

The War on Christmas Rages On

John Gibson is one of the commentators I enjoy listening to on Fox News Radio. He always has been an outspoken advocate of helping to preserve Christmas as a sacred Christian holiday in an era where it has increasingly grown politically incorrect to even mention Christmas. Gibson was so outraged by this trend that he wrote a book a few years ago titled *The War on Christmas*.

Gibson gave examples of the censorship that has become common and has accelerated in recent years. For instance, you can't say "Merry Christmas" at school or the office anymore, but only "Happy Holidays"; you can't go caroling in public; if you put up a tree for decoration, it must be called a "friendship tree," not a Christmas tree. He reported that Santa Claus was banned from one school in Kansas and that in Plano, Texas, some overzealous school board officials actually told parents they couldn't use red and green to decorate!

In contrast, non-Christian holidays such as Hanukkah, Ramadan and Kwanzaa don't face persecution. Can you imagine forcing Jewish people to call the Chanukiah (a menorah-looking 9-candle symbol of the miracle commemorated in Hanukkah) a "holiday candelabra" to avoid offending non-Jews?

Gibson's book is an interesting read for those of us concerned that our right to practice our faith in daily life is being eroded to such an extent that we must hide behind closed doors to celebrate a traditional holiday. But to me, the issues are much deeper than political correctness or the proper interpretation of the Constitution regarding church and state issues.

Through the years, Christians themselves have often downplayed Christmas. Celebrating it is certainly not a scriptural tradition. And many believers have objected to the secularism,

commercialism and materialism that generally accompany the holiday.

Now the question isn't whether Christmas has become too secular or commercial but whether it's OK to mention it. To the liberal secularists, even the commercial version is objectionable because it has Christian roots. In their view, that makes it religious, and all religion should be forbidden from the public square.

The Freedom From Religion Foundation has become one of the more vocal organizations against Christmas in recent years and continues to impose its will on those who aren't strong enough to stand up to them.

But there is something much more important at stake here than whether we can put up Christmas trees in public buildings or have Santa Claus at a school function. It's whether the church will be the church.

In light of the current cultural climate, are we willing to take a stand?

There are many ways to do this. If Christmas is under fire in your community, speak up. And if the officials won't back down, work to defeat them at the next election. Replace them with officials who share your values—or run for office yourself.

And why can't churches lead the way in celebrating Christmas? Who cares if the city government won't put a crèche on the front lawn of city hall? With so many churches around, why shouldn't each one have a nice display about the real meaning of Christmas? That way we won't have to add a reindeer or some other nonreligious object to a nativity scene on city property simply to make it legal.

Why couldn't Christian businesspeople get involved? We still have freedom of speech, so why don't we put up signs saying

“Jesus Is the Reason for the Season” or “Wise Men Still Seek Him”?

Each of us can erect displays on our lawns at home too. Instead of putting up only lights or snowmen in our yards to make them festive, let’s put up displays that are a witness to our faith in Christ.

One thing is certain: With so much darkness surrounding us, even one small light can make a huge difference.

The Bible tells us to be light in a dark world (Matt. 5:16; Phil. 2:15). Ultimately, that is why Christ came to earth—and He is looking for us to follow suit.

Steve Strang *is the founder and publisher of Charisma. Follow him on Twitter at @sstrang or Facebook (stephenestrang).*