

The Christian faith in the public square

Ten biblical reasons to be a Christian influence

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Why be a Christian influence?

The Christian Institute is a non-denominational Christian charity committed to upholding biblical truth in the public arena.

We believe the Bible is the supreme authority for all of life and we hold to the

inerrancy of Scripture. We help Christians to understand the arguments about key contemporary issues, seeking to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God” (2 Corinthians 10:5).

Why is it important for Christians to promote the truth of God’s Word in the public square? Why should we seek to influence public policy?

[The Bible gives many reasons to be a Christian influence. Here are ten](#) ➔

1 THE GLORY OF GOD

Christians show their love for God by seeking his glory. As the Westminster Shorter Catechism says, “Man’s chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever”.

God is glorified when Christians point people to the truth of his Word. By imitating his attributes we bring God glory – his righteous character, his concern for the Church, his love and care for all people. In all these ways The Christian Institute is working for the glory of God.

We are seeking to imitate Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, as we are commanded to do: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us...” (Colossians 1:15; Ephesians 5:1-2; John 7:18).

Foundational to our work is the truth that the triune God is our Creator and that he has designed this universe to reflect his character. We see God’s holy character in his moral law, which requires mankind’s obedience.

Every human being is made in God’s image and his moral law is written on the heart of all (Genesis 1:26-27; Romans 2:14-15). This moral law is summarised by the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20). Essentially they set out the Maker’s instructions for life on this earth. If we are followers of Christ, we should work for God’s moral law to be reflected in the laws of this land to honour and glorify him.

Not only does promoting the truth of God’s Word bring glory to our Creator, it is also for everyone’s good. For example, the covenant of marriage between one man and one woman was hardwired by God into our creation from the beginning, before the Fall. Marriage is for everyone, not just Christians. Disobeying the seventh command to maintain the purity of marriage has negative consequences in this life and eternally; a man reaps what he sows (Galatians 6:7-8). Following God’s pattern for marriage will bring a measure of blessing in this life.



2 THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2:11), exalted far above all authority, power and dominion (Ephesians 1:21; Revelation 1:5) and his Lordship is universal: "For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him" (Colossians 1:16). As the Dutch theologian Abraham Kuyper said: "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is sovereign over all, does not cry: 'Mine!'" It was for loyalty to this truth – that Jesus is Lord, not Caesar – that early Christians were martyred.

James calls the moral law a royal law: a law given by a king (James 2:8). Obedience to Christ in all things is a matter for all individuals, governments and nations. On the last day King Jesus will judge every person according to his law.



3 COMMON GRACE

Woven throughout Scripture is evidence of God's common grace – his blessings to all people in this life outside of salvation (Matthew 5:45; Acts 14:17; 2 Corinthians 9:10).

Creation was drastically affected by the Fall but God restrains the effect of sin by providing us with many good

things, such as marriage, government and our consciences. Christ himself led by example by showing God's common grace in action. He healed and provided food for many people – those who believed in him and those who did not. Indeed it is recorded in John 6 that after the feeding of the 5,000 many stopped following him. As imitators of Christ, we too should seek to care for others.

The doctrine of common grace also holds that God

can work for good through unbelievers, including governing officials. It was the pagan King Cyrus who granted religious freedom to the Jews and even provided for the rebuilding of the temple.

But when people reject God's common grace, they reject and work against the means which God has provided to restrain sin. We cannot make people accept Christian standards, but in a democracy we can certainly argue for them.



4 THE WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD

The Apostle Paul determined to preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). Someone who takes the Bible seriously has to consider passages such as 1 Timothy 2, Romans 13 and 1 Peter 2 which deal specifically with the Christian's relationship with government. Surely churches have to preach on and obey such passages, as they should the rest of the Bible. It is our responsibility to put these passages of Scripture into action.

5 LOVING OUR NEIGHBOUR

The Lord Jesus said on the night before he died: "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). Earlier in his ministry he commanded us to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). Loving our neighbour includes both sharing the Gospel and showing our love by practical acts of compassion.

In the broader sense loving our neighbour also means seeking good laws that will benefit our neighbour's marriage, children, property and so on. The unborn baby is also our neighbour. We need to defend the sanctity of life and protect them from abortion. This is a matter of obedience to Christ.



