

SONGS

Nyame susum, m me ne nantew

Speak to me Lord

LIVING YOUR FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

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1.1 Background

(1 Thess 1:5-10 NIV).

‘Living’ refers to how one acts, thinks, speaks, or takes a position at any time. To live is to exist or have life. ‘Living’ is a present continuous tense, not just a one-day action.

Because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. 6You became imitators of us and of

the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. 7 And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. 8 The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia— your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, 9 for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, 10 and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead —Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath (1 Thess 1:5-10 NIV).

The overarching theme for Vision 2028 is “Possessing the Nations: Unleashing the Whole Church to Transform Their World with the Values and Principles of the Kingdom of God.”

It is important to note that the Church is called out of the world by God unto Himself and sent back into the world to transform it. As a result, serving God in the public sphere remains a major aspect of who we are and the commission committed to us. It is a call to bring our lives and spheres of influence under the rule of the Kingdom of God. As believers, we have a personal responsibility to join God on His mission in the world, “For we are God’s fellow workers. You are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9 ESV).

Therefore, the Christian’s impact is expected to be felt everywhere: in the village and the city, on beaches and farmlands, in classrooms and boardrooms, etc. Every born-again believer should endeavour to bring the fragrance of their transformed life into every arena they find themselves in. Possessing the nations is all about transforming the world with the values and principles of God’s Kingdom.

5. HOW TO LIVE YOUR FAITH IN THE PUBLIC SPHERE

5.1 Virtues required

1. Identity:

The Christian must be aware of their dual citizenship, both on earth and in heaven (Phil. 3:20). We are ambassadors representing Christ on earth (2 Cor. 5:20). We have royal and priestly authority (1 Peter 2:9). We are prophets to the nations (Jer. 1:5). Once you become a Christian, you cannot detach from that identity. Your faith informs everything you are, everything you do, or everything you say (Dan. 3:16-18; Esther 3:1-4). These convictions grant us boldness and assure us of a good conscience in all situations (1 Peter 3:16; 1 Tim. 3:9).

2. Deep roots in Christ:

The Christian must know their God (Dan. 11:32; 2 Peter 1:3; Ezra 7:10), fear God (Gen. 39:9), and be deeply rooted in Christ (Col. 2:7; Eph. 3:17). This requires consecration and a commitment to a deep devotional life and spiritual disciplines (such as studying the Word, prayer, fasting, etc.). This foundation is essential to avoid being tossed about by any wind of doctrine (Eph. 4:14).

3. Living out the Word:

We must endeavour to live out the Word (Ezra 7:10). Let Christ be Lord in all situations, even if it is not pleasant to you.

4. Balance and accountability:

Maintain balance in all aspects of life—family life, career, ministry, health, finances, and relationships with people. Also keep accountability networks (like church, family, godly friends, etc.) to help remain rooted and nourished.

5. Respect:

We must acknowledge, respect, and be sensitive, tolerant, and courteous to people of diverse backgrounds (1 Pet. 2:17; Rom. 12:16-18; Acts 17:16-34).

6. Integrity:

Having integrity is a powerful testimony for the Christian in the public sphere. This includes your honesty in paying taxes (Rom. 13:6-7),

upholding personal morals, demonstrating trustworthiness, and practising good stewardship (Mt. 25:14-28; Lk. 16:11-12).

7. Ethics:

Ethics refers to the moral principles that govern a person's behaviour or the conduct of an activity. Christians' ethics are based on God's holiness, justice, and love. This is reflected in our honesty, integrity, morality, selflessness, cooperation, teamwork, fairness, and equity. It takes wisdom and knowledge to navigate ethical issues. For example: Can I work as a lawyer for an alcoholic beverage brewery? Can I work as an accountant for the national lottery or a sports betting business? Can I produce "secular" music as a Christian? Can I be a social media influencer or fashionista? Can I donate to a political party that also endorses abortion or LGBT rights?

8. Expression:

You may attract conversations about your faith when you wisely use Christian car stickers, labelled clothing and paraphernalia (such as headscarves, T-shirts, hoodies, caps, etc.), playing gospel music in your office or in cars, and avoiding alcohol, illicit drugs, and worldly music at events under your control.

