

Why Do We Support Free Speech?

Free speech is the oxygen of democracy. Without it, freedom suffocates and dies.

But why is free speech so important from a Christian perspective?

The Great Commission

First, let's talk about the primary, practical reason Christians must support free speech: the Great Commission. From Jesus' last words to His disciples in the Gospel of Matthew: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:19-20).

How can you do all of that if you're not free to speak?

The same First Amendment to the Constitution that acknowledges our God-given right to practice faith also recognizes the right to free speech. The two are entwined together. If you cannot bear witness, if you cannot share the gospel, neither your speech is free nor is your practice of religion.

Efforts abound to squeeze Christian voices from the public square. And we're not talking about some longhair on a soapbox screaming, "The end is near" or a big "John 3:16" sign blocking your view at a ball game. We're talking a soldier penalized for having a faith-based sticker at his desk, a real estate agent in Virginia forced out of business because she insisted on including Scripture verses on her business web page. Or a Muslim convert to Christianity who was asked at the Mall of America about his beliefs and started to share his

testimony. A Muslim woman overhearing it reported him to mall security, and soon he found himself in jail. We're talking, too, about pastors who speak out on traditional marriage having public officials seek to seize their sermons (and terminate their tax-free status).

As Dinesh D'Souza wrote in her book *What's So Great About Christianity*, "Somehow freedom for religious expression has become freedom from religious expression."

We need free speech—to be able to share the reason for your hope at a high school graduation.

Free speech—to be able to offer a prayer for someone in need.

Free speech—to be able to sing "O Holy Night."

Free speech—to be able to carry a sign outside an abortion mill.

We fight for free speech so we can carry out our assignment.

The Marketplace of Ideas

It's easy to support free speech when you've got the juiciest, tastiest, most nutritious meat in the marketplace of ideas. Christians celebrate free speech because we can take all comers. Look at the apostle Paul. The book of Acts tells at least seven times Paul used reasoned argument to carry the day.

Sure, free speech means we have to put up with a lot of foul speech, fake speak and "Snake News," The deliberate distortion of truth with the intent to deceive, deflect and destroy. But we can hold on to Prov. 12:6: "The words of the wicked are, 'Lie in wait for blood,' but the mouth of the upright will deliver them."

There is a lot of death in the words of the world, the lies of the "spirit of the air." But we are made righteous in Christ,

and “The mouth of a righteous man is a well of life” (Prov. 10:11a).

Protection of Liberty

If our speech brings life, being silenced brings death to our nation. Our founders knew this. Ben Franklin said, “Whoever would overthrow the liberty of a nation must begin by subduing the freeness of speech.”

He would also say, “Freedom of speech is a principal pillar of a free government: When this support is taken away, the constitution of a free society is dissolved and tyranny is erected on its ruins.”

Are we not seeing hints of this already, with the silencing of voices during the recent COVID-19 pandemic? For example, two California doctors on the front lines against the virus posted a video questioning the actual threat it posed, arguing it was being greatly exaggerated and the shutdown was an overreaction.

YouTube removed their video, which had gone (pardon the expression) viral. Noted epidemiologist Nutt Wittkowski’s video dismissing the need for a shutdown was also censored. Meanwhile, Facebook declared it would remove content contrary to World Health Organization recommendations. (The same WHO that initially downplayed the threat, at the behest of Communist China.)

Hasn’t a cloud, shaped like tyranny, settled on many of our states?

Give up free speech and we are not lions, we are lambs. Said George Washington, “If freedom of speech is taken away, then dumb and silent we may be led, like sheep to the slaughter.”

We are not to be dumb. We are to be wise. We are not to be silent. We are to speak in boldness.

If we Christians can keep to our assignment, our nation will continue to be blessed.{eoa}

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