

Fran and Jesus on the Job: Politically Incorrect

Presented by Mary Lowman

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Day One

I begin another episode of Fran and Jesus on the Job, my fictional story of a single mom who is learning to let Jesus guide her and use her as an ambassador for him in her working world.

As she is working at her desk, her friend, Louise, a fellow believer, walks into her office and shuts the door behind her. “What is it, Louise?” Fran asks. “What’s happened? You look like you’ve seen a ghost.”

“Fran, have you read this latest memo from the home office? Listen to this,” Louise reads from her phone:

In order to make certain our company provides adequate protection for all of our employees and is compliant with Federal and State guidelines, everyone is required to attend a training session addressing these concerns. These are two-hour sessions, which will be conducted by an outside organization, will focus on our individual responsibility to affirm and respect everyone in our company. Please select the day you can attend and sign up below.

“I have not seen that,” Fran replies. “What do you think it’s all about, Louise?”

“Oh, I know what it’s all about. I talked to Sandra in HR—you’ve met her.”

“Yes, I know her—she is a fellow believer. I like her a lot,” Fran replies.

“Well, she told me this training is to tell us how we are to treat LGBTQ people. She said they are making new policies on how we address them, especially transgender people, and stuff like that,” Louise says with anxiety in her voice.

“I don’t see a big problem with that, Louise. Do you?” Fran says.

“Well, yeah, I do. They’re trying to make us accept what is against our belief—our doctrine. This is the politically correct culture gone amuck, Fran. This is just step one; what will be next?” Louise is truly upset about it.

Fran gives it some thought. “Louise, we already treat them like we treat anyone else, right? So, they’re not going to make us do anything we don’t do already. That’s the way I see it. If they just want us to never discriminate and always treat them with respect, I can agree with that. That’s what I think Jesus would do.”

“You just don’t get it, do you, Fran?” Louise asks with some frustration.

Well, is Louise right? Does Fran just not get it? This should be an interesting discussion.

Day Two

Fran's company is requiring all employees to attend a training session on LGBTQ employees, what their rights are and how they are to be treated.

Fran's good friend, Louise, seems to be very concerned about being required to attend this training, as she thinks it requires her as a Christ-follower to accept beliefs she does not agree with. Fran doesn't feel as strongly as Louise does because as Frans sees it, this training is just about treating LGBTQ people with respect and not discriminating against them—which Fran feels is right. They do it anyway. But Louise feels Fran doesn't see the whole picture.

"Fran," she says, "we have to stand for what we believe and not be intimidated by this culture. Every day you hear about new attacks on our Christian beliefs. They let boys—you know, transgender girls who were boys—compete in women's sports, and that's not fair."

"Well, I understand what you're saying, but that's not really what this training is about, is it?" Fran tries to stay calm.

"Like I said, Fran, this is just step one. If we don't take a stand, who knows what will be next?" And with that, Louise leaves Fran's office.

Whew, Fran thinks, Louise is really upset. I'll call her tonight and talk more. So, that evening after the kids are in bed, Fran calls Louise to continue their conversation. "Louise, I didn't mean to upset you today. Maybe I'm missing something here, but I just don't see the danger in this training."

"Fran, I talked with my friend at church tonight, and she agrees that if we don't take a stand now and let the company know our opposition to this kind of training, it will just keep going. So, I've decided to tell Ben I'm choosing not to go to this training because it is against my beliefs. I know they could fire me for it—who knows? But I think I must do it to stand true for Jesus."

Whoa, Fran thinks to herself. Louise is taking this much more seriously than I am. Is she right? She says, "Louise, can you tell me how you came to that decision? Maybe I'm missing something here."

"You are, Fran—like many other Christians, I think. Our culture is quickly becoming anti-Christian, and if we just sit back and do nothing, before you know it, we'll be told to approve of abortion, same-sex marriage, all the things that are against our Christian beliefs," Louise tells Fran.

It seems Fran and Louise have different takes on this particular training and their responsibility as Christ-followers. What do you think? Should Fran go along with Louise and refuse to go to this training?

Day Three

I doubt if many would disagree we are in the midst of major cultural shifts. And as Christ-followers, we must decide how we navigate these changes. How and when do we draw the line between showing love and compassion for people who have anti-biblical beliefs and lifestyles, and when it's time to take a stand for what the Bible teaches?

That's the dilemma Fran is facing now as her company is requiring attendance at a training session on how to accept and appreciate LGBTQ people on the job. Louise, her good friend who is also a believer, thinks it's time now to take a stand and refuse to attend this training as it goes against her faith.

