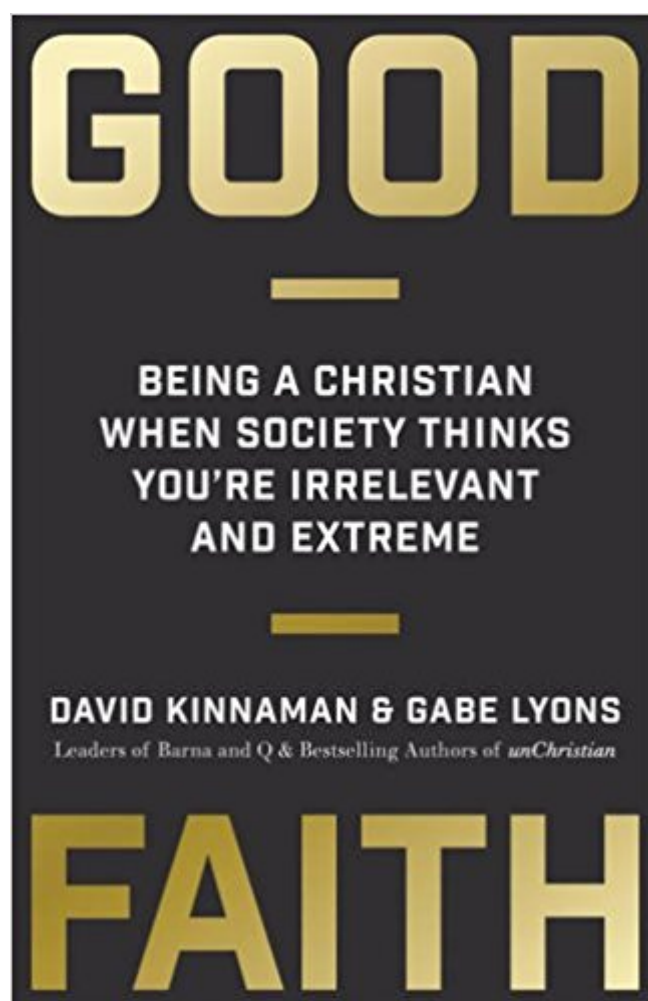


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Good Faith: Being A Christian When Society Thinks You're Irrelevant And Extreme



Synopsis

Many Christians today feel overwhelmed as they try to live faithfully in a culture that seems increasingly hostile to their beliefs. Politics, marriage, sexuality, religious freedom--with an ever-growing list of contentious issues, believers find it harder than ever to hold on to their convictions while treating their friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even family members who disagree with respect and compassion. This isn't just a problem that affects individual Christians; if left unaddressed, the growing gap between the faithful and society's tolerance for public faith will have lasting consequences for the church in America. Now the bestselling authors of *unChristian* turn their data-driven insights toward the thorny question of how Christians talk with people they know and love about the most toxic issues of our day. They help today's disciples understand what they believe and why, and how to keep believing it without being judgmental and defensive. Readers will discover the most significant trends that offer both obstacles and opportunities to God's people, and how not only to challenge culture but to create and renew it for the common good. Perhaps most importantly, David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons invite fellow Christians to understand the heart behind opposing views and show them how to be loving, life-giving friends despite profound differences. This will be the go-to book for young adult and older believers who don't want to hide from culture but to engage and restore it.

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Customer Reviews

It is easy to feel overwhelmed as we try to live faithfully in a culture that seems increasingly hostile to the Christian faith. With a growing backlash against religion and people of faith, it's harder than

ever to hold onto our convictions while treating friends, neighbors, coworkers, and even family members who disagree with respect and compassion. Based on groundbreaking research, this timely book by the bestselling authors of *unChristian* explores politics, sexuality, race, gender, and religious freedom, helping you:

- respond with compassion, clarity and confidence to the most toxic issues of our day
- discover the most significant cultural trends that are creating both obstacles and opportunities for Christians
- know what you believe and why it doesn't make you a judgmental or extreme person
- stop being afraid to talk about what you believe and start having meaningful conversations about tough issues
- understand the heart behind opposing views and learn how to stay friends across differences

David Kinnaman is author of *unChristian* and *You Lost Me*. He is president of Barna Group, a leading research and communications company that works with churches, nonprofits, and businesses ranging from film studios to financial services. Since 1995, David has directed interviews with nearly one million individuals and overseen hundreds of U.S. and global research studies. He and his wife live in California with their three children.