6 DEMONSTRATING THE REALITY OF OUR FAITH

The book of James is clear that faith without works is no faith at all (James 2:26). Our works can never save us, but they do demonstrate the reality of our faith. And the Bible does not exclude the governing authorities from the scope of our good works. The implications of the Gospel extend not just to the forgiveness of a person's sins through Christ's death on the Cross, but also to the transformation of lives and society. While the visible Church as a body focuses on its task of worship, prayer, teaching and evangelism, at the same time individual Christians should be doing good wherever God has placed them in society.

Every Christian has a dual citizenship: of heaven (Philippians 3:20); and of an earthly nation (usually that in which he was born). Theologian Albert Mohler has reminded

Christians that "we live simultaneously as citizens of two cities: a heavenly city and an earthly city. The one is eternal, the other is passing. But the earthly city is also a city of God's good pleasure and divine compassion. As a Christian, I am instructed by the Bible to work for the good and flourishing of this earthly city, even as I work to see as many as possible also become citizens of the heavenly city through faith in Christ Jesus."

Our democracy provides us with many opportunities, and we should use these privileges. Influencing government and laws for good is one outworking of faith in Jesus.



7 PRAYING FOR THOSE IN AUTHORITY

Praying for those in authority is a gospel priority. The command to pray for rulers found in 1 Timothy 2 is directly linked to the freedom to live a godly life, and then to opportunities for the gospel.



If it is right to pray for something, it is also right to take action. We have a biblical example of this from the Old Testament. Jeremiah 29 records a divinely-inspired letter to the Jews in exile in Babylon. God says to his people in a pagan land (verse 7): “...seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” So prayer and actively seeking the peace of the city go together. The prophet Daniel responded by doing both and it was his praying that caused him to be cast into the lion’s den. Years before, he boldly declared to King Nebuchadnezzar that he should stop sinning and do what is right (Daniel 4:27). In our day we must do everything we can to influence our rulers so that there is freedom to obey and to declare God’s Word.

8 DEFENDING SUFFERING BELIEVERS

The Christian Institute’s Legal Defence Fund helps to defend Christians who are marginalised because of their faith. We are applying the command in Hebrews 13:3 to stand up for those who are suffering, and following the example of Paul in Acts 16 when he used his rights as a Roman citizen for the defence of the Gospel.

The parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25 explains that judgement on the last day will weigh how a person has treated believers. It also demonstrates, in verse 45, the inseparable bond between Christ and his people. The risen Lord Jesus said to the great persecutor of the Church before his conversion: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4).



▶ Daniel McArthur, General Manager of Ashers Baking Company, with his wife Amy

9 BIBLICAL COUNSEL TO SECULAR RULERS

The Bible is clear that governing authorities are ordained by God “to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right” (1 Peter 2:14). The likes of Joseph and Daniel brought such counsel to secular rulers.

Theologian Wayne Grudem has also pointed to the example of John the Baptist and the Apostle Paul who did the same in their day. This is a clear biblical pattern for the Church and individual Christians to follow today.

10 SALT AND LIGHT

The Christian's calling is most vividly described by Christ himself. He tells his followers that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). As salt acts to prevent decay in food, so Christians act to restrain evil on this earth. As light illuminates a dark place, so Christians bear witness to the truth. Supremely we bear witness to the truth as it is in Jesus. This is an issue of demonstrating our Christian identity.

God's Word is the truth. It is public truth. It is true for everyone, not just Christians.



We are called to bear witness to the truth of God's Word, including its commands to keep the moral law of our Creator and the blessings of obedience, as well as its teachings of the person, work and Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Christians are salt and light and this metaphor is probably the simplest summary of why Christians must be involved in the wider world, including seeking to be a Christian influence in the public square. We need to take action: guided by biblical principles and in dependence on the power of the Holy Spirit. None of us can do everything, but we can all do something.

What is the greatest reason for being salt and light? It brings glory to God. As Jesus says in Matthew 5:16, "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven".

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Tel: 0191 281 5664 | Email: info@christian.org.uk | Web: the.ci | Published in May 2023

Registered in England as a charity Charity No. 100 4774 Company No. 263 4440. A charity registered in Scotland Charity No. SC039220