

PARENT / TEACHER LESSON PLANS

FOR
**HIGH
SCHOOL**
STUDENTS

HOLY
BIBLE

HUMAN RIGHTS



Summary

This lesson raises the issue of Human Rights Commissions and the participation of Christians. They will see how the denial of any religious grounding for human rights has a real impact on the freedom of a Christian to hold to their beliefs. Students will conclude by examining the pros and cons of participating in these Commissions.

Essential Question

Should Human Rights Commissions be used by Christians to advance our own interests and concerns?

This essential question is intended to raise the issue of how a Reformed Christian participates in a fallen culture. Students will be forced to consider the ethics of participating in these Commissions considering that they essentially deny any religious grounding for human rights.

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Engage the students

- Teachers should read and familiarize themselves with the *Teacher Overview*.
- Display an online version of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms at the front of the classroom. It is available at <http://laws-lois.justice.gc.ca/eng/Const/page-15.html>. Read and discuss in particular, the sections 1-3, 7, and 15.
- Teachers can use <http://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/charter-charte/learn-ausujet.html> as a background to help them prepare for the short discussion on what each of these sections means.
- Using the *Teacher Overview* for this lesson plan and the *Teacher Overview Boissoin Case Study* provides several good points that can be used to hook the interest of students and make it relevant to themselves.
 - Where do human rights come from?
 - What do students think the difference is between a right and a privilege?
 - Do students have a right to K-12 education? Life? Free speech? Religion? Assembly?

Explore deeper with the Boissoin Case Study

- Teachers should read *Teacher Overview - Boissoin Case Study* to be able to set the scene and provide context for students regarding the case and its appearance before the Alberta Human Rights Commission
- Distribute *Handout 1 - Boissoin Case Study*
- Students should read through this and highlight each of the things they read that are facts. These are not opinions but are things that are verifiably true.

Task – Facts and Issues

- In groups of 2-3, students should compare the facts that they came up with.
- They should briefly summarize ten of these facts on *Handout 1 - Facts and Issues*.
- After choosing and summarizing ten facts in the left-hand column, they should identify who the affected parties are for each of these facts.
- After discussing who the affected parties are, they should try to identify what the competing values are from the different stakeholders.
 - Examples of values that could come up in this exercise are:
 - right to say opinion in a debate,
 - protect children from potentially damaging influence,
 - defend biblical definition of marriage,
 - public safety,
 - respect for people,
 - be clear in naming sin,
 - treat neighbour in love,
 - respect for people as made in God's image,
 - be able to publish unpopular opinions,
 - compromise,
 - faith in God's providence
- After going through the ten different facts - affected parties - competing values examples, the group should try to determine what the real underlying issue is in this Human Rights Commission case. Examples to help students come up with a good underlying issue is that it should:
 - Talk about important issues that are relevant to everybody (so avoid niche issues)
 - Allow for people to have different opinions and to agree or disagree on it
 - Be inviting for commentary on what could be done.

Class Sharing

- Have each group share one or two of their facts-affected parties - competing values discussions that really stood out for them.
- After each of the groups have shared, invite them to write their conclusions about what the underlying issue is on chart paper and to post it around the classroom. Lead a class discussion on the different issues that were raised. How similar are the conclusions that each group arrived at? How are they different?

Class Discussion

- Lead a class discussion on *Handout 2 – Paquette Case*. How does this change student perception of HRCs?

Teacher Overview – Human Rights Commissions

What are rights? What happens when they conflict?

Who determines the winner? This lesson introduces students to these questions by looking at one example of a Christian pastor who has been silenced by a human rights commission for speaking up about his beliefs.

Upholding human rights is essential for a just society. In Canada, we are blessed with the protection of many rights, allowing us to live our lives in peace and security. But this is changing. The language of rights is being manipulated to privilege particular worldviews, choices, and lifestyles. Our courts and so-called human rights commissions are increasingly being used to promote an agenda in which basic rights (life, freedom of religion etc.) are being squashed by new “rights” (unregulated abortion, celebration of homosexuality etc.).

As valuable as rights are, there is a lot of confusion about them. What exactly is a right? A right is an entitlement. It is something that we can take hold of, something that we naturally possess simply by being human. This means that rights come from outside of ourselves and our abilities. They have to be given to us by someone else who has the authority to give us these rights. That authority is God. Without belief in God, rights get reduced to a mere fiction or social agreement. They lose all authority and moral reason to compel us to recognize the rights of others.

Rights are accompanied by corresponding responsibilities. For example, we have a right to life but that can only be upheld if we are responsible to protecting the lives of other people. Rights are different than privileges. We are not owed privileges nor do we possess them simply by being human. Many people confuse rights with privileges. For example, we talk about a right to vote when in fact being allowed to vote is a privilege. Being human does not mean that we should be given the ability to be part of determining

the government of our nation. Universal human rights are possessed by all humans equally.

Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms has ushered in a rights revolution in this country. The problem is not as much with the actual document as with the power given to the courts of this land to interpret it in a way that furthers a particular humanist agenda. The vague language of the Charter, combined with the denial of any religious grounding for human rights, has ushered in an era in which our judges use rights language to further particular social and political causes.

In recent years it has been this country's commissions and tribunals that have done the most harm with this rights revolution. The article below explains this in more detail. These commissions and tribunals have taken on the role of censorship, punishing those who publicly voice a worldview contrary to theirs. Unfortunately, many Christians are now afraid of speaking up in public because of the threat of a human rights complaint by someone who claims to be offended.

Teacher Overview – Boissoin Case Study

Pastor Boissoin vs. Goliath

While Alberta's Human Rights Commission is acting the party of the big bully, Pastor Stephen Boissoin is honouring God as a modern-day David

Most of us know the Biblical story of David and Goliath very well. It is a story of courage, strength, and justice. Most of all, it is a story of how God used David, a shepherd boy, to defeat the giant Goliath.

