

On Rights and Love

We're hearing a lot about rights. Rights to not wear masks, rights to have large gatherings, rights to not curtail our routines. Mostly we hear these things as resistance against the government taking away our rights. The conversation about American's constitutional rights is a valid one, but it's not the right one for this moment in the Veritas community. If this is how we are framing the current COVID situation as Christians, we've missed the point. Being Christlike is not about protecting and retaining our rights but about willingly giving them up for the love of others—others who cannot protect themselves.

Jesus had the right to remain with the Father, being worshiped by the angels and enjoying perfect fellowship in heaven. He gave up those rights to demonstrate his love for us while we were yet sinners and couldn't help ourselves. Paul says that Christians have the right to eat meat offered to idols. He instructs his readers to give up those rights so that others who are weak might not stumble—out of love.

Members in our Veritas are in need of sacrificial love right now. Beloved Veritas students have serious health conditions; beloved Veritas parents are immunosuppressed; beloved Veritas faculty are in high-risk categories. When we ask you, as the Veritas community, to lay down some of your rights, it is for these folks that we do it. We want to be on campus in-person, educating students. We want to do that in ways that keep the above-mentioned students, parents, and teachers healthy.

Let's assume we have two teachers—Mr. Brown and Ms. Farmer—whose age and health conditions put them into high-risk categories. We could use real names here, but we're not. If it is more important to you to not wear a mask than to protect Mr. Brown or Ms. Farmer, you've revealed something about your level of love for them. Here is what you need to know: Veritas has decided that our love for Mr. Brown and Ms. Farmer supersedes your right to be on campus without your mask. If you're a non-masker, you'll need to learn at home.

We are asking you to voluntarily curtail things that you, as an American, have the right to do. We're asking you to do it out of love for your vulnerable neighbor. Consider it a form of fasting, the long-practiced, biblical habit of Christians that helps us practice not getting what we want when we want it. Fast from the movies, from club sports, from inside parties. Fasting is never permanent; it's always for a season. At the end of Christian fasting, there is feasting. That will come. We will again gather on the quad and mingle freely. Until then, we fast.

We know that we will have COVID cases at Veritas throughout the school year. We know that the careful protective measures we take will not prevent all illness. What we'd like to do is minimize it. The fewer the cases at the school, the less likely it is that Mr. Brown or Ms. Farmer will become seriously ill. More of their students will get to be taught by them.

We hope that you decide to lay aside your rights, stay at home more, don your mask, and join us on campus. If not, we will miss you. We hope you miss us enough to reconsider.