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How to Witness to an Anti-Christian World

By Freddy Davis

Because of the political nature of our current societal environment, almost everything people do these days is, in many people's eyes, evaluated based on political motives – even if the motives are not actually political. Let me give a couple of examples.

Kim Davis, a county clerk in Kentucky, refused, because of her faith, to issue marriage licenses under her name to same sex couples. Her reason for taking this stand had nothing to do with politics. It had everything to do with her religious faith. Those who opposed her, though, would not accept that. To them, it was a political statement and they have done all they could to force her, using the strong arm of government, to either cave on her beliefs or resign her job.

Coach Joe Kennedy is a committed Christian and a former Marine combat veteran. He is an assistant coach for a high school team in Washington state. For years he has made it a practice, after every game, to go to the 50 yard line and offer a prayer of thanksgiving. He did this alone without inviting anyone. There have been, though, many who have followed his example and gone out to pray with him. When someone recently issued a complaint, the school superintendent fired off a letter ordering him to cease and desist. When he subsequently went out to pray as per his usual practice, the superintendent placed him on administrative leave and ordered him to have nothing to do with the football team. In this case also, political means were used as a weapon to suppress an individual Christian's faith.

What these Christians, and many others, have in common, is that when they were told to stand down concerning their faith by people using the strong arm of government, both stood strong. In these cases, those who are trying to push Christian values out of the public square see the acts of these Christians as political actions. That is the environment we live in.

Of course, if the motives of the Christians taking these actions are political, their opponents may have a point. But in these cases the motives had to do with following their consciences, not with achieving political objectives. For Christians, making this distinction is of critical importance. Because politics is a part of our existence, we sometimes cannot avoid the political ramifications of the actions we take. But our motives must always be to serve God and accomplish his purposes.

As such, whenever we find ourselves in a position where people are pushing against us using political means, we have a choice to make. That choice relates only secondarily to the means we use to respond. Regardless of the means used to push back, our motives must always be based on our faith in Christ. And when that is our motive, the means of our response will become an effort to share a witness for Christ. The truth is, our opponents will not quit opposing us unless they have a change of heart. And a change of heart will likely not happen unless they come to know Christ.

So as we think about impacting our society for Christ, what exactly do we need to do? Here are some specific actions you can take.

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1. Prepare Yourself

The first thing that must be done is to prepare yourself for the task. In order to do this, there are two things you must put in place in your life.

First, you need to make sure that your personal spiritual walk aligns with what the Bible teaches. Christian salvation is not merely a matter of intellectual belief and "praying the sinners prayer." It is expressed by a life that was changed when you entered into an objectively real personal relationship with the living Christ. When a person's life has truly been changed by Christ, that person not only self-identifies as a Christian, but lives life daily in relationship with him. People who are not working toward spiritual growth in Christ are not going to be able to stand up against anti-Christian forces. Christians who want to be faithful witnesses in our current society must make sure that their spiritual walk with God is vital and alive.

A second kind of preparation for sharing Christ in our anti-Christian world relates to knowing what to say. Receiving Christ is a matter of entering into a relationship with him. But to do that, there is a core body of knowledge that a person must grasp so that they may know how to enter that relationship. Beyond that, those who want to be witnesses must know the knowledge base and be able to share it with those who don't.

2. Put Yourself in the Middle of the Fray

There is no magic formula when it comes to sharing a witness. Every situation is its own unique circumstance. Some Christians try to deal with witness in a formulaic way by either sharing a "quiet" witness or by doing it "loudly." The fact is, every Christian needs to be able to handle both kinds of situations.

Some circumstances are most effectively dealt with in a quiet way. It may need to be that way because an aggressive witness is not appropriate in certain circumstances – in many workplace situations, for instance. In those cases, Christians may have to use their lifestyle and kindness to get noticed. This does not mean they cannot express their faith in public, but the focus of that expression may have to be the living of a lifestyle where honesty and integrity are prominent along with words of kindness and expressions of concern. People will respond to that in ways which will lead to further opportunities to be more overt. This does not mean to only use lifestyle. It simply means that you must lead with it.