The two of them are having a somewhat heated discussion about how to respond. In fact, Louise has decided not to attend the training and thinks Fran and every believer in the company should do the same.

“Louise,” Fran says, “have you considered that a decision to refuse to attend the training might be an over-reaction, and that it could backfire on us and make us seem unreasonable and unkind?”

“Fran,” Louise says, “you’re my good friend, but I think you may have been swept up into this politically correct culture without realizing it. You know, this offensive against our Christian beliefs comes on little by little, and we’re just sitting back and doing nothing. Could it be that you’re too concerned about what people will think about you and not concerned enough about how our rights are being taken away.”

Fran responds, “Well, I agree that we need to be courageous and stand for what we believe, but I’m just not making the connection between that and this training the company is planning to do. You see this as part of this slippery slope, I guess, and I don’t,” Fran says.

“Here’s what I think,” Louise says. “This training will require us to deny some of our beliefs, and I’m not willing to do that. That’s how I see it,” Louise says with a final note in her voice.

Fran says. “Maybe we could pray about this and ask for guidance; maybe take a couple of days before we decide—what do you think?”

After a long pause in the conversation, Louise says, “Well, it’s always right to pray, and the training is a month away, so we have time before we have to respond. Okay, when can we pray?”

They decide to get together Friday evening for prayer, and with that they say good night.

Day Four

Fran’s company is requiring employees to attend a training on company policies about LGBTQ employees to make certain they are not discriminated against. Fran and her friend Louise, fellow believers, have differing views as to whether they should refuse to attend this training and take a strong stand for their beliefs, or whether that would be regarded as unkind and un-Christlike.

I’m not suggesting I have the answer to these many issues we face in our post-Christian America, but here are some thoughts to consider. First remember what Jesus said from Mark 8:38.

If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father’s glory with the holy angels (Mark 8:38).

Jesus did not promise popularity for us when we become his disciples. In fact, he promised the opposite. He called his generation—his culture—an *adulterous and sinful* one, so what we face is not unique. It’s always been true that the world is not a friend to Jesus.

The Bible’s teaching on contested issues today, such as abortion, sexuality, or any of our beliefs, is admittedly not always popular. It wasn’t popular in New Testament times either, and the early church repeatedly had to decide if they would “follow Jesus, no turning back” or not. So, if being popular is our goal, we will be swept up into a politically correct world and are likely to compromise in order to be accepted and liked.

Jesus showed no inclination to be politically correct in his day, did he? He was at odds against the religious leaders of his people and said so in direct and very confrontational words. They did not like him, that’s for sure. On the other hand, he showed such incredible grace and love to the worst in their society and was never reluctant to associate with them, eat with them, talk to them, heal them.

Someone has said we must not allow our counter-cultural posture to become anti-cultural. That's the challenge we face. As Christians, we are to be compelled by the love of Christ to extend kindness and friendship to those who disagree with us.

Jesus prayed for us that we would be in this world but not of this world. And as Fran and Louise face this hypothetical decision about the new policies of their company, they need to find that balance and know how Jesus is leading them in this moment.

Day Five

Fran and her friend Louise are facing a decision about some training that is being required by their company concerning new policies on protecting those in the LGBTQ community in the company against discrimination. A long discussion between them has revealed Louise believes they must take a stand and refuse to go to this training, even risking their jobs, if necessary, because a line must be drawn here. Fran thinks this would be perceived as unkind and un-Christlike, and wonders if it is really necessary.

They have decided to postpone any decision until they have prayed about it—together and individually. And so, after a time of prayer on this Friday evening, they are once more united in their love for each other and their desire to always seek to do what is right, whether it is popular or not, and even if it is costly, like, in this case, potentially losing their jobs.

“Well, Louise,” Fran says, “do you still think you should refuse to go to this training?”

“Fran, I think I do but I also think it's time we sought some advice from a pastor or someone who can help us think this through.” On this they agree, and Fran suggests one of their pastors who is a really clear thinker on issues like this. And so, the decision is delayed.

You may be thinking I've taken the easy way out in this episode—to leave this matter hanging without taking one side or the other. But honestly, I believe in this day of political correctness, we will face such decisions more and more as Christ-followers. The real take away from this episode is not to make hasty decisions when those decisions are not totally clear but instead, pray and seek advice. On the other hand, if and when we face very black and white situations which are clearly right or wrong, we have to be prepared to take the unpopular and costly stand.

And another important take away is that as Christians, we always need to be willing to listen to each other and pray with each other, even when we disagree, or especially when we disagree. Jesus said the world will know we are his followers if we love one another. That should always be a high priority.