

Signs of Praise: Using Sacred Texts in Public Witness

How to make protest signs that speak truth, hope, and love.

Why We Make Signs

A protest sign is more than cardboard and paint. It's a public prayer. A sign can praise, challenge, or declare truth—and when done with care, it can remind the world that faith still has a pulse.

Our goal: Use sacred words in a way that builds up, not tears down. Make something that could hang in a sanctuary or be photographed at a rally and still honor the people who see it.

The Go High Rule: If you have to dehumanize someone to make your point, it's a fail. Every person carries sacred worth, even when we disagree.

Where to Find Words That Matter

Sacred texts are living language. They breathe through us when we let them speak with humility and imagination. You can draw from:

- Psalms and prophets (lament and justice)
- The Beatitudes and parables (hope and mercy)
- Hymns and prayers (praise and unity)

Ask yourself: Does this verse invite compassion or exclusion? Does it open hearts or close them?

Examples that pair old and new:

- “Let justice roll down like waters” + “Black Lives Matter.”
- “Love your neighbor” + “No one is illegal.”
- “We are fearfully and wonderfully made” + “Trans Lives Are Sacred.”

The Three Kinds of Sacred Signs

1. Praise Signs

Celebrate what is good and holy.

- **Examples:** “Blessed are the peacemakers.” “Glory in the work of repair.”
- **Focus:** Affirmation, gratitude, resilience.

2. Protest Signs

Call out harm and ask for change.

- **Examples:** “Let my people go.” “Repent—the kingdom looks like equity.”
- **Focus:** Moral clarity and courage.

3. Declaration Signs

Claim identity and shared worth.

- **Examples:** “We are fearfully and wonderfully made.” “Love is our commandment.”
 - **Focus:** Dignity and belonging.
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Four Questions for Every Sign

Ask Yourself	Why It Matters
Does this align with love and justice?	Integrity keeps your message holy.
Does it affirm everyone's dignity?	Inclusion is non-negotiable.
Can it be read from 20 feet away?	Clear words travel farther.
Could I hold it in front of someone who disagrees?	Accountability shows strength.

When Faith Goes Wrong

Sometimes people use faith language to harm. That's not holy—it's branding hate with God's name. Watch for these traps:

- **Dehumanizing:** "People like you are animals."
- **Collective blame:** "All [group] are liars."
- **Taunting or threats:** "You'll pay for this."
- **Weaponized scripture:** Using verses to shame or exclude.

If it tears down, humiliates, or scares people, it isn't sacred protest—it's noise.

Rewrite the Message

Turn "fight" language into "beacon" language. Here are a few transformations:

Harmful Message	Better Version	Why It Works
"Go back where you came from."	"Neighbors belong. Love welcomes."	Keeps the truth, drops the hate.
"We will crush you."	"We will out-organize with love."	Strength through compassion.
"God hates [group]."	"God's love is for all."	Reclaims scripture as mercy.
"Keep them out."	"Make room. Love makes room."	Turns fear into hospitality.

Watching the World with Compassion

Once you've made your own sign, keep your eyes open. When you see slogans or headlines that make your heart sink, pause before reacting.

Ask: What truth or fear is being twisted here? How would I reframe it to reflect love, justice, and dignity?

That practice turns outrage into discernment—and helps keep your faith grounded in hope.

Tips for Lettering Your Sign

Before finalizing your design, test it outdoors—step back 10–15 feet and make sure your message is clear, legible, and balanced in natural light.

Good words deserve good design. These simple choices make your message strong and visible:

- **Go big.** Use thick strokes and letters at least three inches high.
 - **Keep it simple.** Five to seven words is the sweet spot.
 - **Contrast counts.** Dark paint on light cardboard or white on black poster board.
 - **All caps sparingly.** Mix upper and lower case for readability.
 - **Plan first.** Sketch with pencil before committing to marker or paint.
 - **Add breathing room.** Leave margins so your message isn't cramped.
 - **Let it shine.** Outline letters or use bold color for emphasis.
 - **Sign the good news.** You can add your initials or church name small at the bottom—it's a quiet act of accountability.
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Phrases to Inspire You

These examples draw from multiple faith traditions to encourage inclusivity and invite you to explore your own sacred sources. Use these sacred lines as a starting point for your own sign. Mix, adapt, or combine them with modern calls to justice.

From the Hebrew Bible / Old Testament

- "Let justice roll down like waters." – Amos 5:24
- "Learn to do good; seek justice." – Isaiah 1:17
- "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly?" – Micah 6:8

From the New Testament

- "Blessed are the peacemakers." – Matthew 5:9
- "Love one another as I have loved you." – John 15:12
- "There is no fear in love." – 1 John 4:18

From the Qur'an

- "Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to God." – Surah 4:135
- "We created you into nations and tribes so that you may know one another." – Surah 49:13

From Other Faiths

- "All beings are one." – Buddhist teaching
- "Truth is high, but higher still is truthful living." – Sikh scripture
- "I am because we are." – Ubuntu proverb

Use these as raw material—shape them into something fresh that fits the moment.

Make It and Share It

Before you start painting, take a moment to explore the Collective Outcry Starter Kit together. It's a simple, free phrase generator from Stoneroller Cooperative, built to help you find words rooted in faith and justice. Try the Show Me a Sign button and see what phrases speak to you.

Once you've found something that resonates—use it, remix it, or let it spark your own words. The goal isn't to copy; it's to connect your voice to a larger chorus of hope.

Scan or visit: stonerollercoop.com/collective-outcry-starter-kit



Final Blessing and Charge

Every faithful protest is an act of creation. When you make your sign, you're joining a long line of believers who turned words into light.

Write clearly.

Speak honestly.

Carry it with love.

Your sign might be the beacon someone needs to keep hope alive.