

Bold Truth in Love: Ryan Bomberger on Abortion, Race, and the Sanctity of Life

Featuring Ryan Bomberger

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TRANSCRIPT

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Welcome back everyone, to the Wisdom and Influence podcast here at Cornerstone University. I'm so thrilled to have Ryan Bomberger with us today. He's the founder and leader of the Radiance Foundation. He's one of our national President's Fellows here at Cornerstone University, and I've heard Ryan speak before. He's been on our campus before, and I think you will be thrilled at what he's doing nationally for the Lord and here on our campus. Ryan, welcome. Thank you for being with us.

Ryan Bomberger: Hey, it's great to be here, and especially at a place that actually has the Bible as its foundation. I mean, you would think Christian university, that would be a given, but not always a given. So it's great to be here at a place that just preaches and teaches Jesus.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Thank you, Ryan. You know, one of our taglines is being bold. Bold, Christ-centered, influential. And when I think about the work that you have been doing for so many years, and one of the things I have not mentioned, you're an Emmy award-winning graphic designer, artist, and creative. And when I've seen some of your artwork and media, it's bold. It's beautiful. Christ calls us to be excellent, we need to be excellent, but it's bold. It's powerful. It's influential. So share with us just the importance of boldness today, right? There are a lot of people who are bold about all kinds of things. Some are not. But talk to us about boldness as a virtue for us as Christians in today's society.

Ryan Bomberger: Well, 1 Corinthians 16:13, 14 tells to be bold, to be courageous, and do everything with love, which is not an easy order, especially in a culture that despises you so much. But as someone who's worked in the ad agency world for so long creating campaigns for things I could have cared less about, but it was refining my skills so that I was able to do what my wife Bethany and I do through the Radiance Foundation. People respond to design, whether visual design or sonic design. I used to be in radio for years, so I also do a lot of audio work as well. So in fact, if you go to radiance.life, you'll see a lot of the jingles that we have with our promos. But people respond that way. And the challenge is as a creative to figure out, okay, what resonates with people? And mediocrity doesn't resonate with people. And for us, we just figured, as a fledgling 501(c)(3), why don't we take on two of the easiest topics possible? We'll take on race and abortion. Talk about being bold. In the South, we were based in Atlanta at the time, and we decided to actually take on Planned Parenthood. We launched a billboard campaign, 60 billboards that said, "Black children are an endangered species. TooManyAbort.com," calling out the history and the present racism of Planned Parenthood, calling out the American eugenics movement, and calling men to greater responsibility. My gosh, the response was unbelievable. But it's amazing what

happens when you are bold, that you can stir things up. And our motivation, of course, is not just to — some people like the shock and awe, but we're motivated by — it's not just disruption. No, no, no, no. Right? 'Cause people always talk about being a disruptor. No, we're motivated by love. 1 Corinthians 13:6 says, "Love does not delight in evil, but it rejoices in the truth." So we want to rejoice boldly in the truth, and we try to do that with our unconventional designs.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You know, there's a beautiful scripture in Proverbs when Solomon, the father's telling the son, "Don't let truth and mercy forsake you. Bind them with you." And I've always thought about the balance of the importance of both. It's not just one or the other. You have to — truth, mercy, truth, grace — go with those together whatever you do. And so share with us a highlight, maybe even recent or past, of both of those and the importance of the boldness part, sort of bringing truth and mercy to the market, right, to the cultural conversations. Because, as you know, so many times Christians are pegged as haters. You're haters. You must hate, right? But the importance of truth and mercy to redeem and transform and love together, so talk to us about that and what you — and the work you're doing.