Gabe Lyons is author of *unChristian* and *The Next Christians*. He is the founder of Q, a learning community that educates and mobilizes Christians to think well and advance good in society. Called "sophisticated and orthodox" by *The New York Times*, Q represents the perspective of a new generation of Christians. Gabe speaks on cultural issues where faith intersects public life. He lives in Nashville with his wife, Rebekah, and their three children.

www.barna.org www.qideas.org www.goodfaithbook.org #GoodFaith

You are no longer part of the majority. Your response will shape the future of Christianity in America. "Good Faith is a wise and accessible guide to 'being a Christian in the public square' today."--Tim Keller, author and pastor, Redeemer Presbyterian Church

"I love this book. It is a timely reminder that Christians don't have to conform in order to survive."--Francis Chan, author of *Crazy Love* and *You and Me Forever*

"Kinnaman and Lyons are second to none. Unrelenting in its research, compelling in its humility, powerful in its approach, Good Faith is a landmark and thought-provoking read."--Ann Voskamp, author of *One Thousand Gifts* and *A Holy Experience*

"This prophetic book inspired me to rethink my own assumptions about how to live faithfully in our American exile."--Rod Dreher, journalist and author of the forthcoming *The Benedict Option*

"As the issues of our day threaten to divide the church, we must lean in with wisdom and truth while loving with abandon and grace. Gabe and David are leading the way, and help us faithfully navigate the new terrain."--Jennie Allen, author and founder of the *IF: Gathering*

"Good Faith speaks prophetically to the church by diagnosing our

condition and prescribing a course of powerful treatment."--Christine Caine, author and founder of A21 Campaign

"Kinnaman and Lyons turn down the temp and offer leaders a box of cultural engagement tools to use and pass on to our churches. Every pastor and leadership team should read Good Faith."--Mark Batterson, author and pastor, National Community Church

I recently testified before a state legislative committee in favor of two religious freedom bills. Twenty-five years ago, support for religious freedom was widespread. A nearly unanimous Congress passed the federal Religious Freedom Act, for example, and a Democratic president signed it into law. Today, any religious freedom bill, whether at the state or federal level, is sure to spark heated opposition because opponents argue that religious freedom is simply a mask for discrimination against the LGBT community. That shift of thinking is both tectonic and, to Christians like me, worrisome. Something else concerns me too, though. After the first hearing, a woman from the LGBT community approached the huddle of lawyers I was talking to, politely interrupted us, and made the following statement:

"I need to tell you gentlemen something," she said. "If you had lived the life I have lived, you wouldn't think the way you do." Then she walked away. None of us knew how to respond, or whether she wanted us to respond, so we said nothing. Even deeper than my worry about tectonic shifts in legal norms is my worry that the Church is missing the opportunity to share Christ's good news with people whose experience is so contrary to ours, even to our own. I confess that I missed a chance that day. Jesus Christ commissioned His followers to "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:19). While we might prefer to carry out the Great Commission in a society that provides robust protections to our religious freedom, the fact of the matter is that we are under the Lord's orders whether or not the law protects us or our society approves of us. And let's be honest, a large chunk of American society is moving in a direction that is not favorable to Christian faith and practice. David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons' first co-authored book was *UnChristian*, which examined how unbelieving Millennials viewed Christianity. The portrait they painted was not flattering. According to their research, unbelieving Millennials viewed Christians as hypocritical, anti-science, too focused on conversion, anti-gay, sheltered, too political, and judgmental. Their negative view of Christians is more than a PR problem, of course. It is a missional problem. How do we "make disciples of all nations" when the nations view us as irrelevant at best or extreme at worst? *Good Faith* outlines Kinnaman and Lyons' answer to that question.

