



FRAMEWORK for PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

God, who is the author of wholeness, understanding, and love has imbued humankind with diversity, curiosity and the capacity to learn and grow. Our complex and diverse society is in part a reflection of that nature created by God. However, that same diversity and complexity may devolve into tension and competing agendas as the selfish nature of people asserts dominance and control.

When confronting issues, whether spiritual, social, or political we may easily become either lost in the complexity or seek to oversimplify such that the heart of God for restoration, healing, and wholeness is missed. Rather than intellectually negotiating among the variety of opinions on issues before us, we urge our people to begin their discourse and engagement with a deep and thoughtful commitment to God's active interest in both the issue and love of all the people involved.

Because we understand truth to be centered on a person more than a proposition...

our engagement is relational in tone, seeking a dialogue that is honoring and humanizing. The nature of public engagement, therefore, will involve testimonials and stories that bring to light the complexity and breadth of the issue while bringing to the fore the underlying motive of God's call to wholeness. We approach answers to challenging questions with open-handed humility, acknowledging that God's ways are higher than our ways. We seek to avoid dogmatic conclusions in the face of our limited understanding while seeking to reflect Christ with centered Kingdom values in the places we are set.

Because we understand salvation to be the story of God restoring the image in us...

our engagement begins with God's vision of wholeness, mutuality, and integration, and God's redemptive purposes. In approaching complex issues we seek to ask before we declare. How may we participate in God's redemption in this situation? What might be God's heart toward those who are most affected by this situation? What is God's deep ideal for people involved? As we humbly acknowledge that God is the initiator of redemption and we position ourselves in His story, we may more easily see solutions that reflect Christ and bring the healing of God's wholeness and holiness.

Because we understand that the image of God is within every person and all live in brokenness as the effect of the fall...

we seek in any engagement to identify with the hurt and struggle in those most affected through describing the stories of those who face it. By this we seek to dignify God's image in others and personalize the issue, placing it within the real-life context. We are reminded that people's lives

are affected, and we humanize the effects of our discourse and share in the complexity of their story.

Because we understand what we can reflect the nature of God and the depths of God's holiness...

we listen to the real circumstances confronting us in the reality of those we know and love. In pursuing God, we allow resulting tension to produce probing, wonder and curiosity through questions that further clarify and cause deep reflection. In this discovery and reflection, we specifically invite the Holy Spirit into transforming dialogue, submitting to the nuances and insights that come. In reflective dialogue with one another and the Holy Spirit, we ponder the broader questions that concern the nature of God's will. What are the ramifications of this path? How have Scriptural principles informed our motive and action? How may we better reflect the heart of God toward people while reflecting the ideal of God for the same?

Because we understand that God's work in the world proceeds from God's incarnational love...

we bring the issue being engaged into close connection with our lives. By placing our very selves into the circumstance, we bring the reality of our lives into personal engagement, thereby encouraging healthy identification with the impact our response has on others. We seek to truly walk in the others' place while remaining uncompromisingly rooted in an identity formed by and entirely in Christ.

Because we understand the way of salvation to be an ongoing journey...

we invite our people to continue to wrestle with the issue in light of God's story and redemptive restoration. The dynamic tension between the complexity and divisiveness of the issue, and the simplicity and wholeness of God's ideal for us will create constant stretching. We therefore offer encouragement to the ongoing search for understanding, compassion, and grace. By this we find fuller confidence in the nature of God's intention, for the full healing of our condition, as we relentlessly remain committed to and pursue God's vision for us.

Because it is God in Christ through the Holy Spirit who saves...

we find freedom to engage without fear of failure. God has already accomplished the work of salvation. Our role, then, is one of representing and reflecting well what God has completed. The responsibility for convincing and convicting others rests with the Holy Spirit.

We invite our people, churches, and institutions to engage in public discourse as a means to bring the Kingdom of God into relationship with relevant issues of our day.

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