



Volume 61 | Issue 1

Article 117


5-1-2018

T. and Langers' "Winsome persuasion: Christian influence in a post-Christian world" (book review)

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Recommended Citation

Starasta, Leslie (2018) "T. and Langers' "Winsome persuasion: Christian influence in a post-Christian world" (book review)," *The Christian Librarian*: Vol. 61 : Iss. 1 , Article 117.
Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/tcl/vol61/iss1/117>

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Book Reviews



T., & Langer, R. (2016) *Winsome persuasion: Christian influence in a post-Christian world*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press. 190 pp. \$22.00. ISBN 9780830851775

In the recently published *Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in the Post-Christian World*, Tim Muehlhoff, Biola University communication professor, and Richard Langer, Biola University biblical and theological studies professor, expound upon the need for a Christian influence, but most importantly articulate the how to do so in theory and practice. Their combined expertise in communication and theology is perfectly integrated in this timely and important book.

Winsome Persuasion begins by explaining the communication terms used throughout the book, specifically public and counterpublic. After laying the groundwork from a communications perspective, Muehlhoff and Langer tackle how Christian believers can function effectively as a Christian counterpublic. *Winsome Persuasion* emphasizes not only the communication aspect of being a counterpublic, but more importantly how to live out Christian virtues while doing so. Muehlhoff and Langer do not stop at the communication theory but continue with how to develop and hone your message in order to persuade others. In addition to formal spoken and written forms of communication, the authors frequently discuss the use of appropriate use social media in public discourse.

Throughout the book, Muehlhoff and Langer include current examples and historical sketches to illustrate points. Examples come from varying points of the political spectrum and avoid attacking any particular viewpoints. As the purpose of *Winsome Persuasion* is to train Christians to be an effective counterpublic, some examples used may cause the reader discomfort but are instrumental to demonstrate a point. The four historical sketches magnificently demonstrate how the communication theories and strategies described in the book have been successfully used by noted historical figures.

In the final section of the book, Muehlhoff and Langer utilize individual chapters to address a topic being argued today. They effectively demonstrate how to apply the principles and theories espoused in the book. The authors then come together to discuss their viewpoints and demonstrate how varying Christian counterpublics can engage with each other and the public.

Winsome Persuasion is well documented with numerous footnotes which leave no doubt as to the authors' familiarity and expertise with the material. The book is also decidedly Christian as scriptural examples appear right next to academic articles and is used both to illustrate communication theory and to exhort believers to practice Christian virtues while being a counterpublic. Muehlhoff and Langer to not hesitate to remind readers that failure to practice love and compassion will destroy a counterpublic even when effectively constructed.

Winsome Persuasion: Christian Influence in a Post-Christian World is highly recommended for all libraries and definitely belongs in libraries serving Christian higher education institutions as the authors do an excellent job of explaining communications theory and providing examples of Christians appropriately engaging society. This book would also serve as an excellent textbook or recommended reading for communications and political science courses. All Christians who wish to have an effective voice in the public sphere and within any organization should add this book to their reading list.

Reviewer

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