Kinnaman is president of the Barna Group, a leading research and communications company that works with churches, nonprofits, and businesses ranging from film studios to financial services. Lyons is founder of Q, a learning community that educates and mobilizes Christians to think well and advance good in society. Based on their research and biblical reflection, they identify three ingredients that must characterize the Church's mission in contemporary America: How well we love + What we believe + How we live = Good Faith. Stated as one-word imperatives, these elements are love, believe, and live. Each imperative must be fulfilled for good faith to be present. In other words, we can't reduce Christianity to what some have called orthopathy (right affections, love) or orthodoxy (right doctrine, believe) or orthopraxy (right behavior, live). Good faith consists of the three imperatives acting in tandem at all times. Stated so simply, the need for these imperatives is obvious. And yet, how difficult we find it to put them all into practice. Take my encounter with the woman after the legislative hearing, for example. I know what I believe regarding both religious freedom specifically and LGBT issues more generally. I'd like to think that I translate those beliefs into moral behavior on a day-to-day basis. But, if I'm honest, I find it easier to explain and defend my beliefs than to love the person on the other side of those issues. Kinnaman and Lyons write something that I need to take to heart: "There is a world of difference between confidently asserting what we believe and being aggressive in faith-driven beast mode. I hope I never go into beast mode on any issue although I constantly feel the temptation on issues about which I have strong opinions. Still, I wonder: Am I like the Ephesian church which had biblical orthodoxy nailed down tight but had forsaken the love you had at first? (Revelation 2:6)? Am I cultivating the fruit of the Spirit, which is love (Galatians 5:22)? Other Christians may struggle with understanding and defending biblical orthodoxy or with putting their faith into action. Regardless of which of the three imperatives you do best (and which worst), the point is to keep them all together. Kinnaman and Lyons apply the love-believe-live formula to a host of issues. In the final chapter, they sum up the point of the entire book by writing: "The Christian community is called to be a counterculture for the common good. We are countercultural when we love others well, remain committed to orthodox beliefs, make space for those who disagree, stand out from the crowd, ask the right questions, live under God's moral order, and offer a

vision of human intimacy beyond sex. We practice hospitality. We do the good, hard work of racial reconciliation. We value human life in every form, at every stage. We love our gay friends and trust God's design for sex. We build households of faith. We are theologically grounded and culturally responsive. We make disciples. We practice the sacred art of seeing people. We make disciples and faith communities that are Christlike. Good Faith is a good book. For someone like me who is worried about the culture but more concerned about the Church bearing witness to Jesus in the midst of it, the book provides diagnostic criteria and a checklist for self-examination. On any issue, do I love the person on the other side of the issue? Do I know what biblical orthodoxy actually requires of me? Do I live my Christianity in an authentic and attractive way? If I cannot answer "yes" to each of these questions, I have work to do. And so, it seems to me, does the American church. P.S. This review first appeared at [InfluenceMagazine\[dot\]com](http://InfluenceMagazine.com).

I've bought many Kindle books, many of which are languishing in my library with only a couple of chapters read. "Good Faith" is definitely not one of those! I started reading it a couple of days after receiving the download from my pre-release purchase and quickly recognized the encouragement this work will provide Christians who are frustrated trying to carry out God's mission in a culture that seems to be increasingly disinterested or, worse, antagonist. It's a message faithfully conveyed by Kinnaman and Lyons. They provide that message with a challenging combination of head and heart thinking. They take the hard, statistical data generated by exhaustive Barna Group research on faith and culture and explain it in understandable terms. They combine this with inspiring, yet practical, application that will give Christians confidence in sharing a faith we love so dearly. It's, of course, not a substitute for the Bible, but it compliments it nicely. Preachers can preach from it, Bible classes can study it, small groups can share it. Yes, it's that good!

Good Faith is a much needed addition to the many books being published about how to be a faithful Christian in our cultural moment. Some of these types of books are better than others and Good Faith may be the best along with Jesus Outside the Lines by Scott Sauls. Strengths: The research from Barna that is very deep and revealing. The constant note of love and grace that are just as important as truth and orthodoxy. The breadth of issues covered. Weaknesses: The only weakness, if that's even fair, is the brevity of some issues discussed. Of course one could write a whole book on engaging any particular issue, but I would have liked to have seen an appendix with

recommended reading on each topic (racial justice, LGBT people, contextual church ministry, etc.). But overall this is an excellent book that has been published at the perfect time for our cultural moment in America.

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