



A Study Guide for *Faith and Civic Life*

For the Well-Being of All

Session 4:

Religion and the First Amendment

Group Covenant and Guidelines

Sample covenant is based on those written by Dr. Marsha Foster Boyd and the University of Michigan Center for Research on Teaching and Learning and used with permission from Luther Seminary. From the Interfaith Alliance of Iowa.

- I affirm that all have something of value to share or contribute. I also acknowledge that everyone has the chance to speak.
- I will show up as fully as possible.
- I will maintain confidentiality and expect the same in return. I will not share others' stories without their consent.
- I will encourage self-care.
- I listen to understand, not to respond.
- I assume positive intent.
- I am allowed to test issues and not necessarily own them, and I understand others may do the same. Curiosity is encouraged.
- I will both support and challenge others, will expect to be both supported and challenged by others, and will offer explanations if needed.
- I will criticize ideas, not individuals.
- I will avoid assumptions about any member of the group or generalizations about social groups.
- I will not ask individuals to speak on behalf of their social group, as I perceive that group.

Scriptural Reflection: 1 Corinthians 10:23-32

“All things are permitted,” but not all things are beneficial. “All things are permitted,” but not all things build up. Do not seek your own advantage but that of the other. Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising any question on the ground of conscience, for “the earth and its fullness are the Lord’s.” If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you are disposed to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising any question on the ground of conscience. But if someone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice,” then do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who informed you and for the sake of conscience—I mean the other’s conscience, not your own. For why should my freedom be subject to the judgment of someone else’s conscience? If I partake with thankfulness, why should I be denounced because of that for which I give thanks?

So, whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage but that of many, so that they may be saved.

Setting the Table – Theological Foundations and Definitions

Establishment Clause

Government “shall make no law
regarding the establishment of
religion.”

“Separation of Church and State”

Often used as shorthand for the Establishment Clause of the U.S.

Constitution, which forbids state-sponsored religion. However, some applications of this shorthand are, and need to be, contested.

MYTH ALERT: “Wall of Separation”

The Establishment Clause and the ideal of separation of church and state does NOT prohibit individuals from using their religious convictions to shape how they engage in public life.

See Article 33

Free Exercise Clause

“Congress shall make no law ...
prohibiting the free exercise [of
religion]”

Free Exercise vs. Christian Freedom

Free Exercise and the Civil Rights of Others

What does this mean?

The social statement affirms that religious practices **should not infringe on the civil rights of others**. Again, the Lutheran theological standard of care of neighbor is helpful for understanding how the ELCA balances religiously motivated conduct with public interests, including celebrating religious diversity and protecting individuals' civil rights.



CHRISTIANS
AGAINST
CHRISTIAN
NATIONALISM

BjC
For A. Freedom. For All.

Table Talk for Today

Where does exercise of religious
belief have boundaries?

Where does exercise of government
have boundaries regarding religion?

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