

CHRISTIAN PUBLIC WITNESS : TIPS FOR LANGUAGE

AVOID...	INSTEAD TRY:
Entering frustrated, or in a rush...	If possible, prepare for the conversation. Pray, meditate, or ground yourself with breathing. Remind yourself of your why.
Criticizing or complaining about <i>people</i> ...	Talk about the <i>policies or policy outcomes</i> that conflict or align with your values.
Partisan talking points...	Talk about how policies impact you, your neighbors, your community. Speak about impacts you see personally or local data.
All or nothing language; violent language...	Look for points of connection where we can work together. Ground yourself in hope. Ask questions and be curious! Use constructive language.
Labels, name-calling, us vs. them, assuming the worst...	Labels tend to be divisive. Instead, focus on the humanity of everyone by speaking with love. Ask yourself, "who's they?" Remind yourself of your values.
Feeling hopeless about your impact	Focus on local relationships and local government. See how your impact is clear, measurable, and important to your immediate neighbors.
YOU MIGHT HEAR...	YOU MIGHT RESPOND:
"Let's not get into politics..."	Politics is nothing more or less than our shared life together in community in organized groups. Which we should definitely talk about together! Draw distinctions between <i>politics</i> and the <i>partisanship</i> that often dominates.
"Faith/religion/church shouldn't get into politics..."	<i>Public witness</i> is a central part of faithful life in many traditions. Speaking clearly and publicly about our values is a way of expressing our faith and caring for our neighbors.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR CHRISTIAN PUBLIC WITNESS

Change how you talk.

Focus on constructive language instead of partisan rhetoric.

For more concrete tips on language, see the reverse of this sheet.

Start close to home.

Work on having these conversations with your family and friends, people with whom you have an existing relationship. If we can't speak about our values with the people closest to us, we have a big problem!

Connect with your values.

When conversations get difficult and the stakes feel high, it can be easy to lose sight of our values and start to compromise on things like how we want to talk to and treat others OR speaking up about the things we care about. Frequently reminding ourselves of our core values can help us show up in ways we can be proud of. This might mean you need to spend some time identifying your values so you can be clearer about them going forward.

Engage locally.

It's easy to get caught up in national and world politics and events. But we can have the most impact in our direct relationships, organizations, and communities. Focusing energy here also builds relationships and capacity to make broader change.

Prioritize real life.

Stop arguing about things with strangers (and trolls!) on the internet. Consider reducing or shifting your media consumption.

Nurture curiosity.

Be curious about others, yourself, and the world. Assume less; ask more questions!

MEDIA RESOURCES FOR ENGAGING DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

Tangle (readtangle.com): Daily newsletter summarizing diverse takes on a single news story with a thoughtful "my take" section from one of the editors.

Ground News (ground.news): Shows how thousands of news outlets are covering the same story so you can see bias and blindspots in news reporting.

The Middle with Jeremy Hobson (listentothemiddle.com): This radio show and podcast highlights voices from the middle (geographically, politically, and philosophically) as well as people who want to meet in the middle to solve problems.

Braver Angels (braverangels.org): Check out this organization that works to bring people together across political difference to build trust and foster courageous citizenship.

Local - PlainTalkND (youtube.com/@PlainTalkND): Hear reporting and commentary on North Dakota news and politics from hosts Rob Port (center-right) and Chad Oban (center-left).