

Loving Your Enemies, Not an Option

by Richard Nelson

I was recently invited to speak to a group of concerned citizens in Northern Kentucky about a “Fairness” ordinance introduced by their city council and how best to defeat this proposal. The problem with these ordinances is they’re often used as a tool to violate the conscience and religious freedom of local residents, especially business owners. LGBT activists were protesting across the street, one of whom greeted me in front of the church. The camera was rolling from a Cincinnati TV station to record the drama.

Most of us would rather avoid such conflict, but Christians are called not to fear conflict but rather to walk with God in all situations. In fact, we’re called to shape culture by living out principles of the faith. This means standing for truth in the public arena. But just as important as standing for truth is to stand for truth in the right way, a God-honoring way. This means that humiliation, name-calling, and bigotry should have no place in a Christian’s life. Period. Full stop.

What struck me as odd was the outright anger and hostility aimed at LGBT activists chanting across the street, and toward me for suggesting that they need God’s love and compassion as much as I do. The hostility I received from a few people inside the church was unexpected. Some saw grace toward my opponents as compromise and confused loving my enemies with “loving the world.” I share this not to gripe but as an opportunity to offer some guiding principle for Christians to engage culture and

public policy in a public setting.

For starters, followers of Jesus begin in a place of great humility. This is because sinners bring nothing to God and do nothing to merit His saving power in their lives. It’s all grace. It’s all Him. And as we grasp this, it should result in all humility on our part as we engage others. Scripture says that “God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). Jesus exemplified real grace and real love by laying down his life for us—even while we were still at war with him. That’s powerful.



So then how do we begin the conversation? The short answer is not epithets cloaked in anger. Rather we should “walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person” (Colossians 4:5-6). Even before we speak, we ought to walk in wisdom and be cautious. As James tells us, “Let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger

of man does not produce the righteousness of God” (James 1:19-20).

How do we approach those who are still opposed to the Creator and Redeemer of mankind? Even those who promote policies and agendas that are antithetical to human flourishing, undermine religious liberty, and are clearly contrary to God’s principles? Jesus tells us to love our enemies. “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you” (Luke 6:27-28). This is difficult. I’m still trying to figure out what this looks like in the public policy realm. However difficult it may be, Jesus demands this of His followers.

For those who would call fire down from heaven and carpet bomb their opponents, consider 2 Timothy 2:24-26: “And the Lord’s servant must not be quarrelsome but kind to everyone, able to teach, patiently enduring evil, correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will.” Paul’s admonition is a better way. In fact, it’s the truth. To engage in a condemning, hateful, self-righteous way isn’t just ineffective and unproductive, it’s repulsive. It shows a lack of confidence in the gospel of Jesus Christ. We can do better. Our society depends on us whether they realize it or not.

Christianity & Culture Conference: Successful Spring, Looking to the Fall

There is no question that our culture is undergoing a dramatic shift and is increasingly hostile to Christian values. More than ever, it is necessary that Christians across the Commonwealth are equipped with the tools necessary to be salt and light in this dark culture. To that end, CPC launched the Christianity & Culture Conferences this past spring.

The first two conferences were held in Lexington and Louisville. Speakers of the conference included Pastor Bob Russell, Pastor Hershael York, Pastor Robert Cunningham, Angela Minter, Brandon Porter, Daniel Mingo, Blaine Adamson, and Richard Dixon. Each of them provided foundational wisdom and real-world application to attendees who wanted to better engage their neighbors who may be pro-choice, LGBT, or simply antagonistic to traditional values.

Both events were sold out and received high praise. “This conference was one of the most informative and impactful I’ve been to!” wrote one attendee.

We will continue the Christianity & Culture Conferences in West Kentucky in the fall. We will be in Bowling Green on September 10th, Paducah on October 1st, and Somerset on November 5th. Go to our website, www.commonwealthpolicycenter.org, for more details and to register.



Bob Russell Receives Prestigious Friend of the Commonwealth Award



The Commonwealth Policy Center is pleased to announce that Pastor Bob Russell was recently presented with the highest award of honor that our organization offers: the Friend of the Commonwealth Award. This prestigious award has only been given to a few individuals down through the many years of its existence. The award was presented by CPC Executive Director Richard Nelson during the sold-out Christianity and Culture Conference held May 20th at the Gheens Foundation Lodge in Louisville, Kentucky.

The award is given “in appreciation and gratitude for your dedication to Jesus Christ, tireless service to His Church and impact on God’s kingdom in the Commonwealth of Kentucky for over half a century.”

Pastor Russell is the former lead pastor at Southeast Christian Church in Louisville which is one of the largest churches in the nation. Upon retirement from Southeast, he has carried on with his ministry through Bob Russell Ministries where he continues to teach and inspire many throughout the world. Pastor Russell has also been a speaker at our spring Christianity and Culture conferences in Lexington and Louisville where he has encouraged listeners by telling them that, “It is time to speak the truth in love.” He lives in Louisville with his wife Judy.

CPC Involved with Yes for Life Coalition



This past April, Secretary of State Michael Adams signed House Bill 91, a proposed State Constitutional Amendment on abortion. This amendment simply states: “To protect human life, nothing in this Constitution shall be construed to secure or protect a right to abortion or require the funding of abortion.” If Roe v. Wade is overturned this would ban abortion in our Commonwealth. CPC was pivotal in passing this Amendment in the General Assembly, and we attended the historic signing. Other states have passed similar Constitutional Amendments, and we pray Kentucky will do so next year.

