

Dear NCFCA Affiliate Families,

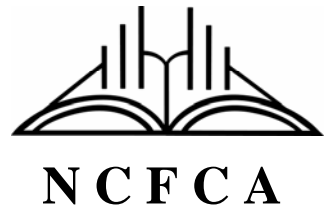
As one might expect from the works of wisdom literature in Scripture, Ecclesiastes has much to say about our human experience lived out before a sovereign God and Creator. Set in the context of worshipping God, Ecclesiastes 5:2 has particular wisdom for our families in the area of communication. “Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; Therefore let your words be few.” This verse should clearly teach us that we should guard our words and our communication with others, since even “private communication” is done in the sight of God. We should be careful about making rash statements which we might regret later, and we should be certain to not use many words when a few will suffice. May God grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to apply these truths in the context of NCFCA speech and debate activities.

One of the questions that frequently comes from league families concerns the debate topic selection process. How are topics chosen? Who gets to decide on the topics? Can affiliates have input in the process? The short answer is that NCFCA maintains a Debate Committee which reviews potential topics and recommends a short list of topics for Board approval. The affiliate families then vote from among several topics to determine the choice for the upcoming season. Any comments from affiliates for potential topics submitted during the year are referred to the Debate Committee for consideration. This short answer is appropriate as far as it goes, but as many veteran coaches and families in the league realize, there is more involved in working with debate topics than might appear at first glance. Several principles are helpful in working with debate topics within NCFCA clubs and tournaments.

First, NCFCA makes a special effort to ensure that no resolution it writes will require a student to advocate a position that would violate his core Christian beliefs. The Debate Committee is made up of Christian debate coaches and leaders who always make it their number one priority to write resolutions that a Christian could debate in good conscience. The review process includes submitting the potential resolutions to the affiliates, and the affiliates ultimately choose the resolutions for the year. In the history of NCFCA, there has not been a resolution that has required a debater to violate his core Christian beliefs.

Second, although the Board of Directors and Debate Committee ensures that no resolution *requires* a debater to violate core Christian doctrines, they obviously cannot prevent individual debaters from trying to take the moral high ground and to back their opponents into a moral corner. The Debate Committee does think through these kinds of moral arguments in advance of the resolution and ensures that there are viable answers that uphold a biblical worldview. NCFCA would like to reassure affiliate families that even with a more difficult topic or an unusual Affirmative case, there are effective arguments upholding a biblical worldview that can answer any moral difficulties that the other team may raise with an NCFCA resolution.

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Coaches should work with their debaters to help them anticipate and respond to these kinds of arguments. Many moral arguments can be defeated on technical grounds. Others can be defeated using creative problem-solving methods. Still other solutions include better evidence of the facts at hand, better reasoning that attacks logical flaws in the opponent's argument, or simply showing how the opponent's argument has no impact in the round. Coaches and debaters should also keep in mind that learning how to handle these kinds of arguments is excellent preparation for the demands of engaging our society in the real-life debates that lie ahead.

Third, NCFCA debate is geared toward high school students and the resolutions reflect subject matter that is appropriate for high school. Since home schooling is a fluid movement often undefined by grades or age alone, the NCFCA age requirements are broad enough to allow parents to use their own discretion about when their child is ready for this high school activity. Each parent should be encouraged to look at the subject matter of the resolution and decide what is appropriate for his child.

Parents, coaches, and tournament directors should also be encouraged to consider younger children who may be either observing or timing debate rounds. Although the majority of debates within NCFCA are quite appropriate for younger audiences, debaters and coaches would do well to consider their full audience before bringing up certain kinds of subject matter or evidence into the round. Evidence and arguments should always be in good taste, and speakers should be sensitive to younger audience members.

NCFCA believes that if parents, coaches, and debaters will keep these three principles in mind, we can all help uphold the NCFCA mission to provide a means for home schooled students to learn and exercise oratorical skills, addressing life issues from a biblical worldview in a manner that glorifies God.

We'll have more league news and information next month.

Grace & Peace,

Mike Larimer