Ryan Bomberger: Well, part of the work that we do is fundamentally about the issue of life, because without life, nothing else matters. But we address a myriad of culture-shaping issues — abortion, adoption, fatherlessness, racism. Racism in particular is a difficult issue to address with just truth. You have to have that balance of truth and mercy, especially in a culture that constantly wants to pretend, like for instance, with the anti-racism movement. It gives it a cloak of religiosity, a little touch of Christianity, although no scriptures typically. And so one of our initiatives is called One Human Race, where we have addressed the whole issue of race, and you know, Acts 17:26, "From one blood God has created us all." As someone who is mixed, I'm a mixture of all kinds of things — white, Black, British, Irish, German, Spanish, Portuguese, and Nigerian. More Native American than Elizabeth Warren. And just a very small percentage of Asian. But it's because of that mixture that we want to bring true reconciliation. And so when addressing the issue and the sin of racism, there has to be that balance of truth and mercy. We do the same thing with abortion when we expose Planned Parenthood and expose the industry, but always compassionate toward the individual, particularly those who are post-abortive. It is always this delicate balance of truth and mercy. But that's our heart because we want redemption, we want restoration.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah. You know, you just spoke to our students, our President's Fellows, this morning. There are about 25 students there, and a lot of questions during your talk and even afterwards, and just great — I could see heads bobbing and it was powerful. Thank you for ministering to our students this morning, and you'll do so in chapel today. But one of the things we're discussing you talked about was, you know, calling abortion what it is, right? And one of the things I've seen in the church, even among what I'll call educated Christians, is how easy it is for Christians to almost depersonalize the baby. It's a fetus. Right? It's this entity, this thing, but not a human, not woven in the womb, and I've been shocked to hear even Christians talk about, well, the fetus in the — the fetus. Now I always think —

Ryan Bomberger: That's such a weird word to me. It's a baby. It's a human being that God knows.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Right. So talk to us about the small ways in which sometimes the darkness in the culture can creep into the everyday hum of life, and what we need to do to be aware, to be vigilant, to be sober about these things.

Ryan Bomberger: Well, it kind of reminds me of Ephesians 4:14, where we're told to not be tossed to and fro by every new wind of teaching. To not be tricked by lies so clever they sound like the truth. And how about not being tricked by the language, the euphemisms that we use to mask evil, to mask sin? I mean, fetus, of course, we all know is Latin for offspring, and what is the offspring of humans? Human. So it's ridiculous when the church justifies in all kinds of ways the violence of abortion when we should

be the first ones to rush in to protect those. I mean, Proverbs 31:8-9 says, "Be a voice for the voiceless, ensure justice for those being crushed," and in our society, literally being crushed. But yet we have so many churches, "Oh, it's nuanced." You know what? You could say that about anything, and then you can avoid our call to actually address sin and call it out for what it is, and love people enough to speak about that sin so they can be set free. Not by us, but through Christ. And so it's a shame that you hear the church adopting the language of the world so much of the time.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You know, Christianity Today, I think it was last month's issue, there was an article where someone was speaking about how oftentimes in universities today — and we're a Christian university — but how many times doubt has become a virtue we talk about. And I've been amazed over 30 years almost in higher education how easy it is for Christian universities to enshrine doubt as a virtue, as an intellectual virtue. It's shocking. For hundreds and hundreds of years that was never the case, and all of a sudden doubt is a virtue, right? And so, you know, in this conversation you talk about nuance. There's a lot of conversations where people speak about the doubt, uncertainty, the doubt, the question, and it's okay to live there. And yet the Scripture talks about how the truth of God will set us free and how truth breaks these things up. So share with us, for those listeners here on our podcast who think about, they're struggling with doubt and uncertainty about these kinds of things. You spoke to our students this morning about rape. The evils of rape. But also the evils of abortion and all these things. Even using the word evil now. Right? You know that. You've seen higher education with presidents unable to say something is evil. Right? So talk with us. Help us to think through how do we break this doubt thing. Is it really a knowledge gap? Is it a fear? How do we overcome that? How do our listeners grapple with that with their own families, with their own young people who are fed doubt, doubt, doubt?

