

**First published in Loveland Reporter Herald as Open Forum article 7/25/2025**

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Do you appreciate being deceived by outside influences?

Media, social platforms, and political discourse play an increasingly significant role in shaping public opinion. Two forces emerge at the forefront of this battle: propaganda and truth-sharing. Both aim to influence public perception and behavior, their methods, ethics, and consequences diverge significantly.

Propaganda defined as a systematic effort to manipulate information to influence public opinion or behaviors in a way that creates an alternative reality. When people's perception of reality changes, information, facts, and common sense lose their influence. Its selective presentation of information often emphasizes certain narratives while ignoring or suppressing opposing viewpoints.

A quote often attributed to Hitler, "If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it" is a very real phenomenon. Additionally, the tactics employed at suppressing opposing viewpoints are remarkably effective. The bullying methods commonly employed include shaming, ridiculing, and intimidating. Saul Alinsky, in his book *Rules for Radicals*, promotes that vilifying those who resist is more effective than reason and civility. Experience affirms that direct, personalized criticism and ridicule are cruel but effective.

In contrast, truth-telling encompasses the dissemination of verified information, empowering individuals to make informed decisions.

Where the intentions of propagandists are to manipulate reality, the impact of sharing truth is transformative. Truth serves as a catalyst for informed discourse, fostering understanding, empathy, and cooperation in society. Additionally, truth-sharing encourages accountability and transparency, holding those in power responsible for their actions.

Christians face a unique challenge when a culture values opinion as truth regardless of the facts. Scripture calls believers to adhere to truth and righteousness, making the role of a propagandist particularly incongruent with Christian values. Scripture frequently emphasizes the importance of truth. Jesus Himself declared in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." This profound statement not only positions Jesus as the embodiment of truth but also calls His followers to reflect this truth in all areas of their lives.

Furthermore, John 8:32 states, “And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” In contexts where misinformation is widespread, Christians are advised to maintain and exemplify the commitment to truth as represented by Christ's teachings.

Ephesians 4:15 also urges believers to “speak the truth in love.” This call underscores the responsibility of Christians to communicate honesty with compassion, rather than resorting to manipulation or deceit. Propaganda thrives on fear, division, and distortion—antithetical to the teachings of Christ.

In 2 Timothy 2:15, Paul exhorts Timothy to “do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” This guidance highlights that Christians should strive for accuracy in communication, emphasizing the need to validate claims and information.

Jesus frequently spoke about discernment, emphasizing its importance for followers. He encouraged judging actions rather than appearances, recognizing false prophets, and discerning the times. He also highlighted the need to look inward and examine one's own motivations before judging others. Christians must become experts in discernment to effectively disarm those who seek to manipulate through propaganda.

Today, the choice between buying into propaganda or demanding truth becomes increasingly critical. While propaganda can produce quick results for specific agendas, it often sows discord and confusion. Truth-sharing, though sometimes slower and more difficult in the face of misinformation, cultivates a foundation of trust, awareness, and informed citizenship.

For Christians, I offer three suggestions for staying focused on truth-telling. Begin by demonstrating a commitment to core values and communicating truthfully and lovingly. Second, address issues directly and truthfully, while maintaining respect and consideration for others. Lastly, we must resolve to love Jesus passionately, worshipping the One who embodies truth and love.

By sharing truth instead of propaganda, Christians can fulfill their calling to be examples of integrity and love, following Jesus' teachings.