

The Timeless Voice: Transforming an unhealthy culture

Commentary by Greg Baker

America's hyper-political culture is not healthy. Neither is it functional: As America is torn into opposing factions, the division destroys our government's ability to carry out its God-given purpose. For God instituted government as His instrument of justice, and where government fails, injustice grows.

If our government is going to carry out its God-given purpose, it needs transformation. And it needs it at a cultural, heart-deep level.

Yet there is hope! I believe that if the Church engages government God's way and with the power that only comes from the gospel of Jesus Christ, we can transform the culture – both in Des Moines and in D.C.

For too long we as Christians have been tangled in the web of partisanship, and we have allowed only select issues to form how we view elected officials. This leads to Christians thinking of one party as light and the other darkness, while the culture concludes the Church and even God must be partisan.

When you dig past the select issues, however, you find the light/dark, hero/villain dichotomy is false. Both sides have a desire to better our nation, but different theories on how to get there. Both sides need guidance from the Scriptures on how to face the many challenges confronting our nation.

The false dichotomy also leads us to false assumptions about

the hearts of elected officials themselves. The truth is, some officials are hardened towards discussing the Lord or His Scriptures, while others are open – and we have found that political identification has little effect on who is soft and who is hardened against the Lord. What's more, when you share the Scriptures and God's desire for a personal relationship with them, it is amazing how the most unexpected people open up to discuss matters of faith.

In complicated issues like healthcare, mental health, the foster system, and immigration, one side could not possibly have all the answers. We need to encourage a culture where both sides of the aisle will listen to one another and earnestly search the Scriptures together to learn what God has to say.

We need to encourage a culture where both sides of the aisle will listen to one another and earnestly search the Scriptures together to learn what God has to say.

The Church of Jesus Christ is so much bigger than partisan and ideological battles. The Church is not here to serve any party or candidate. It is here to bring the transformative gospel of Jesus Christ everywhere it goes – *including the halls of government.*

The world left to its own devices will never do this. For America's partisan bickering to end, for righteous legislation to pass, for our government to restore its rightful role of justice, we need the Church to bring the Great Commission to the halls of government. I believe if we lay aside partisan politics and engage government with the gospel and the timeless truths of the Scriptures, we will see partisan walls come down and people of all political parties work together towards biblical justice.

The Church can lead the way in transforming this culture. We can do this by broadly and biblically speaking to many issues,

rather than only a few. We can do this by teaching all people about God's redemptive love, regardless of party. We can do this by building genuine relationships with governing officials that incorporate both the personal and their unique role as a leader in our land.

For the past three years we have been bringing pastors regularly to the Capitol in Des Moines to get to know Iowa's legislators and members of the executive branch. What God has done has been incredible! We have seen partisan walls come down as we work to bring the Scriptures and the gospel to all people, regardless of political party.

We have seen the culture begin to change in Des Moines, and I believe we can see it change in capitol buildings all across this nation. Our nation and our government need it, and the Church holds the power to do it through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" – John 1:5.

Greg Baker is vice president of church engagement for The FAMILY LEADER.