This Amendment will be on the ballot in November 2022 for you and other Kentuckians to vote on. We have a long road until next November. Pro-abortion groups will do all they can to confuse citizens about this measure and convince them to vote No. That is why CPC has joined the Yes for Life Coalition. This coalition of like-minded pro-life organizations will come together and strategize how we can educate and equip Kentuckians with the information you need to vote Yes this November. We pray we can reach as many people as possible with this information so that Kentucky is safe for unborn babies.

Yes for Life cannot do this alone. If you feel led, please consider donating to this cause. You can write a check to CPC and write “Yes for Life” in the memo line, or donate on our website and do the same in the comment section. We thank you for your consideration and look forward to the passage of this Amendment in November.



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Director's Corner

This is the season where the grills are fired up, and hot dogs and burgers are served to friends and families at picnics and lakeside or swimming pool gatherings. But as we celebrate our nation's 245th birthday it's good to reflect on what our nation is about.

It's been in vogue to criticize and highlight our nation's mistakes. The New York Times 1619 Project teaches that the central idea of our history is when slaves were first brought over in 1619. Critical Race Theory (CRT) is pushing the idea that being white is somehow synonymous with racism and oppression. One idea is a false narrative of our nation's history. The other seeks to embitter and divide us as a people.

State Rep. Matt Lockett joined me on the Commonwealth Matters to talk about his bill to ban the teaching of CRT in our public schools. I applaud Rep. Lockett for calling out CRT for what it is: a patently racist worldview that has no place in our public schools. I also got to spend time with a Chinese national who lived under the ruthless reign of Mao Tse Tung. Y. Yao immigrated here and is now an American citizen grateful for the freedom and opportunity this country has blessed her with. She is dedicated to sharing her story about the tyranny of communism and also the gift of freedom we enjoy as American citizens.

So which version of America do you believe in? Allow me to ask another question: if America is as oppressive and unjust as some assert, why do we have 51 million immigrants, which is four times as many as the next highest country? If we are so racist, why did 844,000 people from every ethnicity and race become U.S. citizens in 2019?

America offers freedom and opportunity unparalleled in all of history. America is a beacon of freedom that draws people from every nation on the face of the earth. We are also a melting pot. This is because the law recognizes equal value and dignity to every person regardless of their skin tone or socio-economic status. And we can celebrate together the greatest political truth found in the Declaration of Independence: "We are endowed by our Creator with certain inalienable rights." Our rights come from God. So does our dignity. That our government acknowledges the origin of our rights and dignity is what makes America great.

Next time someone wants to trash our nation remind them that even as we've made mistakes, the people have had freedom to make corrections through peaceful means. Many such corrections have been made, including decades of attempts to recognize the value and dignity of pre-born babies. Restoring the sanctity of human life for the unborn has been a priority of CPC. That's why CPC is involved with the Yes for Life Coalition.

This coalition of the leading pro-life groups in Kentucky is working to pass the Constitutional Amendment on abortion. The amendment simply says that abortion is not a protected right under the state Constitution and that public funds cannot be used for abortions. It's a critical addition to our laws and will prevent a Roe v Wade activism at the state level. It will appear on the 2022 ballot. You'll be hearing more about this effort and our involvement in the near future.

In the meantime, Happy Independence Day!

Very sincerely yours,

Richard Nelson

Richard Nelson
Executive Director

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GOD IS INTEGRAL TO AMERICAN LIBERTY

Have you ever visited the National Archives and seen the Declaration of Independence? It's alongside the U.S. Constitution and other historical documents in the dimly lit rotunda. 245 years have taken their toll on our nation's founding political document. As those timeless words written in ink are fading on the yellowing parchment, so is our understanding of what this nation is about.



Many ideologies, like critical race theory, have begun to crop up, and paint America in the worst possible light. Militant secularists, pushing such destructive ideologies, are devoted to stamping out moral boundaries and pushing the Creator God out of public life—which ultimately undermines the possibility of freedom.

The Founders understood God's place in the public arena and made a moral case for resisting King George's tyranny and separating from Great Britain. To do so, they reached for the highest principles and outlined "a long train of abuses" of a tyrannical King who trampled their rights. So they appealed to the "Supreme Judge of the world," relied upon "the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God," and had a "firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence." God is referenced four times in the Declaration. He is acknowledged as the basis for justice and the fountain of all

human rights in the most famous of political truths: "all men are created equal and endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights." Yet, we have lost this understanding.

Several surveys over the last decade reveal our ignorance of basic civics. Too many Americans cannot identify the three branches of government or name even a few of our freedoms guaranteed in the First Amendment. An even greater number confuse liberty with license. Gallup's annual Values and Beliefs poll found that 46 percent of Americans believe changing one's gender is morally acceptable. 70 percent of Americans support same-sex marriage. Some contend these beliefs are consistent with American freedom but an individual's right to define one's own moral code was foreign to our Founding Fathers.

So long as we reject the source of our rights, the One whose image we're made in, we are doomed to forfeit the rights themselves. Life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—maximum freedom recognized in the Declaration is only possible when we individually and collectively recognize the majesty and the goodness of the Creator God who gave us those rights in the first place. May each of us celebrate this self-evident truth this July 4:

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness--That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed...

This is the American creed.

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