

WHAT LEGAL RIGHTS DO CHRISTIANS HAVE?

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, [2] for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. [3] This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, [4] who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:1-4 ESV)

Do you know your rights as a Christian in America?

Christians have certain religious rights and freedoms in America. It is important for Christians know their rights and freedoms are so that they can practice, share, and model their faith wherever they are allowed. They need to recognize and respect limits set within their workplace but not be intimidated into silence or disobedience to God's command to "be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

Below are links to and quotes from help documents by the American Center for Law & Justice

Bibles and Bible studies in the workplace:

(<http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Bibles-and-Bible-Studies-in-the-Workplace.pdf>)

"In sum, the First Amendment does not require the censorship of private religious speech in the workplace. It protects such religious expression from government censorship. The ACLJ strongly encourages individuals to meet for voluntary Bible study during nonworking hours."

Religious Expression in the workplace:

(<http://media.aclj.org/pdf/2-Religious-Expression-in-the-Workplace-Formatted.pdf>)

"Furthermore, employers can even hold regular devotional or prayer meetings for employees so long as attendance is not required. ...Moreover, active participation of management in these meetings does not make them discriminatory. ...To ensure that employees understand that devotional meetings are voluntary, notice of the meetings should state that they are not mandatory and it is a good idea to hold these meetings before the work day begins, during breaks, or after work."

"In sum, prayer is not illegal, unauthorized, inappropriate, nor improper – and as long as employees pray before or after work hours, or during official breaks, there should be no problem at all. In addition, employers are required to provide reasonable accommodation to employees' religious beliefs."

Sharing Your Faith and Witnessing:

(<http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Sharing-Your-Faith-Witnessing.pdf>)

"The streets and sidewalks of the United States are an open forum for evangelism. The Constitution guarantees the right to preach the Gospel in public places."

"When you give away religious tracts in public places—streets, sidewalks, and parks—you are engaged in a form of speech and publication protected by the United States Constitution and civil rights laws. When you speak with someone about the Gospel while in a public place, you enjoy constitutional protection."

"Giving away free Gospel tracts and talking to people about salvation are not the same thing as soliciting. The Supreme Court has held that there is a difference between soliciting and leafleting. ...As long as you are giving away your literature for free, and not asking for donations, you are engaging in the most protected form of speech."

“If I am witnessing on the public sidewalk in front of a business, am I “loitering,” and can I be required to move away from the business? No! “Loitering” is the criminal offense of remaining in a certain place (such as a public street) for no apparent reason.”

Sharing Your Faith and Witnessing in School:

(<http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Sharing-Your-Faith-Witnessing-at-School.pdf>)

“Students’ First Amendment rights include the right to distribute Gospel tracts during non-instructional time, the right to wear shirts with overtly Christian messages and symbols, and the right to pray and discuss matters of religion with others. Further, schools may not prevent students from bringing their Bibles to school.”

Student Free Speech Rights:

(<http://media.aclj.org/pdf/Student-Free-Speech-Rights.pdf>)

“The fact is, however, from the moment they step onto the public school campus to the moment they graduate, public school students enjoy substantial rights to free speech, free press, assembly and religion. ... students have the right to discuss religious beliefs, and even share religious materials, with their peers between classes, at break, at lunch, and before and after school. The Supreme Court has also clearly established the right of students to organize and participate in Bible clubs.”

Student Rights at Graduation and School Events:

(<http://media.aclj.org/pdf/1-Student-Rights-at-Graduation,-School-Events.pdf>)

“Are valedictorians and salutatorians permitted to make religious remarks as a part of their speeches Yes, although such remarks must be “non-proselytizing” and “non-sectarian” in some jurisdictions.”

Teacher and Administrator Rights and Responsibilities

(<http://media.aclj.org/pdf/1-Teacher,-Administrator-Rights-&-Responsibilities.pdf>)

“Moreover, the Establishment Clause does not prohibit all religious instruction in public schools. “[T]he Bible may constitutionally be used in an appropriate study of history, civilization, ethics, comparative religion, or the like.” ... In fact, the Supreme Court has recognized that “it might well be said that one’s education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization.”

“Thus, teachers can teach about and/or distribute material with religious content for educational purposes. In addition, teachers may discuss religious matters with their students on an individual basis if the student initiates the topic, the student is not compelled or forced to discuss the topic, and the student is not compelled to accept the teacher’s views. “

“Thus, teachers have “the right to discuss alternate theories of the creation of life and could independently research such topics.” ...However, teachers have a responsibility to teach the curriculum in the manner designated by their superiors. ...Furthermore, teachers may not refuse to teach a subject with which he or she disagrees when that subject is specifically prescribed by the curriculum the teacher has been hired to teach.”

So they called them and charged them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. [19] But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, [20] for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:18-20 ESV)