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/ standing for Christ in a collapsing culture /

Erwin W. Lutzer

*Bestselling author of **We Will Not Be Silenced***

no reason to hide

/workbook/

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Surrender, Sink, or Swim

Christians are finding it more challenging than ever to interact with others in today's culture. In a world that says there is no objective truth, but rather, each individual has their own "truth" based on their life experiences, Christians are told they're intolerant for claiming that God and His Word are the sole sources of truth for all humanity.

The difficulty is this: In a society that refuses to acknowledge the existence of objective truth, there are no longer any reference points for determining right from wrong, or truth from error. Therefore, for a Christian to speak up about matters such as sin and wrongdoing is considered intolerant. After all, every person is entitled to their own viewpoint, which should never be questioned.

So widespread is this cultural thinking that there is tremendous pressure on Christians to keep their perspectives to themselves. At one time, being considerate of others still allowed room for people to share their differing views with one another without animosity. But that isn't the case anymore.

This puts Christians in a difficult place. For the sake of keeping the peace, the temptation is great for us to simply keep quiet and stay hidden. We may reason, *Wouldn't it be better to not upset people lest they end up with a negative view of Christianity?*

But is that the calling we've been given? Even as culture makes it more costly for us to speak up for the truth, we must ask ourselves: Are we living to please people or to please God?

THE NEED FOR HEROES

Surrender, sink, or swim to the shore.

Sometimes heroes are made because of their courage; sometimes they are made by their circumstances. Sometimes a person volunteers to become a hero; sometimes a person becomes a hero because necessity demands it.

No Reason to Hide, page 16

What did John F. Kennedy do that made him so heroic?

Describe a memorable situation in which you had to make a choice between surrendering, sinking, or swimming.

What would surrender have looked like?

What would sinking have looked like?

What would swimming have looked like?

Regardless of how you responded, what was the most important lesson you learned from that experience?

Read Acts 4:13–21. What did the religious leaders in Jerusalem command Peter and John to do (verse 18)?

How did Peter and John respond (verses 19–20)?

According to verse 21, what was the result of Peter and John's boldness?

In what way does Peter and John's example inspire you?

God has lessons to teach us even as we find ourselves drifting in open waters we have never navigated before.

No Reason to Hide, page 17

Think about a way that God confirmed His faithfulness to you when you felt as if you were adrift. What did God do to help you?

CHRISTIANS AND POLITICS

In *No Reason to Hide*, we read, "Politics cannot be separated from morality, and morality cannot be separated from Christianity" (page 18). Try to give one or two examples of why this statement is true.

I understand the tension we as Christians feel. We would prefer not to become involved in politics or culture wars. We want to be known as loving and caring, and we want to be known for what we support, not for what we are against. We want to be known as being apolitical for a reason; we don't want to allow what appears to be secondary disagreements to divide us. We don't want to erect needless stumbling blocks for the gospel. I agree that sometimes neutrality is best; but at other times it's not possible. Sometimes political issues force us into a moral corner where we must choose sides.

No Reason to Hide, page 20

Jonathan Edwards is cited as believing that “Christians should join forces with non-Christians in the public square to work toward common moral goals” (see page 18 in *No Reason to Hide*). What are at least two examples of moral goals we can work toward with unbelievers—moral goals that are consistent with Scripture?

What are the possible benefits of working on common moral goals with non-Christians in the political or social realms?

What are some ways we as believers can offer hope and grace to a weary and angry world?

Do you think it is possible for Christianity to survive and be a positive influence in an oppressive, anti-Christian political environment? Why or why not?

Matthew 5:11 says, “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely *on my account*.” Note that if we’re attacked for righteousness’s sake or for Christ’s sake, that counts as persecution. But if we face opposition *apart* from our faith, that doesn’t count as persecution. Why is this an important distinction for us to recognize?

In 1 Peter 4:16, we read, “If anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.” This is a good passage to remember at the times you are fearful about being embarrassed in front of others because of your faith.

Why should we not be ashamed when others deride or mock us as believers?

How does Peter say we should response instead?

Our collapsing culture must always be seen through the lens of our gospel witness...the opposition we experience often positions us for new opportunities to witness about our faith.

No Reason to Hide, page 21

Can you give an example of an area in your life where you are facing opposition that could be turned into an opportunity to share your faith? What specific steps can you take?

