

## **SHOULD CHRISTIANS BE TRYING TO INFLUENCE SOCIETY WITH GOSPEL VALUES?**

Secular influence in society means that orthodox Christian faith is increasingly different from the values and beliefs of the majority of non-churchgoers. What should we do with our gospel message and our understanding of God's standards? Keep them to ourselves? Or perhaps share publicly what we believe about Jesus, but keep what he taught about behaviour inside church, except where it coincides with the secular view (e.g. care for the poor)? There are strong arguments for the view that we should continue to share with the whole of society God's values and instructions for living.

The most loving thing to do is give the full message of God's good design for human creation, including what happens when we transgress those boundaries. Christians are the best equipped to deal with the complexity and pain of human frailty and failure because we know the One who forgives, redeems and restores. Does that mean we 'force' our views on others? Even as the Lord respects our free wills, so we too must do the same. So we never coerce, but that is very different from presenting a winsome articulate Christian argument in the public realm. Others do so from a variety of viewpoints; why must we remain mute?

Moreover, the notion that we should 'just preach the gospel' while forgoing engagement elsewhere fails to appreciate that there is actually no neutrality now; secularism is a 'faith' and increasingly hostile to others' faiths. We can see this happening in what is taught to our children in schools.

If we self-censor on 'PC' issues now in order not to 'offend', it is only a matter of time before we start self-censoring on the gospel of Jesus. In fact, we are starting to hear reports of how the noose is tightening and Christian witness to Jesus himself is becoming risky: see this article, for example.

Though it is vital that our witness is sensitive and grace-filled, not to speak to pressing public issues by self-censoring actually denies our Lord and his Lordship over all creation.