

LOUISIANA INTERCHURCH CONFERENCE
FALL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
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“Living Out the WORD Through Advocacy”

OVERVIEW of Presentation I

- I. The Action Through Which God Creates
- II. The WORD *Is* **Living**
- III. The Importance of Hearing the WORD
- IV. The Experience of Our Neighbor
- V. The Necessary Move to Advocacy

The Action Through Which God Creates

Q.: How Does God Create?

The Action Through Which God Creates

A.: Through mere **WORD!**

The Action Through Which God Creates

The Story of Creation: Genesis 1

1-3: In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth—and the earth was without form or shape, with darkness over the abyss and a mighty wind sweeping over the waters—

Then God said: Let there be light, and there was light.

6: *Then God said:* Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters, to separate one body of water from the other.

The Action Through Which God Creates

Genesis 1 (Continued)

9: ***Then God said:*** Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin, so that the dry land may appear.

11: ***Then God said:*** Let the earth bring forth vegetation: every kind of plant that bears seed and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.

The Action Through Which God Creates

Genesis 1 (Continued)

14-15: ***Then God said:*** Let there be lights in the dome of the sky, to separate day from night. Let them mark the seasons, the days and the years, and serve as lights in the dome of the sky, to illuminate the earth.

20: ***Then God said:*** Let the water teem with an abundance of living creatures, and on the earth let birds fly beneath the dome of the sky.

24: ***Then God said:*** Let the earth bring forth every kind of living creature: tame animals, crawling things, and every kind of wild animal.

The Action Through Which God Creates

Genesis 1 (Continued)

26-27: **Then God said:** Let us make human beings in our image, after our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the tame animals, all the wild animals, and all the creatures that crawl on the earth.

*God created mankind in his image;
in the image of God he created them;
male and female he created them.*

29-30: **God also said:** See, I give you every seed-bearing plant on all the earth and every tree that has seed-bearing fruit on it to be your food; and to all the wild animals, all the birds of the air, and all the living creatures that crawl on the earth, I give all the green plants for food.

The Action Through Which God Creates

Psalm 33

6-9: By the LORD'S word the heavens were made; by the breath of his mouth all their host. He gathered the waters of the sea as a mound; he sets the deep into storage vaults. Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all who dwell in the world show him reverence. For he spoke, and it came to be, commanded, and it stood in place.

John 1

1-3: In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.

The Word Is Living

Hebrews 4

12: Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart.

Healing Power:

Mark 5

34: He said to her, “Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be cured of your affliction.”

Luke 4

36: They were all amazed and said to one another, “What is there about his word? For with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out.”

The Word Is Living

Matthew 8

8: The centurion said in reply, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof; only say the word and my servant will be healed.”

Power Through Empowerment:

Psalm 29

1-11: The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of Glory thunders, the LORD, over the mighty waters. The voice of the LORD is power; the voice of the LORD is splendor. The voice of the LORD cracks the cedars; the LORD splinters the cedars of Lebanon, makes Lebanon leap like a calf, and Sirion like a young bull. The voice of the LORD strikes with fiery flame; the voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the desert of Kadesh. The voice of the LORD makes the deer dance and strips the forest bare. All in his Temple say, “Glory!”

The Importance of Hearing the WORD

Inviting the WORD

1 Samuel 3

9-10: So he said to Samuel, “Go to sleep, and if you are called, reply, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” When Samuel went to sleep in his place, the LORD came and stood there, calling out as before: Samuel, Samuel! Samuel answered, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

The WORD is Illuminating

Psalm 119

105: Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light for my path.

The Importance of Hearing the WORD

The WORD Provides Wisdom

Proverbs 2

1-6: My son, if you receive my words and treasure my commands, turning your ear to wisdom, inclining your heart to understanding; Yes, if you call for intelligence, and to understanding raise your voice; if you seek her like silver, and like hidden treasure search her out, Then you will understand the fear of the LORD; the knowledge of God you will find; For the LORD gives wisdom, from his mouth come knowledge and understanding

The Importance of Hearing the WORD

Recognize the WORD In the Quiet

1 Kings 19

11-13: Then the LORD said: Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by. There was a strong and violent wind rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind; after the wind, an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake; after the earthquake, fire—but the LORD was not in the fire; after the fire, a light silent sound. When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, Why are you here, Elijah?

The Importance of Hearing the WORD

Pay Attention to the WORD

Mark 4

24: He also told them, “Take care what you hear. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you, and still more will be given to you...”