THE CHURCH IS FACING A DAY OF RECKONING

Let us take time to ponder and answer the questions on page 22 in *No Reason to Hide*. For the sake of personal application, the questions are modified here:

What can we do to prepare ourselves for the days ahead, rather than simply do church as usual?

What can you do to ensure that when unbelievers look at you, they see genuine humility rather than self-righteousness?

Why are love, courage, and humility all so very important as you represent Christ to a watching world?

What can we do to leave a helpful legacy for the believers who follow after us?

Increasingly, Christians are finding it difficult to stay in that “mushy middle.”
The fearful are going in one direction, the faithful are going in another.

No Reason to Hide, page 22

What will it take for us to avoid staying in the “mushy middle,” and instead, be one who swims?

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

After the crucifixion, the disciples hid, in fear, behind locked doors. But then Jesus came into their midst, and that changed everything. Their fear melted away, and they became bold witnesses for the Lord.

What Scripture passages contain promises or truths that help to fill you with courage? Try to come up with at least three:

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WHY THIS BOOK?

On pages 25-26 of *No Reason to Hide*, we read that “evil never retreats on its own; it only retreats when a greater force is applied against it.” What does this mean for how our cultural battles should be fought?

What spiritual resources do we have to counter evil?

This book...is a call for all of us to be *in* the world but not *of* the world, to confront the culture yet not be contaminated by it.

It is a call to remind us that it's not about us, but about Christ.

And a reminder that we are His representatives.

Like the early church, we must be attractive to the world and expect to also be hated by it. Unbelievers should be attracted to us as a loving community but repelled by our biblical standards of holy living.

No Reason to Hide, page 27

Romans 8:31 wonderfully reminds us, "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Yes, we can expect life in today's world to be filled with struggles and challenges. What good can we gain from being believers who, rather than surrender or sink, are committed to swimming?

A Hero Who Found No Reason to Hide

The apostle Peter went from denying Christ three times to being a courageous witness. He wrote, "Rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad

when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you” (1 Peter 4:13–14).

In what ways are you encouraged by what Peter wrote?

What fears can you lift up to God right now, and ask Him to replace with courage?

Will We Be Intimidated by Collective Demonization?

Peer pressure has always been powerful.

These days, it is even more so. In schools and workplaces, certain ways of thinking are praised, while other ways are soundly condemned. Both traditional media and social media define what views are considered acceptable and what aren't.

If you go with the flow of secular culture, you'll be welcomed with open arms. But if you go against the tide, there will be a price to pay.

In a world driven by large social media platforms, a refusal to go with the crowd can get a lot of negative attention. With a few clicks, suddenly you can find yourself at the center of a firestorm of condemnation for saying or doing something that doesn't meet with culture's approval.

There are times when the potential backlash could be so widespread or intense that we choose to censor ourselves. In fear, we hide our true convictions, knowing that to express them will stir the wrath of others. That's how collective demonization works: Those who are politically correct or woke will band together to vilify and shame the few who dare to express a contrary opinion.

Everyone is expected to applaud what is culturally acceptable. And woe to anyone who refuses to clap.

BEHIND THE BERLIN WALL

“Woke-washing” is a term used to describe companies or stores that take a radical leftist position on racial or political issues as a pretense that they are “all in,” standing in solidarity with the leftists’ agenda to remake society. They want to be seen as advocates, as those who are innocent of all the evils attributed to others.

No Reason to Hide, page 36

Based on what you have observed, give one or two examples of popular leftist positions that have gotten the backing of major businesses or organizations.

What is your reaction when a Christian is bold enough to go against the cultural tide?

Today’s moral revolution says, “If we can’t control you, we will destroy you.” Why do you think secular leftists resort so frequently to pressure tactics like collective demonization?

In woke culture, ideology is viewed as being more important than competency. What are the potential negative consequences of this kind of thinking?

THE MARRIAGE OF BIG TECH AND BIG GOVERNMENT

What is the resulting danger when big tech sees its role as advocating leftist government agendas?

Big tech's rule is simple: Amplify the voices you agree with, and silence those with whom you disagree. What are some examples of voices that you've seen being advocated?

What are some examples of voices that you've seen being silenced?

