

Fort Worth Police in Hot Water After Officer Says Christians Can Be Ticketed for 'Offensive' Speech at Pride Event

A confrontation between Christian street preachers and Fort Worth police outside a Pride event has ignited outrage after an officer threatened to issue citations based on whether listeners found the message offensive, raising fresh concerns about the future of free speech and religious liberty in America.

The incident, reported by The Gateway Pundit, unfolded June 27 during Trinity Pride Fest in downtown Fort Worth, where Christian street preachers David Grisham, a retired police officer, and Richard Penkoski were preaching on public property when officers ordered them farther away from the event.

'If They Are Offended by Your Speech'

During the encounter, a female officer made remarks that quickly spread across social media.

According to video cited in the report, the officer told the preachers, "If someone is offended by your talking, then we have a problem."

She later added, "If they are offended by your speech, OK, I will write you a ticket."

When the preachers responded that offensive speech is protected by the First Amendment, the officer said the citation would be for disorderly conduct.

EXCLUSIVE □ Fort Worth, Texas – On June 27, 2026, at Trinity Pride Fest in Fort Worth, Texas, street preachers Richard Penkoski and David Grisham were subjected to multiple violations of their First Amendment rights while attempting to preach on public property.

Upon arrival,...

– Sarah Fields (@SarahisCensored) June 28, 2026

The exchange immediately raised alarm because the First Amendment exists to protect speech that others may find unpopular or offensive. That protection does not disappear simply because someone disagrees with the message.



Order Travis Johnson's New Book, "[Un]Embarrassed" on !

First Amendment Rights Challenged

The confrontation escalated as officers continued moving the preachers away from the event.

Grisham reminded officers he had successfully sued the City of Fort Worth in 2014 over a similar dispute involving public access. According to the report, an officer dismissed that history, saying, "I don't care, you can file whatever lawsuit you want."

Penkoski also showed officers U.S. Supreme Court precedent stating that traditional public forums such as streets and sidewalks remain open for constitutionally protected speech,

even when nearby events are held under permit.

Despite that, officers continued enforcing the restrictions.

Grisham ultimately received a citation for “unreasonable noise.” When asked what qualified as unreasonable under the circumstances, officers reportedly offered no clear explanation.

Department Reverses Course

Following public backlash, the Fort Worth Police Department acknowledged the officer’s statements did not reflect constitutional protections.

According to a statement cited by The Christian Post, the department said it is “committed to protecting the constitutional rights of all individuals, including the right to free speech and peaceful assembly, while also ensuring public safety and enforcing applicable laws and ordinances.”

The department later acknowledged the officer’s comments were “not accurate,” ordered First Amendment refresher training for officers and confirmed that public sidewalks remain open for protected speech.

America Cannot Follow Europe’s Path

The department’s reversal is welcome, but the incident serves as a serious warning.

Across parts of Europe, particularly Great Britain, public expressions of Christian faith have increasingly drawn police scrutiny and legal action under the banner of preventing offense. America was founded on a different principle. Our constitutional freedoms do not depend on whether a message is popular, politically fashionable or emotionally comfortable to hear.

We should never expect everyone to agree with the Gospel. Jesus warned that His followers would face opposition. But disagreement cannot become the standard for government censorship. When public officials begin treating offense as a crime, every American's liberty is placed at risk.

The First Amendment protects unpopular speech precisely because constitutional rights belong to all Americans, not merely those whose views receive public approval.

James Lasher, a seasoned writer and editor at Charisma Media, combines faith and storytelling with a journalism background from Otterbein University and ministry experience in Guatemala and at the LA Dream Center. A Marine Corps and Air Force veteran, he is the author of *The Revelation of Jesus: A Common Man's Commentary* and a contributor to Charisma magazine. For interviews and media inquiries, please contact media@.