



April–June 2017  
NEWSLETTER

# SO HELP ME GOD

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PHOTO: U.S. ARMY



PHOTO: LCMSEB/M. LUNSFORD

## DEVOTIONAL THOUGHT

# Speaking up



by Rev. Dr. Peter J. Scaer

**W**hy should Christians speak in the public square? St. Paul says: “For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved” (Rom. 10:10).

### Why should we speak in the public square?

Jesus Himself says: “What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops” (Matt. 10:27).

Why should we speak in the public square? Because, for a while, we still can, though our window of opportunity may be closing. Everywhere we look, the First Amendment is under attack. Freedom of speech is in jeopardy, dissenting opinions are labeled hate speech. The free exercise of religion is being redefined, pulled out like a carpet from under our feet. The forces of the secular left are gaining strength every day. Perhaps we see this nowhere more clearly than right here in Indiana. A couple of years ago, the Republican governor signed into law the Religious

Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). It was a simple and fair law that said that people should be free to live according to the dictates of their conscience. We ought to be free to disagree, free to operate our businesses and to conduct our lives in a way that accords with our values. Almost immediately, a firestorm came down upon Indiana. The CEO of Apple, Inc. threatened the state, as did the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) and other major businesses. In the end, the governor caved, and our RFRA was “fixed.” People of

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faith lost their protections. This trend has only accelerated, with state after state capitulating to an unholy alliance between secularism and big business. It has become so bad that the governor of Georgia recently vetoed a bill that offered the weakest of protections for pastors and clergy. The free exercise of religion is fast becoming a thing of the past, and our very freedom to worship is in jeopardy.

## What does this all mean?

We are foolish to think this is just politics. Our Lord Jesus calls us to be the light and salt of the world (Matt. 5:13-16). While we are called to be subject to governing authorities (Rom. 13:1), our ultimate allegiance must be to God rather than men (Acts 4:19, 5:29). Everywhere we look, Christians are suffering for their faith. Florists like Baronelle Stutzman, cake designers like Melissa Klein and photographers like Elaine Hugenin are being sued and fined out of business, simply for not wishing to use their artistic skills to celebrate so-called gay marriage. African-American firefighter, Kelvin Cochran, lost his job simply for writing a book about the biblical truth of marriage and the sin that is homosexuality. Brendan Eich, the CEO of Mozilla Corp., was driven from his company when it was learned that he had financially supported a California amendment in favor of traditional marriage. These men and women are Christians who wish to testify to Christ by the lives that they live. These Christians want only to shine the light of Christ in their workplace and businesses. Sadly, so few have stood in their defense. The Church has been far too silent.

The trends are disturbing. As sexual orientation and gender identity laws are enacted, traditional Christian teaching is being labeled as hate speech and traditional Christians are called bigots. It means Christian adoption agencies are endangered, as are our social services. Our Christian schools are sure to come under fire, voucher programs will be put at risk as Christian teaching is treated as the modern equivalence to racism. What we are witnessing is an age of growing intolerance. And, as one author has put it, if you don't already, you will be made to care.



## Intolerance toward Christians rising?

**60 percent of U.S. adults** agree **religious liberty** is on the decline in America, up from 54 percent in 2013. **64 percent of Christians** agree **religious liberty** is on the decline in America, including:

- ▶ 65 percent of people of other faiths, such as Jews, Muslims and other minority religions.
- ▶ 46 percent of “nones” — people who claim no religious identity.

**63 percent of U.S. adults** agree Christians increasingly are confronted by intolerance in America today, up from 50 percent in 2013.

**70 percent of Christians** agree they increasingly are confronted by intolerance in America today.

Source: LifeWay Research

## What should we do?

First, we must all rush to the Scriptures to be fed and instructed by God's Word. The world is always preaching. As pastors, we must preach the truth, and as Christians, we must go to the churches that remain faithful. Together, we must hear again the story of Creation and what it means to be created man and woman in God's image (Genesis 1 and 2). We need to listen as our Lord tells us what marriage actually is (Matthew 19). We must listen again about Paul's warning against sin and the need to make a good confession. We need to hear how much Jesus loves us, how He came not to endorse our sin but to pay for it and forgive it.

