

The Challenges and Opportunities for Engagement in the Public Square

In an age of increasing secularisation and political correctness, this workshop will examine the opportunities and challenges we face as we try to influence the public square. Can we still have a voice or is the debate being shut down? Using practical examples and Biblical teaching, Nola will examine the relationship between Christ and our culture and explore how we can be salt and light to power.

Nola Leach is a co-leader of the European Politics and Society Network and serves as the Chief Executive of CARE (Christian Action Research & Education), one of Europe's leading Christian charities, which provides resources and helps bring Christian insight and experience to matters of public policy and practical caring initiatives. CARE undertakes a variety of social caring and educational programmes and research and is represented in the UK Parliaments and Assemblies. As Head of the Public Affairs team, Nola leads campaigns on topics such as human trafficking, Internet pornography, and the value of human life from its beginning to natural end. She has overseen the publication of *Living Free*, a sequel to the CARE book *Searching for Intimacy* – a resource designed to help those trapped in the net of Internet pornography. She has a passion for developing Christian leaders and heads up CARE's unique Leadership Programme. She is increasingly in demand as both a writer and a public speaker, has penned numerous articles, and regularly appears in the media.

I. Why do we need to engage?

A. Because we are called to

- i. "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." 1 Peter 3:15 NIV

B. Because of the nature of God

- i. Psalm 11:7; Deuteronomy 10:12-20; Micah 6:8; 1 John 3:17.
- ii. Our God cares for the total wellbeing of his people.
- iii. God is a God of justice as well as justification.

C. Because of the example of Jesus

- i. Acts 10:38
- ii. Jesus demonstrated the arrival of the Kingdom of God with acts of compassion.

D. Because of the nature of Humans

- i. Romans 14:15

- ii. Each of us is made in God's image, and Christ died for each of us.
- iii. Compassion flows when we see people through God's eyes.
- iv. Be the voice of the voiceless and defender of the powerless.

E. Because this is true worship

- i. Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:14
- ii. We are not saved by good works
- iii. Love for God creates in us the desire for service
- iv. Different worship acceptable to God – Psalmist tells us that worship involves freeing the oppressed and offering love and care for those in need.

II. How should we engage?

A. With Passion and Conviction

- i. With the belief that Jesus is Lord over all!
- ii. Our Baptismal Confession
 - 1. To be in the world, but not of the world.
- iii. The Creation Mandate
 - 1. Our God-given authority
 - 2. A responsibility to steward well
- iv. Salt and Light

B. With Wisdom

- i. Politics: The art of making a choice between relative goods and lesser evils.
- ii. Be Informed
- iii. Avoid knee jerk reactions
- iv. Use the right tone
 - 1. A time to be firm and a time to be relational
 - 2. Be prepared and clear with your words

C. With Integrity and Faith

- i. Great example of Daniel – Daniel 1: 1-21
 - 1. Lived out his faith even though he came under scrutiny and hostility. He faced life threatening challenges and God protected him because of his faith and integrity.
- ii. Compromise when appropriate
- iii. State Government as ordained by God – Romans 13:1-7
 - 1. We must trust God through whatever political challenges He sends our way.

D. With Care

- i. Christlike; full of grace and truth
 - 1. Use the right language
 - 2. Earn the right to speak through praise and encouragement
- ii. Just as Jesus did, build relationships by spending time investing in people with whom you would not usually spend time.
- iii. Be thoughtful and informed with your words – use CARE resources.
 - 1. Impact Direct

III. How *can* we be involved?

A. Get to know your MEP/MP

- i. How often in the last 6 months have you prayed specifically for him/her?
- ii. Email to express your point of view

B. Are you concerned with TV, mass media and the internet?

- i. Take positive action to make your opinions known
- ii. Shape the media

C. Join a political party or trade union and have a say

- i. Become an intern

- ii. Stand for election
- iii. Residents' Associations

Suggested Reading:

KELLER, T. 2012. *Generous Justice: How God's Grace Makes Us Just*. Penguin Books.

EVANGELICAL ALLIANCE AND THE LAWYERS' CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP. *Speak Up: The Law and your Gospel Freedoms*. [online] <https://greatcommission.co.uk/speak-up-the-full-resource>

SPENCER, N. AND CHAPLIN, J. 2009. *God and Government*.

LAURENCE, T. 2014. *Good News for the Public Square: A Biblical Framework for Christian Engagement*.