



8. My life as I profess my faith

Christians reflect God's love through their words and actions *What does "profess" mean? Does it have a positive or negative connotation? (Sometimes, it's negative, i.e. "he professes to be a Christian, but he's not") But it doesn't have to be e.g. "he professed his love for her" a public, positive confession. A profession of faith, a confession of sin.*

Introduction

Sound a Clear Call

"If the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle?" (1 Corinthians 14:8).

From Bible times all the way down to more recent history, trumpets have been an important method of communication. Why would a trumpet need to sound a clear call?

Trumpets were used to direct armies. Soldiers needed to know when to attack or retreat. (No walkie-talkies, cell phones, AWACS).

How important is it for us to sound a clear call when it comes to our relationships with: **What does a garbled note, or a mixed message sound like?**

- non-Christians? "I talk the talk, without walking the walk; I apply God's law, but not God's love to your life. I show love to all, but disregard God's truth" Clear is important because their spiritual life is at stake; we may be their only connection to Christ.
- the opposite sex? "I know what the Bible says about pre-marital sex; I just ignore it. The Bible says that men are more important than women" Am I becoming a stumbling block to their relationship to God? A tempter/temptress.
- fellow members of our congregation/church body? "I can't/don't have to confront members about their sins. I can let my hair down when I'm with the insiders. I'll put on my best behavior toward visitors, but not members. I don't like a lot of things about the WELS" Members' souls are at risk, too. People are evaluating our synod by our words and actions.

The Scriptures Say

1. Read the following Bible passages and explain what our natural state leads us to profess by our words and actions. **What does our natural condition look like?**

Ephesians 2:1-3 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you **followed the ways of this world** and of the

ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath.

Romans 7:5 When we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.

Matthew 15:19 Out of the (natural) heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander.

Our natural state professes agreement with the world.

2. Use the following Bible passages to explain what happens to our natural state, as expressed by our words and actions, after we become a Christian.

Romans 6:22,23 Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 John 2:9-11 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light, and there is nothing in them to make them stumble. But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them.

Galatians 5:22,23 The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

Christ has set us free from the power of the sinful nature. Professing agreement with Christ is an unnatural state.

3. Why does a Christian want to profess Christ clearly in his or her words and actions?

Psalms 105:1-5 Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice. Look to the Lord and his strength; seek his face always. Remember the wonders he has done, his miracles, and the judgments he pronounced.

John 17:26 Jesus: I have made you [the only true God] known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them. To be in fellowship with God is a gift.

Expressing fellowship with God is our privilege and flows naturally from God's love for us.

4. As you read the passages below, list three reasons why clearly professing the truth through our words and actions is important for every Christian.

1 John 1:5,6 God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. **If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie** and do not live out the truth. **Our words and actions are a reflection of God and our relationship to him.**

Matthew 7:15 Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. **We confess the truth for the sake of our soul**

Titus 3:10 Warn a divisive person once, and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. **For whose benefit? Theirs and others.**

We profess the truth for the sake of God's name, our own soul, and the souls of others.

The Principles

Because the Bible clearly teaches the following truths . . .

1. I believe professing agreement with the world is my natural state; agreement with Christ is an unnatural state.
2. I believe expressing fellowship with God is my privilege.
3. I believe I profess my faith for the sake of God's truth, my own soul, and the souls of others.

Focus

Even a Hint?

"Among you there must **not be even a hint of sexual immorality**, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people" (Ephesians 5:3).

God is so concerned that his children properly represent him with their words and lives that he warns us not to have even a "hint" of sexual immorality in our lives. Why is this so important? What applications do we see for this warning today?

Living together but unmarried; appropriate dress; appropriate restaurants/taverns/entertainment; our choice of reading material, jokes, etc.

What Does This Mean?

1. The world looks at the limits and restrictions Christians put on themselves as unnecessary and antiquated. How does a Christian look at such things?

I'd rather be a slave to God than a slave to my sinful nature. With our words and actions we glorify God, acknowledge that his will is good, and clearly profess Christ to the world.

2. What new meaning and encouragement does this lesson give to a parent who has heard the following justification one too many times: "But everyone's doing it"?

It is our precious privilege to show how God has blessed us by revealing his truth to us and setting us free from slavery to the empty way of life that enslaves much of the world. We realize that our decisions and our way of life may seem unnatural to the rest of the world.

3. Agree/disagree: We would be more effective at reaching others if we became more like the world. (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:22 "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.")

In areas where God hasn't given us a command, we have freedom. In 1 Corinthians 9:22, God directed the apostle Paul to write, "I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some."

When Paul was with Jews, he was sensitive to their understanding about Old Testament laws and customs. When he was with Gentiles, he wanted to avoid putting up roadblocks that might keep them from hearing the gospel. But he also wrote in Romans 12:2, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Adopting the ways of the world that are against God's will would hurt our testimony.

4. Agree/disagree: The WELS position on Church Fellowship is a stumbling block to our personal evangelism efforts.

Granted, people may initially misunderstand the biblical doctrine of church fellowship. But the gospel offers true fellowship with God and fellow believers, based on God's truth. The Word creates true unity, something to be cherished and shared. We offer something that truly matters (while still distinguishing the Invisible Church from the Visible Church).

What This Means for Me

- Take a few moments to write a short statement expressing the way these truths shape what you believe and how you live.