Hebrews 2

1: Therefore, we must attend all the more to what we have heard, so that we may not be carried away.

The Experience of Our Neighbor

Who Is Our Neighbor?

We MUST both see and know our neighbor, for doing so is to see and know our God

- This requires BOTH an AWARENESS and an OPENNESS
- It may also require a METANOIA

Matthew 25

35-39: For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' Then the righteous* will answer him and say, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?'

The Experience of Our Neighbor

An Example: Baton Rouge...

A TALE OF TWO CITIES

- Southern part of City
 - Some of wealthiest communities in state
 - Access to higher performing schools
 - 25% African American
 - Unemployment at 5.66%

The Experience of Our Neighbor

- Northern part of City
 - Median household income of \$36,694 – well below Louisiana (44,086) and national (52,762) averages
 - 75% African American
 - Unemployment at 11.6%
 - Crime is high; much-needed health and social services are scarce; and there is no access to a full-service grocery store

The Experience of Our Neighbor

Being WITH Others vs. Being For Others

We need to CEASE being a man or woman FOR others and more accurately be a man or woman WITH others

- Doing so will align ourselves more closely with God's call in Matthew's Gospel. Jesus doesn't ask were you for me... he asks were you WITH me
- Being WITH our neighbor "idigenizes" us – it attempts to make us locals and to see and feel what it is that our neighbors truly see and feel

The Experience of Our Neighbor

- Subsidiarity v. Solidarity
- Lastly, being WITH as opposed to for someone requires the formation of relationships
 - This should be no surprise as God created us as relational beings
 - We must enter as a LISTENER and not as an initiator/expert
 - And, YES, this means that we are also called into messy relationships
 - Basics of relationships: mutuality, reciprocity, accountability

The Experience of Our Neighbor

Psalm 34

The LORD hears the cry of the Poor!

Systematic Failure and Social Sin

- When we see/know our neighbor and begin to move to action in a way where we are truly “neighboring,” we will discover systemic failures and social sin – any structure within society that oppresses human beings, violates human dignity, stifles freedom and/or imposes great inequity
 - This will literally be a pulling away of the veil and a realization that for many in our society – the powerless, the vulnerable, the poor, those without a voice – the deck is stacked against them
- It should NOT be surprising that social sin can exist given the fact that all structures within our world and society are created by man – sinful and flawed creatures

The Necessary Move to Advocacy

Proverbs 31

8-9: Open your mouth on behalf of the mute, and for the rights of the destitute; Open your mouth, judge justly, defend the needy and the poor!

Advocacy Guided by Faith

May 5, 2017. Ehsan Zaffar in US News & World Report

1. Let faith be the spark that motives you to action
2. Let faith serve as your compass
3. Let your faith sustain you

The Necessary Move to Advocacy

Advocate

Noun: a person who publicly supports or recommends a particular cause or policy
one who pleads the cause of another

Verb: to public recommend or support

The Necessary Move to Advocacy

Faith and the Public Square

Feels at times that we're caught in a net of contradictions

Bishop Fulton Sheen:

“A religion that does not interfere with the secular order will soon discover that the secular order will not refrain from interfering with it”

The Necessary Move to Advocacy

Welcome to the World of *CONFLICT*

Google ngrams:

- Google ngrams is advertised by some as a way to track “the rise and fall of keywords across 5 million books and 500 years.” Here are some words of interest and their usage from 1800 to the present:

The Necessary Move to Advocacy

- **Compassion**: lowest usage was in 1940; highest usage was in 1810; currently at the same level today as in 1871; steady decline in its usage from 1822-1940 and steady incline in its usage from 1940 until present
- **Neighbor**: lowest usage was in 1818; highest usage is now; ebb and flow over the vast time period
- **Conflict**: lowest usage was in 1800; highest usage is now which represents a steady incline over the past 220 years

The Necessary Move to Advocacy

To **advocate**, to enter in the space of advocacy – especially from a faith perspective, is to ensure that the WORD is **Living**.

Become engaged and involved

- It's NOT about politics or partisanship. It IS about principles!
 - It's messy. It's dirty. However, it is absolutely necessary and what we are called to. The Gospel IS about CHALLENGE and ACTION. It's not called, "the LIVING Word of God," for nothing!

The Necessary Move to Advocacy

And remember...

For every Moses, there is an Aaron!