

Column

“What do they teach them at these schools?”

Fans of C.S. Lewis’ will recall Professor Kirk asking this question more than once in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. It obviously reflected Lewis’ disdain for progressive practices in education popular at the time. He believed young people should be taught that objective truth exists and to reason and argue clearly. One role of the teacher was to knock out “sloppy, emotional, and inexact thinking.”

Professor Kirk’s question came to mind as I listen to videos of U.S. college students coming to the microphone to address another “Kirk” – Charlie Kirk. When Kirk asked them to defend their position, their responses were often just what Lewis loathed, “sloppy, emotional and inexact”. Their reasoning was circular, their language skills lacking.

Notice what I am saying has nothing to do with the merit of the position they were attempting to argue, only in their inability to speak and reason.

One can only shake one's head and ask: what kind of schools did they attend? If this is the cream of the crop, the brightest and best in our universities and colleges, how will American democracy (or whatever system of government you think we have) survive?

This is not to say there are some bright spots. Thankfully, there are young Americans who can reason and speak without interjecting 'like' between every other word, who can argue their position coherently and dispassionately, even as Charlie Kirk did. Even those who do not agree with all of his positions should be able to give him credit for that, along with providing a venue for honest and civil discourse.

Where should Christians stand in the midst of today's societal chaos? Here are a few thoughts:

First, our speech should be clear. "But let your communication be, Yea, yea," says Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:7). In context, He is warning against needless oaths, but surely his words extend to clarity in general in speech.

Secondly, our speech should be gracious following Paul's words in Colossians 4:6: Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man." "Listen first and then speak" is a good practice to adopt. Doing so opens doors of understanding even when complete agreement is not possible. Sadly, many today, instead of listening and responding in a gracious and reasoned way, resort to shouting: "Nazi, racist, fascist, homophobic, nationalist or some other pejorative epithet. They closed down the conversation before it begins.

Finally, our speech should be uncompromising when it comes to truth. If this stance is unpopular, so be it. Respecting another's autonomy is a praiseworthy practice; however, stretching this dictum to mean that there are multiple 'truths' is nonsense and is a denial of God's created order. A person may choose to be a poached egg, that may be his 'truth', but that does not make it so. In the same way, just because a person says he is a member of the sex opposite from which he was born does not make him a member of that sex. Such reasoning is a

denial of objective science and the God who stands behind objective science. “Male and female created he them” (Genesis 1:27).

The question posed by Professor Kirk in Lewis’ childhood story -- “What do they teach them at these schools?” – remains relevant and demands an answer.

ALMIGHTY God, we beseech thee, with thy gracious favour, to behold our universities, colleges, and schools, that knowledge may be increased among us, and all good learning flourish and abound; bless all who teach and all who learn; and grant that in humility of heart they may ever look unto thee, who art the fountain of all wisdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Book of Common Prayer)

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