society next decides is non-negotiable. And we now need church leaders and thinkers who understand this and are prepared for the social consequences. If the leaders will not lead with the truth, why should the people take a stand on the truth? . . . [N]ew leadership is now needed, one that understands the exile nature of the church, the inevitable opposition of the world, and the importance of opposing the abolition of man at every turn.” (Excerpted from “David French and the Future of Orthodox Protestantism” by Carl R. Trueman in *First Things*, 11-25-22. Quoted by Rev. Jason Braaten in *Gottesdienst*, 11-29-22)

What can we do? Together with your family, give careful thought and prayer to the fact that the confessing Christian who chooses not to wear a mask or receive injections has already been labeled “unloving,” “hateful,” and “dangerous.” How will you respond in the days ahead? Give careful thought to the fact that a Christian who believes that abortion is the intentional ending of a human life, that God has created male and female—as opposed to multiple sex or gender possibilities, that marriage is God’s design for one man and one woman for life, and that God entrusts children to parents and not to the state might very well be considered “hateful,” “bigoted,” and “disobedient to the state.” Ask: How am I prepared to respond? When a grandson tells you, his grandmother, to address him by “she/her” or “they/them,” how are you prepared to respond? Discuss: How will a Christian’s “social status” change as he remains faithful to God’s Word? To what does God call us? Read Matthew 24:1-14 (especially v. 13); Colossians 2:8; and Psalm 91.

Please pray to remain faithful to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in all circumstances... in Jesus’ name.

Story Hour: Theirs... and Ours

“Tired of complaining” about drag queen story hours for children in libraries across the nation, a pastor in Prescott, AZ., decided to host his own story hour at a local library. In November, Dale Partridge read to the children from the book he authored entitled *Jesus and My Gender*. According to the Daily Wire, the book “teaches a positive view of biblical boyhood and girlhood.”

Although drag queen story hours started out in libraries, they have been introduced in some public schools and even churches. But, says Partridge, “Fathers and mothers are to raise their children to understand what the Bible says about God, man, Christ, and the church.” It is most unfortunate that too many “Christian men have abdicated this role, leaving children vulnerable to the influence and lies of the culture.”

Partridge notes that the LGBTQ+ movement has been so effective in getting its message across that same-sex marriage is no longer up for debate. The conservative movement has seemingly surrendered to the mob as evidenced by the 12 Republican senators who recently backed the so-called Respect for Marriage Act. Partridge is concerned that so many churches have embraced worldly, unbiblical teaching and role-modeling. We can no longer afford to be passive, says Partridge. God's people cannot be silent in the face of a godless world that desires to shape the thinking and behavior of our children. (Source: Western Journal, 11-25-22) (*Jesus and My Gender* by Dale Partridge is available from Relearn.org. The description reads: "In this rhyming book for children ages 3-10, pastor Dale Partridge masterfully lays out a cohesive theological presentation of biblical gender. The content of each page is supported by Scripture references and, at the end of the book, is a 5-question biblical catechism to instill these truths in the minds of young people.)

What can we do? Resist the idea that those who oppose God have a monopoly on shaping the culture. Like David, step out in faith to stand between your children and Goliath. Winsomely engage in the battle for the hearts and minds of children by hosting your own story hour with a book like *Jesus and My Gender*. Form a parent group that reviews books for children and adults. As a group, ask your public library for permission to donate adult books such as *Love Thy Body* by Nancy R. Pearcey, *When Harry Became Sally* by Ryan T. Anderson, *What Is a Woman* by Matt Walsh, and *Irreversible Damage: The Transgender Craze Seducing Our Daughters* by Abigail Shrier. Enter the public square and engage the culture!

Please pray for courage to engage the culture for the sake of children... in Jesus' name.

A Disposition Toward Gratitude

Gratitude is the "proper disposition toward all the good that we have done so little to earn." That is the message from Yuval Levin, director of Social, Cultural, and Constitutional Studies at the American Enterprise Institute and editor of *National Affairs*.

"In 1789, when, at Congress's request, President George Washington signed a proclamation marking the last Thursday of November that year as a day to give thanks to God, he suggested a particular set of circumstances for which to express gratitude. These

included the nearly miraculous fact of American victory in the Revolutionary War and 'the great degree of tranquility, union, and plenty, which we have since enjoyed,' as well as 'the peaceable and rational manner, in which we have been enabled to establish constitutions of government for our safety and happiness,' and 'the civil and religious liberty with which we are blessed.' Each was a blessing, but also a hard-won achievement that Washington's words suggested he could easily imagine losing."

This kind of gratitude, explains Levin, "does not bind us to continuing injustices, but quite the contrary." A "spirit of gratitude" and a "spirit of atonement are both rooted in humility, and so they make a natural pair. Indeed, atonement without gratitude (which is something like what the left wing of our culture wars demands of our society) amounts to a kind of arrogance devoid of any genuine spirit of penitence, or any real possibility of forgiveness."

It is important that we "draw younger Americans into a spirit of appreciation and humility, not into arrogance and anger. [This] means that gratitude must have a central place in how we understand ourselves. We need to show the rising generation what it should be grateful for before we can show it what it should be angry or alarmed about; and we cannot hope to do that in an outraged mode, let alone in hysterical panic. We should care about how our arguments strike our neighbors and what we seem to be inviting people into—either a steadfast project of conservation and construction or a furious circus of victimhood and resentment. The two would draw very different people and would shape them very differently." (Excerpted from "Gratitude in an Angry Time" by Yuval Levin, *Public Discourse*, 11-23-22.)

What can we do? In spite of failures, sorrows, and injustices in this fallen world, we can help a younger generation find successes, joys, and decency. We can nurture our own disposition of gratitude "toward all the good we have been given, that we have done so little to earn." With this disposition of gratitude, we can "strengthen both our understanding of what justice actually demands in this imperfect world, and our ability to appeal to those among the young who might be inclined to take up its cause." We can be available to someone in need and perhaps, in time, invite them to partake in a spirit of thanksgiving.

Please pray that we winsomely persuade toward a spirit of gratitude ... in Jesus' name.

