

Why Must We Speak?

On April 13, 1829, Alexander Campbell walked onto the stage of a 1,200-seat Methodist Church in Cincinnati, Ohio, to debate the well-known socialist and agnostic Robert Owen. This famous encounter lasted for over one week, during which time each man gave at least twenty-five individual speeches in front of standing-room-only crowds. In one of these exchanges, the articulate Campbell is said to have given a twelve-hour speech “explaining the rationale for Christianity.” And people stayed! This is not the only debate Campbell is known to have participated in, but this is the primary one in which he clearly articulated a defense for faith in Christ in a compelling and influential way.

Campbell did not just speak through debate, however. He was arguably the leading voice in seventeenth-century America for what has come to be known as the Restoration Movement. Along with Barton Stone, he led a grassroots movement of independent Christian churches as an itinerant preacher, covering much of the East Coast and Midwest on horseback. He was also a very influential writer as the primary contributor for two publications. For about seven years he published the *Christian Baptist*, but his greatest work in publication came later in life when he edited and published the *Millennial Harbinger* from 1830 to 1863. He also established Bethany College in 1840, serving as both professor and president, adding his voice to the world of Christian education.

Obviously, Campbell made a lasting impact, but most of us are not historical figures nor do we have the opportunities he had. Some of us have an official voice in the church through preaching, teaching, leading or writing, but most Christians never find themselves in front of an audience in the traditional sense. Even if we were all equally gifted as public speakers, there is no longer much interest in debates, and fewer and fewer Americans are attending church regularly, if at all.

Yet this fact remains: as Christians, we are called to speak.

Our times and places in history may vary, and our audiences may not be equal in size, but we are all called to add our voice to the conversation. Why? Because Jesus himself has commissioned each of us to be a witness for his kingdom. And every believer has a faith testimony—a story of how Jesus has made all the difference—compelling us to be his representatives. It’s not someone else’s job to do the talking for Christ. No, in the church, we all speak. We pray that this book challenges and encourages you to join the conversation and helps you identify your voice in the process.

Speaking of voices, there are three that you will hear throughout this book. All the chapter content was written by Mike Baker, while J. K. Jones authored the five daily devotional readings at the end of each chapter. At the back of the book you’ll find a weekly small group

We Speak: Proclaiming Truth in an Age of Talk

Available July 2015

\$16, 189 pages, paperback

978-0-8308-4425-8

“We Speak is a strong call to evangelism, but it’s not about guilt, tracts, or fire and brimstone. This book will remind you that the good news about Jesus is worth telling, but it will also help you know what to say and how to say it.”

— Kyle Idleman, teaching pastor, Southeast Christian Church, Louisville, KY, and author of *Not a Fan*

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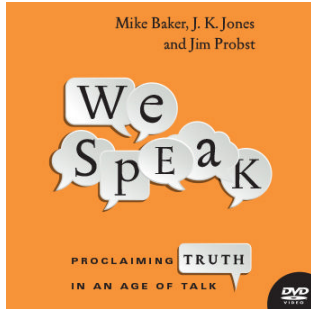
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BOOK EXCERPT



We Speak companion DVD

Available July 2015

\$12, 80 minutes

978-0-8308-4426-5

With seven ten-minute video teachings, this DVD is designed to be an encouragement and support as you identify and add your voice to the chorus.

guide by Jim Probst. You may also want to view the companion videos, which are available separately. These resources are designed to reinforce the themes of the book and to invite you into the conversation.

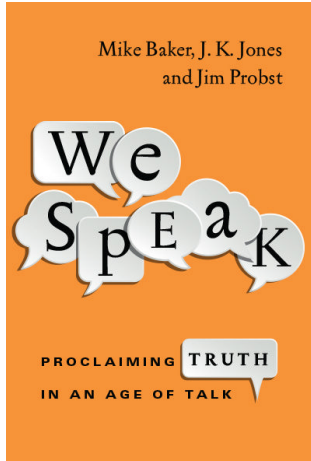
In the next few pages, we will be inspired by the boldness and resolve displayed in the lives of the early believers who claimed they couldn't help but speak. All generations will be motivated to speak, as both young and old will find unique ways to enter the conversation. Along the way, we'll be convicted by some Old Testament lepers who learned that they couldn't keep good news to themselves, and we'll empathize with a powerful prophet who went largely unheard. Surprisingly, we will find that our voices are most powerful when we are weak and that our hope is strengthened in times of intense persecution.

More than anything, we will all be reminded that the church still has a message and that we are the voices that carry it. We are called to speak of

- a God who holds it all together;
- the salvation won through Jesus' death, burial and resurrection;
- the hope of eternal life;
- peace, love, grace and forgiveness; and
- the living Word, Jesus.

We have experienced the Word. His Spirit testifies through us of the Word. Our Savior has commanded us to spread the Word. The world needs the Word now more than ever. And so . . . we speak.

– From the Introduction



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We Will Never Stop Speaking

"This book is not some full-court press to get the reluctant to testify to Jesus. It is a simple reminder of the marriage that took place between his story and our story. Anyone forgiven much will speak much. We speak every day and everywhere because we are persuaded by his love."

— From Week Seven Devotional Readings



Mike Baker is the senior pastor of Eastview Christian Church in Normal, Illinois. Starting as youth pastor, he also served as associate pastor and has been with Eastview since 1995. He is the author of *I AM Revealed*, *Recalculating*, *Freedom in Christ* and *Counsel Fit for a King*. Mike has spoken internationally to over 250,000 students and is president of the 2015 North American Christian Convention. He and his wife Sara have two grown sons.



J. K. Jones is pastor of spiritual formation at Eastview Christian Church in Normal, Illinois. An experienced preacher and teacher who provides spiritual direction to pastors, he studied under Richard Foster and currently leads the Master of Arts in Spiritual Formation program at Lincoln Christian University. He is the author of several books including *Reading with God in Mind*, *Walk: Our Journey Toward Christlikeness* and *What the Monks Can Teach Us*. J. K. and his wife Sue have two grown children and two grandchildren.



Jim Probst is pastor of small groups at Eastview Christian Church in Normal, Illinois. In ministry for over two decades, he has served with Eastview since 2008 where he leads a dynamic small group ministry of approximately 4,000 adults in 370 groups. He is the coauthor of *Ridiculous: Living Like Christ in a Lovestarved World* and *Open: The Life of a Dangerous Witness*. He and his wife Julie have three children.