



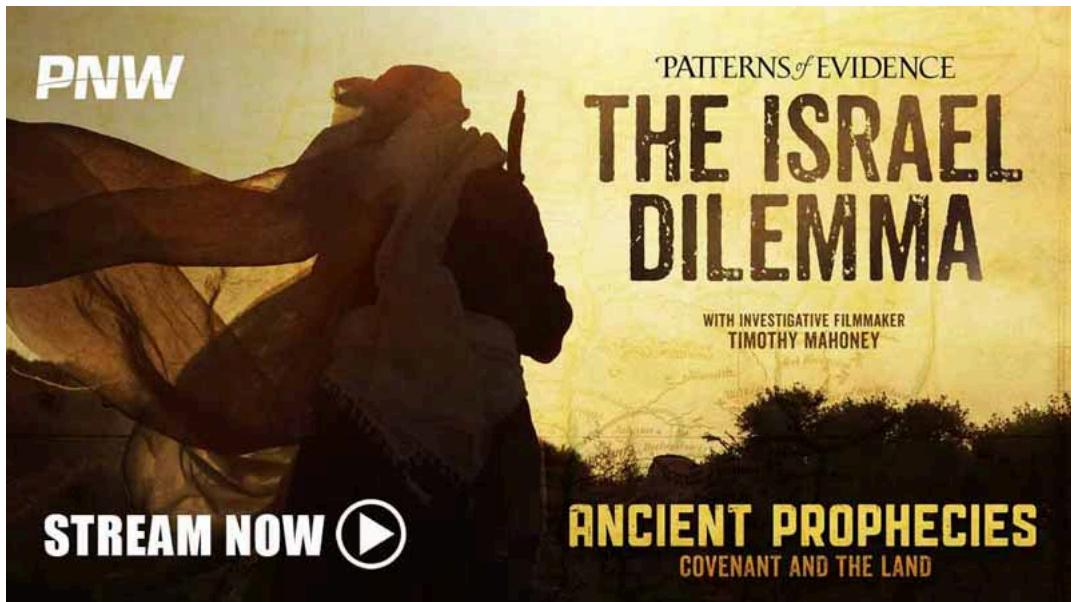
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ARTICLE

Hidden Bibles & Forbidden Heroes: Schools Are Silencing Voices They Don't Like





BY PNW STAFF JANUARY 20, 2026

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Two incidents, separated by more than a thousand miles, reveal a deeply troubling pattern in America's public schools. In Washington state, a school district allegedly buried Christian expression under layers of paperwork and humiliation.

In Kansas, a classroom exercise designed to help children "find their voice" became a lesson in which voices were acceptable--and which were not. Together, these cases expose a growing reality: when faith or unfashionable viewpoints enter the schoolhouse, neutrality often disappears.

In Everett, Washington, the public school district is now facing a federal lawsuit for what civil rights attorneys describe as open hostility toward LifeWise Academy, a Christian nonprofit that provides voluntary, off-campus Bible instruction during released time. The program, which operates nationwide, is fully compliant with long-established Supreme Court precedent. Parents must opt their children in. Instruction occurs off school property. No taxpayer funds are used.

