

We Need to Change Both Hearts and Laws

Bill Bright (1921-2003) is best known as the founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, one of the largest campus outreach ministries in the world, author of the famous “Four Spiritual Laws” evangelism booklet and producer of the “Jesus” film, which has been viewed more than 7 billion times in almost 2,000 different languages, making it one of the most significant evangelistic projects in history.

But Bright was not just a visionary evangelist who founded Campus Crusade (known today as Cru). He was also the founder of the Alliance Defending Freedom, America’s “largest legal organization committed to protecting religious freedom, free speech, marriage and family, parental rights and the sanctity of life.”

That’s because he understood that protecting our foundational American freedoms went hand in hand with our ability to preach the gospel without restriction. As Bright said, “I truly believe we are fighting for the very survival of the gospel and of evangelism in America today.” (Bear in mind that he died in 2003; already then, the assault on our liberties was very clear.)

Since 2011, the ADF has been directly involved in 15 major Supreme Court wins, most notably the *Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization* in June 2022 that led directly to the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. It doesn’t get any bigger than that!

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Other cases of note that were successfully litigated by the ADF before the Supreme Court include *303 Creative v. Elenis*

(in 2023), a major victory for Christian freedom of conscience and expression; *Uzuegbunam v. Preczewski* (2021), on behalf of a Christian student who was blocked from openly sharing his faith on his college campus; and *March for Life Education and Defense Fund v. California* (2020), stating that employers did not have to “provide their employees with abortion-inducing drugs, sterilization and contraception—regardless of their religious or moral convictions.”

Had these cases, among many others, been decided differently, our country would look very different than it does today.

This points to the importance of Christian legal work since, without it, not only could our essential rights and freedoms be removed, but we could be compelled by the government to say or do things contrary to our faith, resulting in loss of job, expulsion from colleges and universities, steep fines and even prison sentences if we refused to comply. Even worse, our children could be taken from us and put into state care (or into other homes) if we refused to act and speak as the government demanded.

All that being said, it is even more important that we seek to change hearts and minds as well as laws. Put another way, we must win in the court of public appeal as well in courthouses throughout the land. We must change the thinking of millions of Americans, lest the legislative victories of one generation get swallowed up with massive reversals in the next generation, if not even more quickly. What a terrible shame that would be.

Thinking back to the eradication of slavery in the 1700-1800s, how was it that William Wilberforce (1759-1833) and the abolitionists in the United Kingdom and America succeeded in their mission? Slavery was a way of life, with national economies built on its very back. There was no way political leaders would even think of outlawing the practice, unless their own eyes could be opened to the horrors of slavery and,

even more importantly, unless the eyes of the people could be opened.

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To give just one example of how deeply entrenched the slave trade was in British life, John Newton (1725-1807), author of the world-famous hymn "Amazing Grace," continued for a few years as the captain of a slave trading ship *after* his radical conversion experience. As he explained (to his shame) years later, "Custom, example, and interest had blinded my eyes. I did it ignorantly." In other words, this was the common practice of the day (custom); everyone he knew, including Christians, had no real problem with it (example); and it was profitable (interest).

That's why Wilberforce (who was a parliamentarian fighting on a governmental as well as popular level) and his colleagues launched graphic public relations campaigns, using the image of a chained Black man asking, "Am I not a man and a brother"?

They also utilized the testimonies of former slaves (and even former slave traders, like Newton), ultimately changing the law by changing public opinion. It was in that same spirit that President Abraham Lincoln allegedly said to Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-1896), author of the watershed novel "Uncle Tom's Cabin," "So you're the little woman who wrote the book that made this great war!" (He was speaking, of course, of the Civil War.)

Whether the quote is true or not, it is a recognition of the fact that Stowe's book was greatly used to change the thinking of millions of Americans. They came to realize that the African slave trade was downright evil. It had no business in our country at all.

That's why, to say it again, the changing of hearts must

accompany the changing of laws. Otherwise, there will ultimately be resentment, anger and, finally, rebellion, leading to the reversal of the good laws we fought so hard to pass. The short-term gains will become long-term losses.

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(Excerpted and adapted from Michael L. Brown, "Turn the Tide: How to Ignite a Cultural Awakening" [Charisma House, 2024].)



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