The runaway slave Frederick Douglass observed that free speech “is the dread of tyrants...it is the one right which they first of all strike down” (see page 43 in *No Reason to Hide*). Why is free speech such a threat to those who want control over others?

What is collective demonization? It is the punishment of all who dare to disagree with those in power; it is the erasure of individualism by stigmatizing and punishing dissenters.

No Reason to Hide, page 44

A WARNING FROM THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND

On page 45 of *No Reason to Hide*, we read these words from Alexei Navalny: “We have seen many examples in Russia and China of such private companies becoming the state’s best friends and enablers when it comes to censorship.”¹

Is the fact that major businesses—including big tech companies—are helping to enable government censorship a reason for us to be concerned? Why or why not?

Jesus predicted that families would be *divided* because of Him, and “a person’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matthew 10:36). He also warned His followers they would be “put...to death, and you will be *hated* by all nations for my name’s sake. And then many will fall away and *betray* one another and hate one another” (Matthew 24:9–10).

Notice that Jesus talked about what we see happening in our present-day culture: *division*, *hatred*, and *betrayal*. All three of these dominate much of social media and cultural and political discourse. We are not where some totalitarian countries are, but we appear to be on our way.

No Reason to Hide, pages 44-45

Also on page 45, we read, “If we continue to go in this direction, *that which is cancelled today will be criminalized tomorrow.*” Based on what the secular left criticizes and cancels these days, what views and actions do you think have the potential to end up being criminalized in the future?

THE SEARCH FOR EXTREMISTS

In recent years, what has happened to the definitions of the terms *white supremacist* and *extremist*?

Under the radical left’s new definition of *extremist*, who are some of the people that have been branded as extremists?

PATRIOTISM’S BLESSINGS

What distinguishes simple patriotism from Christian nationalism?

On page 49 of *No Reason to Hide*, we read, “The divide is not so much between Republican or Democrat, or right versus left; rather, our choices are becoming good versus evil, right versus wrong, freedom versus censorship.” In what ways do you see these choices evident in your interactions with culture?

Also on page 49, we’re reminded that “in the midst of the chaos, we are to be representatives of Christ. Ultimately, it is the gospel that matters most.” Why is being a good representative of Christ the most powerful influence we can have in today’s culture?

HISTORY DOES REPEAT ITSELF

History reveals that the Holocaust had its beginnings in stereotypes, prejudice, exclusion, and dehumanization. Small steps became big ones that led to deadly consequences. What are some small steps you see happening in today’s society that could lead to bigger ones?

What is the natural result when government overreach occurs?

VALOR IN TRYING TIMES

What are some of the consequences that Christians face today for holding to their convictions?

THE PRIORITY OF THE GOSPEL

The train has left the station. And we are passengers along with all the others. We can't stop the train by pacing back and forth, by going from one end of it to the other. But we can share the truths of the gospel to all of our fellow passengers.

No Reason to Hide, pages 51-52

In *No Reason to Hide*, we read that “all trains are God’s trains.” What do you think is meant by this?

At the same time that we stand *against* the culture, it is vital that we stand *above* it and stand for Christ. Why do you think it’s so crucial to do both at the same time?

James Emery White is quoted as asking, “Is the ultimate goal a Christian nation or a nation of Christians?” Why is the better answer “a nation of Christians”?

What is the only way this can take place?

What is God’s solution to evil?

What has God promised *will* happen in the future, according to Revelation 11:15?

A Promise to Carry with Us

The Lord stood by me and strengthened me, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen (2 Timothy 4:17–18).

In the above passage, what does the apostle Paul thank God for?

In what ways have you seen God strengthen you and keep you safe in the midst of today's culture?

A Hero Who Found No Reason to Hide

Rod Dreher is quoted as saying, “The ordinary man may not be able to overturn the kingdom of lies, but he can at least say that he is not going to be its loyal subject.”² Why do you think this is an important mentality for us to have—that even though we may not be able to change what the government is doing, we still refuse to clap?

The doctor who shared Christ with Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was later killed, and Solzhenitsyn went on to become a witness to millions. What does the doctor's example tell us about the importance of being faithful no matter how small our circles of social influence are?

Action Step

What are some specific, tangible ways that Christians can create a community of support to uphold one another when they are attacked?

