

Managing Debate and Opposition in the Public Square

Evangelical Christians are bound to find themselves in challenging situations of candid or open opposition in their worklife and in public debate on social media and elsewhere. How can we use arguments and our conduct as a way to represent the kingdom of God in these situations? This session will share Biblical principles and personal experiences as advice on how to take a biblical stand founded on truth, humility and justice when facing challenges in the public square.

Per Ewert is the director of The Clapham Institute, Sweden's leading Christian think tank and research institute. His PhD describes the political process which shaped Sweden into the world's arguably most secular-individualistic nation. Per is the author of several books on apologetics, relations, and the role of faith in society. He also writes weekly editorials in one of Sweden's Christian dailies. He lives with his wife and four children in southern Sweden.

- I. Do not fear persecution. Opposition against Christians is to be expected. However, we must separate between just criticism for actual sin, and unjust persecution for the sake of the Gospel. Therefore, we need different strategies in different situations.

- II. Biblical examples show that unjust attacks often tend to come due to envy and lack of fear of the Lord. Such conflicts take energy from more important tasks. Do not wear yourself out in meaningless battles. Save the strength for when really needed.

- III. Police give three suggestions if someone would come under terrorist attack: Run, hide or fight. Similar strategies could be used in times of opposition for the Gospel. Some general pieces of advice when you find yourself in a hard situation of opposition or debate.
 - A. Wait. If possible, sleep on the matter before responding.
 - B. Pray and fast over how to handle the situation.
 - C. If nasty attacks are expected, try to avoid taking them in.
 - D. If you are married, seek support and be a support for your spouse.
 - E. Find intercessors who can carry you in prayer.
 - F. Listen to advice. Others have been in similar situations before.

- IV. Three Biblical strategies, each one for different situations. Seek advice from other people and the Holy Spirit about when to apply which.
 - A. Avoid confrontation, hide or leave, Is 53:7, Mark 6:10f

- B. Seek refuge and comfort, Luk 13:31-34, Is 26:20
 - C. Contradict falsehoods, bullying or evil slander, while maintaining your heart and your calling, Jer 37:13-14, Neh 6:1-8, 1 Sam 17:26-29, 45-47
 - D. Fight the good battle in truth, humility and justice, Ps 45:6, 2 Tim 4:1-5
- V. Be ready to both receive help and be a helper. Biblical examples: Barnabas, Acts 9:26, Ebed-Melech, Jer 38:4-13
- VI. Never let opposition hinder you from running your whole race, 2 Tim 4:6-8.

Suggested Readings:

Max Lucado, *Facing Your Giants*

John MacArthur, *Remaining Faithful in Ministry*

Warren W Wiersbe, *Be Courageous*

Rick Hill, *Deep Roots of Resilient Disciples: Principles & Practices for a Life of Lasting Faith*