Ryan Bomberger: Well, that's the bizarre thing for Christians because there are things that we know are certain. We have confidence in knowing, for us, for instance, the word of God is true. If we have no confidence in that, then what is our faith? It's absolutely nothing. But you have this movement, for instance, of deconstructionism. Some people want to deconstruct their faith. They didn't construct it in the first place on the right thing, so that's why they're deconstructing. But yet, doubt is almost idolized. Like, I have more doubt than you have doubt. Or let's use the example of trauma, for instance. We're in a place where we almost worship trauma, and as Christians, we work to reduce or eliminate trauma, but trauma should be a reference point, not a resting place. Not a destination almost. And so you have the church constantly in doubt, in doubt, in doubt, but yet we are the ones who are called to have an answer for these questions. And I believe that that applies to some of the temporal stuff, but certainly to the eternal stuff. We don't have room for all this wishy-washy doubt. I mean, it's gotten so ridiculous. We don't even know, well, actually, are there only two genders? I mean, really, we can just go to Genesis 1:27. We can see God created us male and female, but it's the doubt that allows sin to creep in in ways that they want to cast it as compassionate. No, not being certain of truth is not exactly a compassionate approach, and it's so sad because so many people are desperate, desperate to be set free, and so many are just spending their time wallowing in this doubt and in this confusion, when if they actually relied on the word of God and they actually spoke that truth in love, it would give people an opportunity to be set free.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Now, you and your wife have worked on a number of books and I really appreciate the children's books. He Is He, She Is She. And the entire gender issue that's happening, you know, and that's touched so many families in our country. It's a very serious — not complicated issue, but a very serious nuanced issue because it involves emotions and feelings and relationships and so on. But share with us, how do families handle those kinds of things? Those are complicated issues. I've talked to many families who say, "I need to support my son or daughter no matter what." Right? And I've

had very complicated conversations. It's touched our family, and we've had to make very biblical choices with truth and love, but truth and Christ at the center to ensure that we honor Jesus, we honor what is good, and yet we also have the compassion of Christ to bring, by God's grace, help lead people to Him. But how do people work through that? And tell me how those books have been received and how they're tools for those conversations.

Ryan Bomberger: Well, those books were born out of our experience living in Loudoun County, Virginia, which has been ground zero for school boards gone wild. My wife's a teacher by profession, and so her heart is children's lit. And it's amazing the truths that you can powerfully communicate through these children's books, not just to two-year-olds and five-year-olds, but actually up through middle school. But they've been received incredibly well. I mean, people — it's amazing that sometimes people just don't know how to frame something. Particularly Christians sometimes don't know how to frame something. They're like, "Thank you for this tool because I now know how to address these issues." Not only do our books, *He Is He* and *She Is She*, address gender, and it's an age-appropriate thing for kids, but on the website, like sheisshe.org or heishe.org, there are further resources that parents can dig deeper. For instance, with teens who may be experiencing gender dysphoria or may be experiencing the receiving end of all the propaganda from Hollywood and from public schools and even some churches. But there are great resources. There are apologetics resources. There are medical resources for them to actually get to the root of these issues. And if we don't have confidence in what the word of God says, that He has created us male and female, when we say, "I'm just going to support them for whatever they're going to go through," well, you wouldn't take that same approach with drug addiction, for instance. 'Cause you understand that drug addiction is destroying them, and so is the lie, whatever it may be. A lie about race, a lie about gender, a lie about who we are created to be. We can't just support the child no matter the direction it takes them. We actually need to direct where that goes, and that goes to the redemption and the salvation of Christ who can redeem all things. I love the fact that parents are thanking us. Not just parents, but adults. Kids love the book. It's just such common sense. You wouldn't think you would need that, but in 2025, apparently you need a reminder of this.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah. It's not just common sense — I mean, it's not just biology. It's not just the Bible. It's common sense. You know, you spoke about framing the issue, and maybe you can share with us and our listeners on how you learn to do that. It takes time to figure that out. How do you frame the issue for Christians, for those who are not, for those who are seeking, for those who are antagonists? There's a science, but an art to it. I'm always mindful of the word in Acts when we're told the Holy Spirit will give you the right words. Don't even — you know, when you get to the tribunal and you're on trial, He will give you those words. So it has to be Spirit-filled. But also, we have to use what God gives to us. So what was the journey like learning how to frame the issue? You think about the billboards you mentioned. I mean, those are powerful. Seven words or less powerful. So how did you learn to frame, and what advice would you give to our listeners about here's how you frame these issues with wisdom, with influence, with truth, with mercy?