Perhaps, more than anything, we need to take heart. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus tells His disciples to be of good courage. He reminds us that God is watching over us, and even more, Christ promises to be with us always. In the face of worldly opposition, we may not always know what to say. But remember, Christ loves us and His words can be trusted. While the world mocks the teachings of the Scriptures, we say with St. Paul, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16). Like the first disciples, we are called to observe all that our Lord has commanded (Matt. 28:20).

Remember the 21 Coptic Christians who were beheaded on the shores of Libya. Think of all those Christians in Iraq who have lost their lives and livelihoods for bearing the name of the



**The Church has been far too silent.”**

Nazarene. They have taken to heart the words of our Lord, “For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it” (Mark 8:35).

## Now, more than ever, we must speak.

As responsible citizens, we must defend our fellow Christians who want only to live according to God’s will. True love means that we stand with those who suffer for Christ’s sake. Jesus said to His disciples, “You will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved” (Matt. 10:22). There may soon come a time when we can no longer speak openly, when Christians are driven from the public square. So, we must take the opportunity our Lord has given us now. As Christians, we are called upon to defend the unborn, to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves. So also must we speak for the truth of marriage, and we must defend boldly all who would live according to it.

These are not simply social issues. When we defend marriage as one man and one woman, we are in fact praising the God of creation, knowing that marriage is no arbitrary law, but that it is put in place for the good of men, women, and yes, children. When we speak for true marriage, we are proclaiming our fidelity to Christ who taught marriage and who is Himself the Bridegroom who gave His life for the Church. Make no mistake, this is not simply a political issue, but goes to our very heart and soul as Christians. The world desperately needs to hear the truth of God’s love in salvation, to hear the truth of His good creation. This means kindness and forgiveness, but also calling a thing for what it is, knowing that repentance and forgiveness go together. This means calling ourselves to account as well, recognizing in humility the need to go

back to God’s Word, which must be our life’s guide.

Much of the coming persecution is the result of the Supreme Court’s Obergefell ruling, which redefined marriage. As Christians, we must speak and live according to what we know is true. We must bear in mind that marriage, as a creation of God, is a natural good. It was designed to nurture and protect children, so that every child might know the love of a mother and protection of a father.

Whenever Christians suffer for their faith, we must stand with them and bear their reproach. We must be prepared to be mocked and ridiculed for our faith. As our Lord also says, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account” (Matt. 5:11). But do not lose heart. Though it seems as if we are losing battles, we are in fact winning souls through our faithfulness. Take heart and never give up. The war has been won and the victory is ours in Christ Jesus. If you are called to suffer ridicule for Christ, smile. As our Lord says, “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matt. 5:12).

Things may be changing all around us, but the love of Christ remains forever the same, and that’s something worth talking about.

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## BE INFORMED

Stay up-to-date on news surrounding life, marriage and religious liberty issues. Good places to start include:

- ▶ **Free to Be Faithful**  
[lcms.org/freetobefaitful](http://lcms.org/freetobefaitful)
- ▶ **LCMS Life Ministry**  
[lcms.org/life](http://lcms.org/life)
- ▶ **Lutherans for Life**  
[lutheransforlife.org](http://lutheransforlife.org)



## PRAY

Romans 12:12 tells us: “Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

Steadfastly pray for the protection of life, pray for those in same-sex unions and pray we may continue to live out our religious convictions freely.



## ACT

Serve your neighbors and witness God’s truth!



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## FREE TO BE FAITHFUL ON WORLDWIDE KFUE.ORG



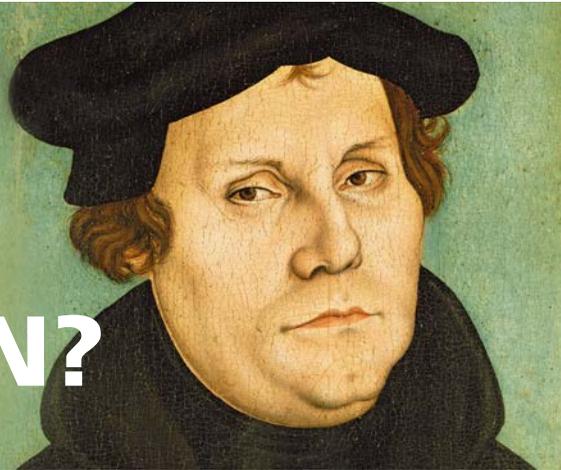
Listen to *KFUO.org* interviews with key attorneys and other experts involved in major issues affecting religious liberty as part of the Synod’s “Free to be Faithful” initiative.

