

Casualties of the Culture War ... and how healing begins



by Greg Baker

In the early years of World War I, when evening fell upon the battlefield, soldiers from both sides walked across the blood-stained soil, seeking the wounded among the dead, hoping to heal those who could still be saved.

Now is the time to do the same in America's Culture War. My hope is that by tending to the wounded and learning from our scars, we may improve the way we engage the culture and win more hearts to Christ.

Among our bleeding casualties are churches themselves, so shell-shocked by the Culture War they shy away from holding to biblical truths, sometimes even questioning the validity of the Bible itself. And not just churches, but many people who used to be in those churches ... and are no more.

In my work at the Capitol for the past six years, I've witnessed another casualty: Legislator prayer meetings, Bible studies, and worship services have become more and more partisan. Today, many of these events have only Republicans attending. Have we gotten to the point that our elected

officials cannot even come together to worship the Creator of the heavens and earth? Have we become so different?

Worse still is the nation itself, which has become equally divided, drawing God into partisan battle lines, as though conservative and religious were synonymous and as though denying God were a prerequisite to being liberal.

Yet I do not believe one side nor one party is solely to blame.

I see people, on one hand, who have a heart for the "lesser of these," but have been taken captive by an ideology that has blinded them to the Creator who gave them such compassion. The sexual ethic of our day sounds compassionate, yet is so incompatible with God, these well-intentioned people have turned to humanism to justify it. As a result, they have turned from God and now find themselves fighting a cause for the poor and needy they cannot win. Why? Because they no longer see people's spiritual needs, but only the physical, and seek to treat symptoms rather than the true root.

On the other hand, I see people who stand for morality and the rule of law, but in the battle have been captured by moralism and legalism. They cannot be open to admitting their own struggles, and their churches become museums for the righteous rather than hospitals for sick. Rather than fighting Satan, they fight against his prisoners. And too often, the fight drives those very prisoners further from the gospel that would set them free.

And thus, the worst of the casualties is the church's true mission, to proclaim the gospel. For neither humanism nor moralism flow from a biblical worldview, and neither lead to salvation of the lost. Hardened against one another in the Culture War, both sides have adopted a path that leads not to life in Christ, but to death on the battlefield.

In a culture that is walking further away from the Lord and

calling right wrong and wrong right, **the church must find a way to be a voice without sacrificing its mission.** We must find a way to communicate the truth of the Scriptures in a way that is both bold and gracious. This is possible. We can do this, but we must understand what is happening and how the Bible says to handle it.

How the healing begins

In a culture caught in the clash between humanism and moralism, Bible-believing Christians have the opportunity to stand out, to “shine among them like stars in the sky” (Philippians 2:15). **For we know who the true enemy is.** It’s not liberals or gays or Democrats, not lobbyists or Wall Street or “the one percent.” The enemy is the Prince of Lies and the lies he uses to enslave us all.

Yes, we know what sin has done to creation, what it will do to creation, and why it must be called out. Compassion does not allow us to dismiss sin as “OK for you,” for we know how it destroys lives. Yet we also understand all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. And we see how much we all need Jesus.

Our greatest strategy in the Culture War, then, is to proclaim firmly that sin destroys but humbly that we are all sinners in need of grace.

But what of government and the partisan battles that plague it?

The Bible states government has the God-given purpose to punish evil and reward the good (1 Peter 2:14), yet how can the government define good and evil without God? In the Scriptures we see the prophets and kings – in other words, the church and state – have a separate, but working relationship. The state needs the church as a moral compass to guide it.

Yet our relationship with the state cannot end there. The

Bible commands us to honor the king and pray for all those in authority. We must not be quick to rebuke, but quick to pray. Perhaps if we spent as much time praying for our leaders as we do complaining about them, we would have much different results. And perhaps if we didn't slander or disrespect them, they would hear what we had to say. To honor and pray for them is not a biblical recommendation; it is a command.

Yes, false teachers will continue to emerge, and more and more churches will teach what the dying world's itching ears want to hear. Paul teaches us how to approach such times. He commands us to gently instruct our opponents, with patience, and perhaps God will grant them repentance. They are not our enemy, as much as Satan would like us to think they are. They are nothing more than Satan's captives. Our hearts must break for them as Jesus' did. They know not what they do. We must treat them as prisoners of war, rather than enemies. If we do, I believe more victories will be won.

"And the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will" ~ 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

As Christians, we must persevere for the heart of our nation. Souls are at stake, and sin ultimately leads to death. But in so doing, let us challenge one another that we will not disqualify ourselves or become a stumbling block for the gospel. Let's be committed to share how God set us free and how He can free others.

In the meantime, this may be why God has given us split government: so that we can learn to love both sides. **Whoever "they" are on "the other side," they are God's people, and He longs for them to return.** For He desires all men to be saved

and come to repentance ... and so should we.