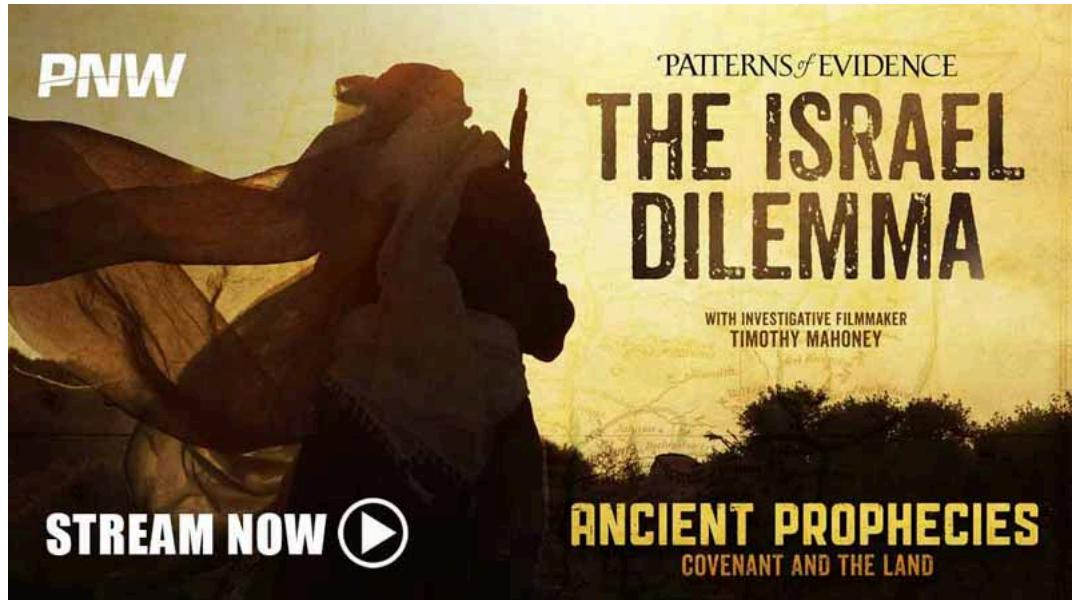
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Yet according to a lawsuit filed December 18 by First Liberty Institute and Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP, Everett Public Schools treated LifeWise as something to be suppressed rather than accommodated. School officials allegedly barred the group from participating in community fairs, prohibited them from placing informational flyers alongside secular organizations, and imposed a uniquely burdensome policy requiring parents to submit new written permission slips every single week.

Most alarming, elementary students participating in LifeWise were reportedly instructed to keep their Bibles and religious materials "sealed in an envelope" and hidden inside their backpacks. The message to children was unmistakable: your faith is something to conceal.

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At Marshall Elementary School, sixth graders participating in a project called "Find Your Voice" were asked to write about their heroes. The assignment, led by guidance counselor Kacey Countryman, was meant to encourage self-expression. Instead, it became an exercise in exclusion.

According to parents interviewed by KWCH, one student named Charlie Kirk as a hero. The teacher reportedly became visibly uncomfortable and told the child that Kirk was not a hero. Another student mentioned President Donald Trump, prompting what parents described as an enraged response. The teacher declared that political figures were not allowed.

Then came the clearest line of all. When a student wrote "Jesus Christ" as a role model, the teacher reportedly said religious figures were also forbidden.

Children went home confused and upset. Parents complained to the school board. Rather than resolving the issue, the situation escalated. The families are now represented by the American Center for Law & Justice, which has filed a federal discrimination complaint with the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education.

According to ACLJ, the school attempted to justify the bans by claiming that allowing discussion of Jesus, Charlie Kirk, or President Trump could create an "unsafe" environment or provoke disagreement.

This rationale should alarm anyone who values education. Disagreement is not danger. Exposure to differing viewpoints is not harm. Suppressing speech because someone might object is what the Supreme Court has long called a "heckler's veto"--and it is unconstitutional.

The situation worsened when, following a supposed apology, Principal Stacy Coulter reportedly addressed the sixth-grade class and instructed students that future concerns should be brought to school officials, not their parents. Multiple students recalled the principal stating that the school should also be considered their family.

That statement alone reveals the heart of the issue. When schools position themselves as moral gatekeepers and discourage parental involvement, education slips into indoctrination.

In both Washington and Kansas, the pattern is the same. Christian expression is treated as a problem to be managed. Unpopular viewpoints are labeled "unsafe." Bureaucracy and authority are used not to educate, but to control.

These are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of an educational culture increasingly uncomfortable with faith, tradition, and dissenting perspectives--especially when voiced by children.

Teaching students how to engage respectfully with ideas they may not share is one of the core purposes of public education. Teaching them to hide their Bibles, censor their heroes, and bypass their parents is not.

This is not about protecting kids. It is about shaping them.

And when schools decide which voices are allowed to be heard, the lesson students learn is clear: speak only what those in power approve.

That is not education.

It is indoctrination.

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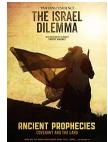
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