

Bermudian Church of the Brethren

WEDNESDAY's WORD – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler
to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week
September 27 in the year of our Lord 2017 - #712

“Should I? Or Shouldn't I?”

I labored a bit over whether or not to wade into the debate raging currently about National Football League (NFL) players protesting our National Anthem. The topic is so divisive and there are so many strong emotions. But I've decided to share my perspective with the hope that it might be helpful ... or at least thought provoking for you. **I'm not opening a debate. I'm not interested in getting into a back-and-forth argument about this. If you disagree with me on this ... that's perfectly OK!!! I still love you in the Lord.**

I'd like to reflect on the issue first from a **CHRISTIAN & BIBLICAL** point of view; then from a **LEGAL** point of view; and then share some “**I WISH...**” comments.

A CHRISTIAN & BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

For any person truly trying to follow Christ, this should always be our first reflection on any given issue. What does the Bible say? And on this topic, the Bible teaching is clear, simple to understand and concise.

“Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right. ... Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.” 1 Peter 2:13-17 NIV

Now remember that Peter wrote these words when the Roman government was severely persecuting Christians! The Biblical principle is simply **respect**. And in our nation to stand for the national anthem is a sign of **respect**. It does not mean that we agree with everything happening in our nation or everything our government leaders are doing. But we are called as Christians ... to show **respect**. And the universally understood sign of **respect** is to stand as the anthem is sung. You don't have to wave a flag, put your hand over your heart, or sing along if you don't want to. But as a Christian you do have to stand in respect.

I stand in **respect** for the Judeo-Christian heritage of our land. I stand in **respect** for those who have served our nation sacrificially in the military; and as conscientious objectors; and as government leaders at local, state & national levels; and as first responders & police. Even if I disagree at points with some positions ... tactics ... programs ... (and I surely do!) ... I stand in **respect** for their service.

Simply ... that's what the Bible tells me to do.

I do not see any Biblical support for Christians to be part of protesting, or “resisting” in ways that are violent, mean spirited, hateful or showing disrespect. There are ways to **“speak the truth in love”** (Ephesians 4:15 NIV) that do not involve violence & disrespect. And please don't tell me about Jesus cleansing the Temple as your support for such activity!!! To do so takes that

moment out of context in so many ways! We aren't Jesus! And the issue that angered Jesus was that the Courtyard of the Gentiles ... the one place where non-Jewish people could come to worship the one true God ... had become a farmer's market. The issue was Evangelism!

“My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. But you have made it a den of robbers.” Mark 11:17 NIV

A LEGAL PERSPECTIVE

That said ... we do live in a nation where a person's freedom to protest is protected. It's part of what makes our nation a great nation. While we don't have the freedom to hurt others or damage property with our protests ... that right to peacefully protest is protected. And that too is pretty simple to understand. You don't have to like it, or appreciate the perspective someone represents, it may even be offensive to you, but they have that legal right to share it peacefully, nonviolently, respectfully.

I WISH... (And my “Hall of Shame”)

And now with both those things laid out, let me share my very personal wishes!

1. **I wish the media would just not cover this.** Don't show it and it loses its power. Don't make such a big production of it and it becomes a non-issue. Shame on the media for hyping this and stirring division!
2. **I wish professional athletes would acknowledge the place of privilege & influence they have** and in many cases ... just grow up! In our culture our professional athletes are often the heroes & role models of our children & youth. That's a BIG responsibility! I hate the *“look at me”* demonstrations on the field and the lifestyles of gross consumerism & decadence!!! I deeply respect those athletes who understand how blessed they are to be in their positions and use their wealth, power & influence to make a difference in the world and especially in the lives of children! When my son John played high school football his very wise coach would often say, *“When you are on the field you represent everyone who has ever worn the Bermudian Springs uniform.”* I wish more professional athletes would get this! If there are issues you want to take a stand for ... do it in ways that will show your integrity and truly make a difference. With your wealth & prestige comes great responsibility! Shame on professional athletes who act like spoiled children!
3. **I wish our President would lose his phone!** Mr. President I'm a conservative voter. I support many of your positions. But when you act like a Jr. High youth with name calling on Twitter (or in speeches to your fans) ... it drives me crazy! You represent us! You represent the office! Stop already with the name calling! You aren't helping anything! It's not presidential! It's not Christian! It's not smart! It's not even good business! Shame on you for not knowing better! Put your phone down! Stop it!

Well, there you go ... maybe something to upset everyone??!! I share it as “food-for-thought” ... and as I said above, I really don’t want to get into a big back-and-forth debate with anyone. One-on-one ... if you want to sit down face-to-face ... I’d love it. I pray this is helpful, thought provoking, as our nation labors through this debate!

Blessings! Pastor Larry <><