

Voices: Faithfully serving God in a secular society

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As I get older, the idea of faithfulness meets me at every turn, often because I totally depend on God's faithfulness in the face of illness and trouble. The COVID pandemic and loss of friends has made this more poignant than ever.

Faithfulness comes into play regularly when I encounter other people with diverse beliefs.

Many of us in ministry, education, counseling and social services experience moral dissonance in response to changing notions about gender identity, acceptable sexual behavior and family composition. This dissonance is accentuated by new guidelines and rules at work about how we address the public on these issues.

We want to give everyone the rights they are due in our society. We also want to be faithful to God's word. And we want to be Christian witnesses, helping build God's kingdom.

Dealing with moral dissonance

The following ideas have helped me deal with moral dissonance in my work.

- I strive to be at peace within myself, which leads to pursuing peace with others. We are told to be at peace with all people "as much as it depends on you" (Romans 12:18). We are not responsible for other people's ideas about identity, sex and family. The peace I hold within myself comes from knowing God understands my desire to honor him.

- I do not have to have the final say on every matter; I can depend on God for that. My ego and identity are not in this fight. It is an honor to be used by God in any way.
- It is OK to plant and water the seed, and not bring in the harvest. Our kind actions toward others often affect the way they think and the ideas about God they may accept later in their lives. Timing matters.
- Showing Christ's love is never the wrong thing to do. By love we show our discipleship, not being the most righteous or scholarly person in the room (John 13:35).
- Praying for others is powerful. In fact, I do nothing more powerful. No human may know about it, but prayer is my deepest offering to God and a transfer of the stresses of life onto him.

We understand the big picture about sin. Falling short of God's rule is nothing new or shocking. We understand wrongdoing exists on many levels, in varying degrees of severity and consequence. Sin doesn't always have to be widely visible to be present.

God has given us tools to deal with sin—grace, patience, forgiveness, salvation, discipleship, his conviction of sin. God never has left us “holding the bag” with no resources.

The answer to sin is not me; it is Christ.

Taking a stand

If we speak what we believe, we may invite more attacks and more unwanted publicity, and we can face that with courage.

We can elect Christian representatives, but we must not make a coalition that is violent, mean-spirited or sarcastic. I see such on television and ask:

“What is the point of that message?” It does more harm than good.

Lastly, if forced to choose between obeying God or man, we choose God.

In some jobs, the Christian employee has deep, interpersonal contact with people living apart from God’s law in the areas of sexuality, gender and/or marriage. We can affirm the image of God in them and demonstrate Christ’s love, respect and tender care. God expects no less.

If we have skills that will help the people in our care, we use them.

But the freedom of faith we hold dear in this country means we never will affirm sin—not in ourselves, not in others, not in society.

We are not better than anyone else. We have, however, made the commitment to honor God in our work and calling. This is our right.

We are believers unashamed of the gospel and unafraid of the world.

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