KFUO radio host Kip Allen leads the discussion on *KFUO.org* 2:30 p.m. Central time on the third Wednesday of each month.

Listeners may ask questions by email at [publicsquare@kfuo.org](mailto:publicsquare@kfuo.org) or telephone at 314-821-0850 or 800-730-2727. Questions may be submitted in advance or during the program.

Previous interviews are available at [kfuoam.org/category/free-to-be-faithful](http://kfuoam.org/category/free-to-be-faithful).

# HAVE YOU MET MARTIN?



**W**e are called on to make a first impression. Sometimes we are aware of this event. We introduce ourselves; we hang out at a party and meet people. Often this occurs unawares. We sip our favorite drink at a coffee shop ... people are watching you and forming an opinion of you. We enter through a MEPS station and the person standing next to you may end up as your Battle Buddy or Shipmate through the duration of your time in the military. Whether right or wrong, this first impression is often a lasting impression of you.

An important question to ask is: how did we meet Martin Luther? This year is the big 500th anniversary

year celebrating the Reformation. As Lutherans, this is OUR year. The central figure of the Reformation is Martin Luther. Luther rocketed on to the international scene when he posted 95 Theses (statements intended for discussion in a theological and academic environment). Immediately after posting them on the castle church door, the once unknown Augustinian monk was on center stage. Wow! What did Luther say in those 95 Theses? Rather, what was the first thing Luther said? He could have said a lot about things popular in his time — a thirst for power, a statement of vitriol toward authority, a call for economic overhaul. Instead, the monk from Wittenberg, who often was accused

of turning the world upside down, said something revolutionary ... Scriptural, truthful and forgotten. Luther's introduction to the world struck the heart of humanity: "When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, 'Repent' (Matt. 4:17), he willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance."

With one word, "Repent," Luther called all humanity back to Christ. In the original language, repent means "about face." Imagine how different the world be if every believer, in every circumstance, in every calling in life, lived a life of

**“With one word, ‘Repent,’ Luther called all humanity back to Christ ... he sent us straight to Jesus.”**

repentance? Energy and time wasted covering our guilt-filled tracks could be put to better use by loving our neighbor. Marriages and

families would set aside their differences and unite themselves under the cross of Christ. Governments would cease making war and turn the engine of government and commerce to solve the plight of this fallen world. All people would come to a comforting, warm and loving knowledge that Christ Jesus' activity on the cross is for all people. We are forgiven.

Luther sent us straight to Jesus. Matt. 4:17 requires us to examine our own broken condition, flaws, hurts and pain. We acknowledge our inability for salvation and do an "about face" and look at the cross.

What an introduction! What a first impression!

## CHECK IT OUT!



[media.ctsfw.edu](http://media.ctsfw.edu)

The latest articles relating to Lutheranism and Lutheran academic thought from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind.

[lutheranreformation.org](http://lutheranreformation.org)

A robust website relating to all things about Luther and Lutheranism. Spend some time here. Lots to see.

[thelc.ms/PTSD-Coach-App](http://thelc.ms/PTSD-Coach-App)

A wonderful app by the Department of Veterans Affairs to help those with post-traumatic stress disorder.

[csl.edu/resources/publications](http://csl.edu/resources/publications)

The website of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. There is plenty to look at on the study of the Bible and how Scriptures came into being.



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[lcms.org/armedforces](http://lcms.org/armedforces)

[lcms.org/operationbarnabas](http://lcms.org/operationbarnabas)

[facebook.com/MinistryArmedForces](https://facebook.com/MinistryArmedForces).  
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