We are in our own David and Goliath situation today with Christians throughout the country being charged by Canada's human rights commissions (HRC's). Alberta Pastor Stephen Boissoin is one example – and his story needs to be told. His ordeal with the Alberta HRC forces us to question how we will respond. Are we going to be like the men of Israel who shook in their boots whenever Goliath came out to challenge them? Even worse, will we just shrug our shoulders and not care? Or will we be like David, who courageously fought back with the Lord's strength because he realized it was God's Name that was being dishonoured?

The context:

If you follow the news, you've probably heard at least a bit about two high profile cases involving *Western Standard* magazine publisher Ezra Levant and *Maclean's* columnist Mark Steyn. These two were brought before human rights commissions because of things they had published and written.

But while these two journalists have gotten most of the media attention there are many lesser-known cases involving people who do not have a lot of money or a media empire behind them to help fight their case. Canada's HRC's have been carrying out their persecution for years and few people seemed to care. I know of at least two cases involving businessmen from Reformed churches in Canada who have been brought before these commissions for refusing to do work which was not in keeping with their faith.

Before explaining Pastor Boissoin's case, it is helpful to know a few things about the Human Rights Commissions. Long-time Calgary newspaperman Nigel Hanniford has written a policy paper entitled "the Commission of Human Wrongs." In it he explains that the commissions were

established across the country in the 1960's and 1970's "to provide quick, inexpensive remedies outside of the regular court system for victims of discrimination in the areas of employment and accommodation." But by the 1980's the commissions began to be used by activists as an easy tool for censorship. The reason why these commissions are so effective in the hands of these activists is because they do not follow the standard proceedings of justice. Here are some examples of how HRC's are open to exploitation:

- If a case is accepted, the complainant does not have to pay any of the costs, even if they lose the case. On the other hand, *the defendant must cover all of their own legal expenses, even if they win*. Therefore, simply being brought before a HRC is a penalty, even if you are not guilty.
- It doesn't matter if any harm *actually* occurs. It's enough that something is *likely* to occur, regardless of whether it ever does.
- Regular legal defences of truth, fair comment, and lack of intent to harm don't apply in the HRC's. In other words, you can be convicted for simply saying the truth, and nothing but the truth, if someone finds that truth offensive.
- The regular rules of evidence that apply in courts are lax and even neglected completely. For example, in the BC Human Rights Commission trial involving Mark Steyn and *Maclean's* magazine, the "prosecutor" was allowed to use quotes from Internet bloggers as evidence against Steyn. How can anybody defend themselves against every random thing some person might blog about them?
- Pastor Boissoin has also reported that at least one HRC (Alberta) is also in a conflict of interest because it hands out grants to groups that it thinks promote equality and diversity (including Alberta Parents Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Is it possible for them to be impartial and objective?

Adapted from an article written by Mark Penninga (first published in Reformed Perspective Magazine, July/Aug 2008)

Update on Appeals:

In 2009, the Alberta Court of Queens Bench ruled in favour of Boissoin and overturned the ruling that was handed down by the Alberta Human Rights Commission. This ruling was then appealed by the original complainant to the Alberta Appeals Court. In 2012, this court again ruled in the favour of Boissoin, agreeing with the original court decision that Boissoin's original letter was not likely to expose homosexuals to hatred or contempt.

Facts and Issues of the Boissoin Case

Nr.	Fact	Parties	Competing Values
1)			
2)			
3)			
4)			
5)			

Nr.	Fact	Parties	Competing Values
6)			
7)			
8)			
9)			
10)			

Bethany Paquette won't back down on human rights complaint against Amaruk Wilderness, lawyer says

CBC News Posted: Oct 10, 2014 7:36 PM PT Last Updated: Oct 10, 2014 7:38 PM PT

The lawyer representing a Trinity Western University graduate says she will proceed with her human rights complaint against Amaruk Wilderness, despite questions over the company's existence.

The company hit headlines this week after CBC News reported on [the case of Bethany Paquette](#), who claims her application to work for the company was rejected — in a series of offensive emails — because she's Christian.

Responding to that story with a statement, [Amaruk Wilderness rejected that claim](#), saying the Trinity Western grad was eminently unqualified for the position for which she applied.

However, since Paquette's complaint was reported, CBC News has [heard from other women](#) who received bizarre and inappropriate responses to their job applications to the wilderness company.

And efforts to reach the company's CEO Christopher Fragassi-Bjornsen have left CBC News questioning whether the business and its jobs even exist.

On Friday, Paquette's lawyer Geoffrey Trotter issued a news release responding to the latest CBC report on Amaruk Wilderness, saying the revelations will have no impact on her decision to go forward with her human rights complaint.

"Bethany is a hero for standing up to Amaruk. By taking a stand against the discrimination she encountered and by

going public with her human rights complaint, Bethany has emboldened others to come forward," Trotter writes.

He goes on to say that Amaruk Wilderness Corp. is legally registered in British Columbia and Christopher Fragassi is listed on that corporate registration.

"Neither he nor the company have denied sending the e-mails to Bethany, which were published by the CBC on Tuesday," Trotter writes.

Lawyer Geoffrey Trotter reviews the human rights complaint with Bethany Paquette. (CBC)

He expressed his view that "whether or not some of the emails were sent under pseudonyms, or whether or not Mr. Fragassi has exaggerated the size or capabilities of his company, both the company and Mr. Fragassi himself will need to answer to the Human Rights Tribunal."

CBC News has sent questions to several Amaruk email addresses about the latest allegations made against the company. Calls to several listed numbers reached no one. Their lawyer says these are simply allegations. The company has not made any comment.