Ryan Bomberger: Part of it is just actually putting yourself in situations in serving. I worked on a lot of urban ministries for years and years, and so it's the way that you perceive the world around you, the way that you receive it. So it's that part. It's also some of the training in graphic design, working in the ad agency world, loving words. I mean, words are powerful — they're revolutionary. I mean, God spoke the world into existence, so because my mom gave me a love for reading and a love for words, I've always tried to wordsmith things to try to say things differently, and I understand that one size never fits all. So you have to do the work of understanding the context of an issue, which I think that's important. I consider myself a factivist. My wife and I are factivists. And we're all about context, 'cause context brings clarity. And when you have that — and honestly, divine downloads, so when God's given you a

particular gift or a talent and you're pursuing that gift or talent, he's going to equip you to be able to do these things. So I just thank God for the downloads. But I love that challenge of trying to take really complicated things and kind of distill them down to something simpler that actually just resonates with somebody's heart, and we've found success over and over again through the Radiance Foundation in the way that we convey these things. I can't tell you how many people have written to us, have called us, have told us in person, "I didn't know how to talk about that issue. But you gave me the words." And so it is a process. It's from our own professional backgrounds, but it's also because of our passion for people and loving people. How can we break through this? And so you just keep trying. Sometimes you have iterations like, "Mm, that's not going to work." And I do like a little bit of sarcasm. I will — honestly, there's sometimes Bethany will say, "Well, maybe you don't want to say it quite like that." So there is some filter — so there are multiple drafts there can be sometimes. But it is because our love for God, and when you love God, that natural outflow is loving people. And so trying to figure out how to frame things, how to message things, it's a passion of ours, because we love people enough to speak the truth so that they can experience the freedom that only Christ gives. And so we keep on endeavoring to take all these crazy, heavy cultural issues and sometimes, 'cause we have very short attention spans in our society, and you got everybody scrolling for a second, you only have a moment. And so we just thank God for those moments that we're able to break through.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Yeah. You know, one of the things that — my son, who shares a lot with us about his high school experience, he goes to a secular school, public school, and he said, "All of my friends come from broken homes." And he tells us this, almost every single one. And he had a friend over just this past weekend, and this friend said to him afterwards, "You're the first family I've met that's not divorced." Senior in high school, almost 18. All they know is broken homes. And my wife and I have just — it made us sober up and pause at the significant amount of familial breakdowns and dysfunctions in the church, outside of the church, and all of these things. So that's the context of the question I want to ask you. One of the things I've noticed about your work, even how you present yourself, there's always beauty there. Right? There's always beauty in the pictures, in the family, in the activity, in the colors, and all that. And I've always thought beauty's such a powerful thing. Thomas Aquinas talked about beauty being more powerful than arguments, right? So share with us about the importance of beauty in your work, in how you do it, how you communicate it, and how we need to be thinking about incorporating that in powerful ways that lead to powerful conversations.

