

LENDING OUR VOICES

There is a growing gap between the gospel and our cultures. The Gospel Gap requires a Kingdom Force which is multigenerational, multiethnic, and multieconomic, women and men, lay and clergy, everywhere to everywhere. We must **intentionally mobilize** each of these Kingdom Force groups.

How is our church standing with and advocating for people of every ethnicity?

Advocacy requires boldness. Advocacy requires that we follow God's mandate to use our voices for those who can't defend themselves or don't know how to use their voices.

Advocacy- supporting someone or something- is spread across the pages of the Bible and, in both the Old Testament and New Testament, God asks us to speak boldly whether we feel qualified or not. We, as people of faith, can see how God's vision of the wholeness of creation has always challenged the human limits of our thoughts, imaginations, and hopes. Jesus reminds us of this call in Matthew 25:40 where it says "truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

How can we become good advocates for those to whom we can lend our voices?

1

BE A GOOD LISTENER

To be able to speak on the behalf of others, you need to be able to know what they would say. BEWARE....this is where we face the ever-present danger of ASSUMING. Without listening, it's easy to assume we know what they would want or say without really knowing.

Strategy: Be an active listener. Ask lots of questions.

Use Drive-thru method. Apply 80-20 rule.

2

CREATE RELATIONSHIP

If we wish to speak on behalf of (or even better...alongside) others, then we need to build friendships and give them our time. Relationships give us the foundations for real action for real people.

Strategy: Block time off your schedule to get to know people.

IMPORTANT: The goal is person-oriented (learning about each other), not task-oriented.

3

KNOWLEDGE IS INFLUENTIAL

Internet is an amazing resource we have at hand. It allows us to research, to read articles, books and blogs.

BEWARE...each article or blog is an individual experience. For the sake of knowledge, we must take a wider view, bringing all aspects together.

Strategy: One person = (only) ONE worldview. Seek to read from a variety of voices or authors that can help you see worldviews from different angles. Be comfortable with being uncomfortable in certain situations.

4

PRAYER. GRACE. TRUST. REPEAT

As soon as people start to feel threatened, they get defensive and we end up in a cycle of bitterness. Take small steps or approaches when making changes. Even if it seems like it is a long hard struggle, get people around you who will pray and remind you of grace. In all things, Christ will be our greatest advocate. And pray. And forgive. And pray.

Strategy: Remember God's mission is the goal: unity in Christ.

Apply the principle of "focused prayer" to direct each action you are taking towards being an advocate for others. Build trust, not tension. Keep short accounts with people.

Advocating is definitely getting to know people. It begins with listening....

"If we won't allow God to change our own individual hearts, how can He change the nation? Each of us must develop a heart that cares for our fellow man created in the image of God."

-Tony Evans

HOW DO I DEVELOP (IN) MY ADVOCACY?

Create an approach - Whether personal or for your organization/church, you can use these to help guide you:

1. Where do/can we start? (Focused Prayer)
2. What do we want to accomplish? (Objectives)
3. Who can provide the stories for us? (Audiences)
4. What do we need to hear? (Message)
5. What questions should/shoudln't we ask? (Intentionality)
6. Who do the receivers need to hear stories from? (Messengers)
7. How can we get them to hear it? (Delivery)
8. When do we share these messages? (Focused Prayer)

Go to the Word - Much of the work we need to do relies in the power of the Holy Spirit and the wisdom and discernment God gives us.

- Pray about what this means to you/your church/your organization
 - **Ask God** to show you ways to keep developing and seeing stories in your zip code from different angles
- Look for stories in the Bible from people who advocate for others
 - **Ask God** how you might use these stories as lessons for advocacy. Use them for a sermon series.
 - Examples: Queen Esther (Esther 1-10), Paul (Philemon), Joses, also known as Barnabas, Ruth...