

# Shouting at specks

*As followers of Jesus, we're called to model a better way*

Kelly Rempel  
Senior Editor

Life is loud. I'm a work-at-home mother of two young children with at least one or two extras in the house at any given time throughout the day. I love them, but sometimes I think my head is going to explode. They run. They shout. They demand. And when they're upset...look out. Tempers fly, and I'll be the first to admit that sometimes includes my own.

It's a wonder I can form a coherent sentence.

I'll often find myself playing referee, extolling the merits of using quiet words, of calmly addressing a situation and finding a way to solve problems that doesn't

include throwing toys or hitting your sibling.

Conflict doesn't get any easier with age. Maybe we don't throw Hot Wheels anymore, but we certainly wield words and ideologies with similar power. The culture wars continue to rage. What can one say before it's labeled hate speech? Does anyone have the right to decide when they die or who, if anyone, helps them do it? How do we protect religious freedom? What about same-sex relationships? And just what do evangelicals stand for, anyhow?

Many times shouting overpowers. Just visit the comment section in any mainstream newspaper; anonymity lends itself well to scathing vitriol and furious

rhetoric. It's shocking, really.

As followers of Christ, we're called to a different way. The questions are relevant, and the discussion vital. We're not called to be wishy-washy. We're called to stand firm for what we believe.

But the people—those living the realities for which others wage war—are heart and soul, spirit and flesh. Jesus listened. He heard their stories, their struggles, their fears. He forgave. He healed. He loved. He modeled a better way. How can we do any less?

He saved His judgment for those who would cast the first stone, those who paid more attention to the speck in another's eye than the plank in their own. And many did. Eventually, they turned

on Him. He forgave them then, too.

Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for them. Engage the issues, love the people.

I hope my children learn these lessons well in childhood. Because they're hard ones to learn as an adult, when we're often more predisposed to pick at specks and hurl boulders.

As you read the stories in this month's print edition of *ChristianWeek*, and as you visit us online, we hope you will be inspired to think beyond the pages to the lives behind the headlines. Because every voice matters.

And you can't really hear what they're saying, until the shouting stops.

# My rights, your wrongs

Charles and Charlene Van den Akker  
Special to *ChristianWeek*

Imagine yourself in significant conflict that ends up in a courtroom. You sit at one table; your opponent at another. You'll present your argument to a judge, hoping that you'll win your case.

You know what you've got to do to win. No anger, fear, or tears. Stand straight. Look everyone in the eye. Quote whatever law you can that vaguely supports your position; Most importantly: stay emotionally detached, but occasionally throw in some righteous indignation to make your opponent look more guilty.

You've probably seen this scenario in movies and on TV, but is it also part of your day-to-day family life?

Sadly, this lawyer-like attitude that we'll call a "law-keeper" is

much too common in marriages and families. The law-keeper is the person in the family who insists that everyone follow the rules.

What rules? Whatever rules back up their position. They talk about rules for people, money, politics, religion, or right living. Rules about sports, driving, construction, or how to mow the lawn. Rules about life their way.

A law-keeper's rules are rarely about righteousness; their rules are about control. Some rules are made up, some rules are not-so-common "common sense," and some rules are even available in print. The Bible can be their favourite behavioural rule book of all!

A law-keeping husband might quote "wives, submit to your husbands" (Eph 5:22) to compel his wife to do his bidding, praise him for providing, stop nagging when

he's idle, even perform better and more often in the bedroom.

A law-keeping wife might quote "husbands, love your wives" (Eph 5:25) to make her husband tell her he loves her more often, control his leisure time and take her out instead, or get him to stop criticizing her cooking and cleaning.

A law-keeping parent might quote "children, obey your parents" (Eph 6:1) to make young ones believe that parental or house rules are God's own rules, or "honour your father and mother" (Ex 20:12) later in life to make grown children obey unsolicited advice.

A law-keeping child might quote "fathers, do not provoke your children to anger" to get controlling parents to lay off and let them do what they want, when they want—or face a deliberate teen temper tantrum!

Are these law-keepers right?

Not really. While the biblical underpinnings might be correct,

there's a problem with the law-keeper's heart: it's cold, and they're disconnected from the warmth, closeness and joy of relationship. Their rules (self-centred opinions) are stated to force others to do what they want, and they back it up from somewhere else.

Jesus spoke to law-keepers in the Parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37). Those who strictly kept the law lacked compassion, and left another to suffer, even to die. That's not righteousness; it's self-righteousness.

Remember the courtroom?

What happens when you win the case? You win! You feel great! You're vindicated! You got your justice! Maybe you even get compensated!

But do you still have a relationship with the other person?

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*Charles and Charlene are counselors/life coaches in private practice in Winnipeg, MB. This is part three of a five part series. www.ccssg.com.*



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