Ryan Bomberger: You know, I guess it comes down to when you think of, like, Psalm 139, how we are fearfully and wonderfully made, when you're looking at life through that filter, you act and react to people differently because you see them as image-bearers of God who have equal and inherent worth. And so it's easy, for instance, in our culture, where you can just — you can be speaking the truth, but it can be really harsh, or you say things that are demeaning, name-calling, and all that kind — that stuff's easy. The hard stuff is trying to figure out, "Okay, how can I speak to someone's brokenness? How can I speak to their desperate situation and still uphold their dignity?" And so that's been our goal through the Radiance Foundation, is creating these beautiful projects, creating this beautiful messaging. One of our initiatives is called Adopted and Loved. It's actually part of our initiative that also has a fund, Adopted and Loved Fund. And capturing — it's amazing, 'cause adoption happens because of brokenness, because of some really ugly situations, but yet it is so beautifully redemptive. And trying to convey that visually. We have these projects with the families that have received the grants. We capture their stories, and they're just so beautiful. And it's amazing how it touches people, not just people who think about adoption or are adoptive parents, but because of the beauty of that project, people are moved. In my presentations, I'll never forget, I was speaking at a pregnancy center gala, and had a former military man come up to me, and he was, I think, in his late 70s, and he just came up and he just hugged me really hard and just kept squeezing me. And I could feel him shaking. Then I'm not going to lie, I —

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: You start shaking too.

Ryan Bomberger: Yes, 'cause I'm a sappy sort of guy. So I'm crying, and he said, "I always thought — 'cause you mentioned you were conceived in rape but adopted in love, and I always wrote off those conceived in rape, and you completely changed my heart on that." It's because of the beauty that he saw in those visual presentations, which is why I love doing the multimedia presentations, 'cause it's a way of being able to convey that kind of beauty. But that's our approach. We want to capture people with that beauty and bring them, and point them, of course, vertically to Christ. But that's really our heart. And that should be the outflow when you love people, that you want to reach them with beauty, and that constant tension. Like, there's so much that we need to say, and we need to be bold. We need to be truthful. But we try to kind of balance all those things with the work that we do through the Radiance Foundation.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Ryan, you know, we think about some of the things that have happened in our country. Here's 2025, right? April 2025. And there's a sense that I gather from the culture that many think we're shifting in a particular direction, and it's a good direction. And one of the concerns I've always had is as Christians, we have to be mindful that it's the Lord and the gospel and the Spirit of God that change hearts. Right? Even if the culture's shifting or the politics is shifting, regardless of what direction it is, that Romans 1:16, the gospel — I am not ashamed of the gospel of God. It is the power of God, right, to transform and to change. So share that with our listeners. It's, you know, keeping in mind the importance of human action. We're responsible to act. Right? We just can't sit down. We have to act. We have to speak. We have to be involved. We have to do beautiful things, pursuing truth, beauty, and goodness for the Lord, but also the importance of the gospel and prayer, that spiritual dimension that should undergird this. So talk to us about that in your work and what advice do you have for our listeners and those who are watching about the importance of really bathing things in prayer and the Spirit and the Word.

Ryan Bomberger: Prayer is everything. I mean, it's our lifeline to God. It is how we understand, better understand the world around us. It's how we see change happen, the miraculous happen, even in a landscape where politically it looks impossible, but it doesn't matter because what matters is what's going on spiritually. And that's why, as Christians, we can't rely on what's happening currently in this temporal space with politics, 'cause politics is not our salvation, Jesus is. And so when the church acts like the church should act, and that is relying on the word of God to bring about transformation, then we'll transform politics, we'll transform business, we'll transform all these different institutions, as long as we're faithful to the word of God. People sometimes get so caught up like, "Oh look, things are more conservative now," or whatever, but that doesn't equate to they're more biblical. Let's focus on the stuff that's eternal, and then we can really affect the stuff that's temporal. And so I want to encourage people, pray first, pray in the middle, pray at the end. Pray all the time, because I mean, I think of our organization. When Bethany and I started this organization, we didn't know nothing about running a nonprofit. We had no money. I mean, we had to pray. We had no idea where God was going to lead us, and prayer has opened up door after door after door of speaking, whether it's through Fox News or whether it's through ABC News or whether it's in Harvard or Princeton or University of Notre Dame. He has opened up these doors, but our focus has been on, "Okay God, what are you calling us to do? How are you calling us to reach people with the truth?" And that's our focus, 'cause the other stuff that's temporary, that disappears tomorrow, that is trending now but won't be trending tomorrow — the word of God should always be trending as Christians, and that's the only thing that matters. And I think when you keep that focus and when you understand how you can pour yourself into being that ambassador for Christ, 'cause that's wherever you are, in your workplace, church, in your home, that that is your full-time job. You actually never get off that role of being an ambassador for Christ, and the way that you