9. Excellence:

Excellence attracts interest and attention (Dan. 1:17-21; 5:10-12; 6:3-5). You can use your skills and talents to produce positive results (Ps. 78:72; Gen. 41:33-40). Work hard (1 Thess. 4:11-12), solve problems, be creative, show leadership, offer encouragement, help resolve conflicts, and bring your godly counsel and influence to bear in all situations. Be ready to serve or take up any menial task (Lk. 22:27; Jn. 13:4-5).

10. Love:

Godly love must be at the core of all our actions (Col. 3:12-14; Mt. 22:37-39; 1 Cor 13:1-13). Love confronts without hatred. It is often said, "People do not care what you know until they know that you care." Loving others requires compassion and empathy.

11. Wisdom:

Jesus instructs us to be wise as serpents as we go out to minister among men (Mt. 10:16). Esther wisely invited King Ahasuerus and Haman to dinner twice before disclosing her intent (Esther 5:1-8; 7:1-10). We must also share our godly wisdom when called upon to do so. The fear of the Lord is both the beginning and demonstration of our wisdom (Prov. 9:10; Deut. 4:6).

12. Engagement:

To live our faith in the public sphere, we must engage rather than remain disconnected or disinterested. To engage requires presence, patience, and sometimes even confrontation. We must build good relationships and promote good neighbourliness, emulating the Good Samaritan (Lk. 10:29-37). Be available and visible when people need help, especially in times of discomfort, ill health, bereavement, and family crisis (Mt. 25:34-46). Additionally, we must also utilise our God-given public platforms to clearly and boldly articulate theological matters such as faith, hope, love, compassion, integrity, and justice, especially as they connect with the ordinary lives of people.

13. Character:

Our character reveals who we are. We must endeavour to show gratitude and be kind, sociable, interactive, and engaged. Avoid gossip,

swearing, and judgmental attitudes. Instead, be good listeners, empathetic, patient, and full of joy. Poor attitudes can put off work colleagues. We must embody humility as we enter the public sphere (Phil. 2:5-11).

14. Reason:

There may be occasions to teach the Scriptures (Ezra 7:10) or even preach (Rom 10:14-15), but most often, we will need to engage in reasoning (1 Peter 3:15; Acts 17:2-4). To reason is to explain, argue, or defend our beliefs. Building capacity in apologetics may be useful, especially regarding questions about the existence of God, the Trinity, the origin and destiny of humanity, the coexistence of God and human evil, the question of suffering, the relationship between science and faith, the person and ministry of Jesus Christ, and Jesus as the only way to God.

15. **Opportunity:**

Use every opportunity to reach out to people about your faith (Eph. 5:15-16). However, it's important to have realistic expectations and develop resilience (stress inoculation) against opposition and criticism.

16. **Testimony:** Share your testimony (Rev. 12:11). Tell your story. Be authentic. Humbly admit your weakness and share how God's grace has helped in your journey of faith.

17. **Discernment:**

For people in our spheres, we must discern and be able to judge the extent of our engagement with them (Acts 16:16-18). Regi Campbell recommends an intentionality map that categorize people into ABCDE. A for Apathetic (those disinterested in Christ); B for Beginning to

search; C for Confessing Christian; D for Developing Disciple; and E for Excelling Christian. Ed Silvoso also classifies Christians in the workplace into four categories: (a) those simply trying to survive, (b) those living by Christian principles, (c) those living by the power of the Holy Spirit, and (d) those transforming their workplace for Christ.

18. Intercession:

We must fervently pray for the lost, our leaders, and nations (1 Tim. 2:1-4; Dan. 9:1-23; Ezra 9:1-15; Neh. 9:1-38). Intercession changes our agenda. It reveals and determines our priorities. Prayer has the power to change both people and environments.

19. **Holy Spirit:**

We must engage the power of the Holy Spirit as we live our faith in the public sphere (Acts 5:12; 13:6-12; 28:8-10). The manifestation of gifts of the Holy Spirit (such as the working of miracles, gifts of healing, faith, word of wisdom, word of knowledge, discerning of spirits, and prophecy) should not be limited to the church environment. The Holy Ghost in us must be diffused into our spheres. The banker must engage the word of wisdom to grant loans; the judge will need discerning of spirits while passing sentences; the businessman requires special faith in deciding on investments; the Christian counsellor will be helped by the gifts of healing; and the medical doctor will benefit from the word of knowledge in their diagnosis. Developing intimate fellowship with the Holy Spirit is vital to accessing guidance, help, comfort, direction, counsel, and companionship. Most of the popular secular success strategies for the business world are rooted in Christian values of the

fruit of the Holy Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).