Other circumstances allow for a more overt kind of witness. This may be in life situations where speaking of your Christian faith is acceptable. It may also involve circumstances where it is necessary to strongly advocate for your faith against hostile attacks.

Regardless of the specific circumstances, the key is to be intentional. A witness for Christ is only a true witness if it somehow leads to an opportunity to actually share one's faith. There are nice people who are not Christians. Someone is not going to know your niceness is due to your faith in Christ if you don't somehow let them know. On the other hand, it is also possible to be obnoxious in sharing your faith and push people away from Christ. To witness in our world, we must intentionally enter the fray. But it must be done appropriately in each circumstance.

3. Know Your Rights

First a disclaimer. For a Christian, rights do not enter the equation when it comes to motivation for thinking what we think and doing what we do. The Christian's purpose in life is not to "get our rights," but to serve God. All we do should relate to how we glorify him in our lives.

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Contact Information

If you wish to contact us directly, you may do so by the following methods:

321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312

E-mail:

info@marketfaith.org

Phone: 850-383-9756 (Tallahassee, Florida)

Fax: 850-514-4571

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That said, in American society, we do have rights. But as we claim and exercise those rights, it is not for the purpose of "getting our rights." The rights which were enshrined in the American legal system were created for a higher purpose. The founders recognized the existence of God and established our form of government in a way which corresponds with what God has revealed in the Bible concerning such matters as the value of human life, freedom of conscience, and the proper use of material goods.

As Christians, the exercise of our rights is not to "get what we want," but to glorify God. So in modern society where the rights of Christians are being abridged, the purpose for claiming our rights is not a matter of getting what we personally desire. It is for maintaining an environment in society that allows citizens to freely live in a way which is able to glorify God. This is not to say that all citizens even have an interest in doing that. But if the environment which allows for that to occur is not maintained, everyone comes under bondage. For that reason, Christians ought to assert their rights as citizens in order to promote a societal environment which allows for that kind of freedom. The apostle Paul himself did that when he claimed Roman citizenship in order to keep from being further persecuted.

One of the most important freedoms that we, as Christians, want to maintain is the ability to freely share Christ. In a free society we have that opportunity. As such, it is a proper thing for us to advocate for the continuance of that freedom.

But we also need to be aware that even when rights are abridged and we find ourselves under persecution, we can still be faithful witnesses. In our current environment where suppression of Christians is becoming

more common, that very suppression provides its own witnessing opportunity. When we are wronged, a bold statement of what is right is very powerful – and the exercise of our "rights" can be an instrument in that effort.

There is one last thing that must also be expressed. As we exercise our rights, we must always do it based on a godly motivation. We must always be loving, even to those who hate us. The Christian faith does not allow for an "ends justifies the means" approach. How we do what we do is just as important as what we do. It is impossible to do God's will using ungodly means.

Witness to an Anti-Christian World

The world we live in is increasingly anti-Christian. This is not only because the number of people who self-identify as Christians is smaller as a percentage of the population, but also because more people who fall into that category are militant in expressing their anti-Christian faith. In order to effectively share a witness in this environment we must do three things.

1. *Be Genuine*

First, our faith must be truly genuine. Not only can non-believers easily pick up on those who express their faith legalistically, there is no power in it. The power we have to live out our faith ultimately comes from our personal relationship with God, not from our knowledge about the Bible or the good works we do. God has chosen to work primarily through those who truly know him. To be an effective witness, we must "be" a person who lives genuinely in relationship with him.

2. *Be Intentional*

Second, we need to have a plan and work that plan in our lives. There are many different ways to express our faith, and different people will be ef-

fective doing it based on different gifts, talents, and passions. This does not mean that we can never express our faith outside of some intentional plan, but most of our effectiveness will be within it.

3. Be Bold

Finally, we must be willing to stand strong in the face of opposition. Our world is one in which anti-Christian activism is a sad reality. Not all people will not be ugly in opposing Christians, but many will be. This

is never to be an excuse to be ugly back, but it is a recognition that boldness is an absolute necessity in the face of boldness by opponents.

There are many opportunities to share our Christian faith in modern society. In fact, there are many times when opposition provides even more opportunities. But to take advantage of these, one must be prepared in every respect. Don't miss out on your opportunities.

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