carry that out is really important. And that's why I love the fact that we've been able to do what we're doing simply because we're like, "God — we can't. First of all, all this is impossible without you. We can't do this without your guidance, without your wisdom." And so that's always — and Bethany loves having our prayer intercessory team because we know that that is our foundation. And we're Holy Spirit driven. I mean, we wouldn't do what we do without the Holy Spirit. I mean, I can't even imagine accomplishing the things that we've been able to accomplish, and this is not patting ourselves on the back. This is saying, "God, thank you for the opportunities to be used by you." But the Holy Spirit has been guiding us step after step after step after sorrow, after triumph, after trial, whatever we have been carried through, over and over again.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Tell us what's next for you. You've got Adopted and Loved. We saw the video this morning. It was powerful. A little bit of your story, and it was beautiful. So what's on the horizon for you and your spouse, your wife, and the Radiance Foundation? Tell us.

Ryan Bomberger: Well, we're going to continue with our children's books. We have a new book on adoption that's coming out, hopefully this year, and maybe next year, another one on identity, or self-perception, which is something that was born years ago, and we'll finally see the light of day soon. So the children's books are a huge part. I'm also working on, for next year, my own story — basically should have been aborted, and writing that book so that people can understand this God-breathed story. And only God could be credited with how my life has been up to this point. We're also going to expand our Adopted and Loved initiative and our Adopted and Loved Fund because we want more Christian families to consider adoption, and we want to be able to take away the burden of the expenses, which is why we issue these large grants. So we're going to continue to grow that. And honestly, again, because we are led by the Holy Spirit, there are some things that happen that are reactive, and we're going to respond the way that we need to respond. And just pray that God's Holy Spirit leads us into whatever the next project is, the next initiative is. But we're really passionate about continuing to frame these discussions and to do that with truth and beauty.

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Ryan, I want to give you the last word here. So, you know, for our audience members, for our college students here at Cornerstone University, what advice, what wisdom would you share with them about wisdom and influence in their life for the cause of Christ as we think about a future that the Lord knows but we don't, right? What would you say?

Ryan Bomberger: I would say, look, if you love Jesus, you're going to rely on him to lead you. And there are a lot of times when we just have fears. We have fear, I don't know what my future's going to look like. Just take the hour, take the day and understand, look, God, I'm giving you my day. I don't know what tomorrow's going to look like. I don't know what next year is going to look like, but keep pursuing God's calling in your life. Sometimes we feel like I don't hear him. We're not attuned to his voice, that sometimes we miss that. And so I just want to encourage you — I mean, he gives us wisdom for every day. I mean, he is our daily bread, right? And I just want to encourage these students to understand that we too often have this complex of, wait, I gotta plan this all out. God's got it. God's got it, and you just have to have faith and reliance on the God who created you, who knit you together in your mother's womb. In Jeremiah 1:5 says, "I knew you before I created you." So if he knew you before you were even created in the womb, he's going to know what your future's going to look like. And as Jeremiah 29:11, I believe, "He's going to give you a future and a hope."

Gerson Moreno-Riaño: Ryan, thank you so much for being with us. It's wonderful to have you. Thank you so much for all you do, and thank you for being here at Cornerstone.

Ryan Bomberger: Thank you, Ryan.

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