

American Council of Christian Churches
82nd Annual Convention, October 24-26, 2023
Faith Baptist Church, Kittery, ME
Resolution on Voices of Authority in the Digital Age

In today's world, people are encouraged to state their opinions on anything, anywhere, anytime. Social media and podcast platforms, such as Facebook, X (Twitter), Instagram, YouTube, Tik-Tok, and Spotify, enable users to speak their minds constantly. Amazon, Google, eBay, TripAdvisor, OpenTable, Yelp, Vrbo, Airbnb, RateMyProfessors, and iTunes welcome product and service reviews. News sites, blogs, and sermon archives provide comment fields for consumers to express their thoughts. Churches, schools, and businesses also send out surveys to solicit feedback. All these venues seem to affirm the popular slogan: "Your voice matters." Despite this impression, not all voices are equally valid. The voice of the Good Shepherd matters above all else (John 10:16, 27), as His Word is timeless, inerrant, authoritative, and sufficient for "life and godliness" (2 Pet. 1:3). While no one today can speak omnisciently or infallibly like Jesus, God has ordained other voices to carry significant weight in certain contexts.

As man is a finite being, bound by time and place, he cannot know or care for everyone everywhere, but he is called rather to labor in the spheres of a home, church, and state in a specific locality (Gen. 2:8, Acts 6:1-7, Acts 17:26, 1 Tim. 3:4-5, 5:8).¹ Next to God, voices in those spheres should matter most to the people who are a part of them. The closer the geographical, familial, and ecclesiastical tie, the greater the significance of the voice (1 Tim. 5:4). Within each sphere, those who are in authority should be honored and obeyed (1 Pet. 2:13-14), and those who show an increased proficiency in their callings should receive the highest esteem (Gen. 39:2-6, 1 Tim. 5:17, 1 Thess. 5:12-13).² If there is a perceived problem within a particular jurisdiction, the parties involved should voice their concerns through the proper channels (Matt. 18:15-20), and the appropriate authorities should listen, without respect of persons, to establish justice (Deut. 1:17, Isa. 1:17).³

Therefore, the American Council of Christian Churches at its 82nd annual convention, October 24-26, 2023, at Faith Baptist Church of Kittery, Maine, resolves to admonish everyone to labor diligently wherever the Lord has placed them (Eccles. 9:10), paying heed preeminently to God's Word and secondarily to the respected voices in one's own community (Exod. 20:12, Lev. 19:32, Heb. 13:7, 17).⁴ Those who (1) speak lies (Exod. 20:16, 1 John 4:1), (2) operate independently of their community (2 Pet. 2:10), (3) intermeddle with affairs outside their proper sphere of responsibility (Prov. 26:17), (4) ask for favored treatment based on their race, class, or gender (Exod. 23:2-3, Lev. 19:15, Acts 10:34-35, Jam. 2:1, 8-9), or (5) demand a public audience through self-appointment, celebrity status, or mystic revelation, "speak things they ought not" (1 Tim. 5:13); and, therefore, they should receive little attention. Furthermore, those who bypass the proper channels of authority by leaking confidential information to the public (Lev. 19:16, 1 Tim. 5:13) or by seeking to create mob action in any other way, likewise should be denounced. Rom. 13:1-2 instructs "every soul [to] be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God . . . whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation." Lastly, we exhort everyone to be "slow to speak, slow to wrath" (Jam. 1:19), and slow to become teachers, "knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (Jam. 3:1, cf. 1 Tim. 3:6).



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¹ See also the 2016 ACCC Resolution on the Assembly of Believers and Augustine of Hippo's *On Christian Doctrine*, Book I, Chapter 28.

² Through prayer, study, refined skill, selfless service, and proven integrity (Exod. 35:30-35, 1 Chron. 12:32, 28:21, Dan. 1:4, Matt. 20:25-28).

³ When certain issues are common to multiple localities, duly appointed representatives from those communities can band together "for the accomplishment of [specifically delegated] tasks which can better be done in cooperation than separately." Preamble of the ACCC Constitution.

⁴ "In practice this means taking a vital interest only in one's closest associates (family, friends, immediate neighbors) and affairs (work, community, etc.), and taking a vaguer interest the farther one moves out from the realm of personal familiarity. It also means refusing to take an interest in matters which one cannot control and the knowledge of which serves only to make one miserable." Tom Hervey, "On Naivete and Moral Numbness: A Rejoinder to Russell Moore," *The Aquila Report* (April 17, 2023): <https://theaquilareport.com/on-naivete-and-moral-numbness-a-rejoinder-to-russell-moore/>.