

A man with glasses and a red polo shirt is speaking at a podium. He is gesturing with his right hand. A large white speech bubble with the words 'table talk' in a stylized font is overlaid on the right side of the image. The background is dark and out of focus.

table talk

8/9/26

"When A Christian Nation Forgets God"

Lutzer's Fifth Thesis: The media often becomes an agent of societal conditioning.

*In a nation that forgets God, the media may be less about "truth" and more about its own "interpretation of truth." When this happens, some truth is omitted or at least distorted in order to change the perception of citizens. When this happens, news more properly becomes "propaganda." Propaganda can be true or false, but propaganda, by definition, does not deal fairly with the truth. I used to listen to a particular commentator who eventually began writing books that I also enjoyed. As time went by, I noticed something that became more unsettling. His claim to fame was that he could prove every story he told was true. The incident or storyline was verifiable. The problem I had was not that he fabricated stories. He didn't. My problem was the way he often interpreted those stories. If you used another phrase or provided more context, you'd find yourself saying: **"Yes, that happened, but it didn't happen that way. Your conclusion is inaccurate."***

I cannot really reduce this chapter from Lutzer's book into a summary fitting this format. Dr. Lutzer is very deep and layered and provides copious examples from both Nazi Germany's records and from struggles in America from some current voices. It seems every network or program has its own agenda, and none of them seem willing to concede graciousness to opposing viewpoints. So, Lutzer's chapter needs to read firsthand. But I will use my allotted space to make some observations and set context.

I want to tell you about two of the most precious people in my life. My respect and affection for them both are beyond words. They are both in Heaven now, but I still will not use their names in order to preserve their dignity and integrity.

One was a relative. The other was as close to family as he could be. My roots with them go back decades, and there is not a day that goes by that they are not sorely missed. The first man was someone I could talk with about anything without fear of judgment or being marginalized.

My political views were shaped in large measure by his own. We didn't always agree, but we usually did. If the difference could not be resolved, it ceased being an issue between us easily enough. Politics was something we enjoyed talking about and actually enjoyed conventions and speeches. Now, here's the strange thing. In the early 90s something changed. My opinion was no longer valued. My interpretation of history carried no weight. Over the course of 3 or 4 years I realized I absolutely could not talk to him about politics - NOT AT ALL!

He would argue over any point, and, if he couldn't win, name-calling was sometimes the only recourse. I wondered for a while if it was dementia, but it went on for months that turned into years. I was baffled until I solved the mystery after consulting with other family members. A new phenomena was taking America by storm - 24-hour news programming. He stayed glued in front of the talking heads. He picked up strange ideas that he'd never held to in his adult life. He was marked by attitudes that I know he hated.

Just a few months before he died we got it worked out between us. He was so sick that he had to move away from the news. But a biased news network had poisoned him as far as I was concerned. They stole something from me they could never replace.

My other example followed the same path. We shared a "truth grid" that was based on Scripture, but over time I saw it was modified to "well, that's not MY truth." Things that he never would have defended were no longer challenged because to hold on to what he previously believed would cause him to disagree with some he loved so dearly. I don't think we ever worked through it before his passing.

None of us understand truth perfectly, but the thoughts I want to leave you with are as follows:

1. Never allow any "false truth" to become "my truth." We believe there is absolute truth, and it is God's Word. I've never seen a time in American history that the Bible is hated as intensely and bitterly as it is now. Loving the truth got Jesus crucified. Stephen's crowd turned on him like a pack of mad dogs. During a difficult political battle, President Lincoln asked an opponent, "If a dog has four legs and calls its tail another leg, then how many legs does the dog have?" The answer given was "five." The President said, "No, it's still four. Truth is funny like that. It doesn't matter how many times you call his tail a leg - it's still a tail."

2. We all probably need to reduce our screen time and spend more time in Scripture and to be shut in with God.

3. Ask God to help you truly love the sinner while truly hating the sin. Human love is quick to compromise and to tolerate evil in order to not offend. Jesus knew that truth might even separate close family members at times.

I love you,
Pastor Stephen