

3 Critical Responses to the Impending Crisis in America

The current crisis of legalized homosexual marriage and the attack against Christian business owners who are standing up for their faith is resulting in a lot of uproar, strong opinions, Facebook and Twitter wars and even confusion and fear for many Christians. Ten years ago the reality of what we are facing today was unthinkable. The thought that a Christian baker would be fined \$135,000 because they refused to provide a cake for a homosexual wedding would have been absolutely nonsensical and unbelievable. Yet this is where we are today.

In 2008, President Obama said, "I believe that marriage is the union between a man and a woman. Now, for me as a Christian—for me—for me as a Christian, it is also a sacred union. God's in the mix."

It's highly doubtful our president really believed what he said in that campaign season. Just seven years later he lights up the White House in rainbow colors and declares:

This ruling will strengthen all of our communities by offering to all loving same-sex couples the dignity of marriage across this great land.

In my second inaugural address, I said that if we are truly created equal, then surely the love we commit to one another must be equal as well. It is gratifying to see that principle enshrined into law by this decision.

This ruling is a victory for Jim Obergefell and the other plaintiffs in the case. It's a victory for gay and lesbian couples who have (waited) so long for their basic civil rights.

This ruling is a victory for America. This decision affirms

what millions of Americans already believe in their hearts. When all Americans are treated as equal, we are all more free.

If President Obama only understood how erroneous that statement was. The result isn't a freer America. It's an imprisoned people who are now validated and locked into an identity that will bring devastation and spiritual death.

The Church Must Respond

All of this is taking place on the church's watch. It's our fault for refusing to do what's necessary to see revival and a spiritual revolution come to America. Our reckless slumber is resulting in millions of people falling deeper into the hopelessness that sin and a Christ-less lifestyle brings.

Pastors, nobody wants to come to our churches anymore when they are devoid of passion, power, depth and a consecration worthy of the King of kings. The answer isn't inviting friends to our church services; it's finding those who are serious enough to contend in tears for a move of God.

We can't be surprised that, as Pastor John Kilpatrick says, "America is now an apostate nation." As with Israel during the time of Gideon who was given into the hand of Midian for seven years, America is experiencing the early stages of judgment—and our response must be quick and fervent.

"The children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, so the Lord gave them into the hands of Midian for seven years. The hands of Midian dominated Israel, and because of Midian the children of Israel made hiding places for themselves in the mountains, caves, and strongholds" (Judg. 6:1-2).

The enemy has escalated his attack against the church in an attempt to completely overtake this culture and to destroy our

provision, overwhelm us with fear and cause us to cower as the roaring lion threatens to devour.

“Whenever Israel would plant crops, the Midianites, Amalekites, and the people from the east would come up against them. Then they would make camp by them and ruin crops of the land all the way to Gaza. They did not leave any provisions behind in Israel—neither sheep, nor cattle, nor donkeys. For they came with their livestock and tents like a swarm of locusts. They and their camels were too numerous to count, and they came into the land to destroy it” (Judg. 6:3-5).

While there are a diversity of reactions that are appropriate, I propose the following three to be non-negotiable:

STEP ONE: Cry out.

In a time of desperation, it's time to cry out.

We must see churches embracing reform and becoming prayer meetings again. Solemn assemblies should start popping up in every city in our nation and every blood-bought Christian should be in attendance. No longer can we offer up the “good excuses” that have crippled the church. Gather together and repent. Pray. Burn. Contend. Cry out.

“Blow the ram's horn in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly. Gather the people, consecrate the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and those nursing at the breast; let the bridegroom leave his room and the bride her chamber. Between the temple porch and the altar, let the priests, ministers of the Lord, weep and say, ‘Have pity upon Your people, and do not make Your heritage a disgrace, a mockery among the nations. Why should they say among the peoples, “Where is their God?”’” (Joel. 2:15-17).

How's that for shutting down excuses? How often do we think it's OK to reject the call to gather and pray because other activities seem to be more demanding? The call is to gather the congregation and the elders. Every Christian, every pastor in the city should be together. But, certainly if the solemn assembly doesn't have child care then moms would be exempt, right? No. Obviously someone who has spent a great deal of time, energy and money preparing for their wedding day would be excused, right? It depends on what's more pressing, I suppose. How serious are we? How desperate is the situation?

I suppose the question is: What must happen in our nation before no excuse is powerful enough to steal our attention from the call to cry out as a church?

Ask yourself an honest question: What is different in your life as a result of the onslaught of the enemy against Christianity and the church? Are you gathering together continually to contend in prayer with other remnant Christians? Are you broken and repentant? Are you waking up every day burning hot with passion for advancing the kingdom? Are you calling for solemn assemblies? Just what is different? Or, are you attending church services just as you always have, focusing on family life, pouring energy into entertainment and saying a nice bedtime prayer?

I want to challenge you to cry out! Embrace such a radical shift in your daily life that people around you are stunned. Become a burning, shining lamp, a blazing, searing force that ignites atmospheres!

The threat of the enemy will only grow more terrifying if the church doesn't discover its end-time purpose.

For Israel the threat was so fearsome that they retreated into hiding in caves. Will the American church wait for that to happen before we repent? Will the church of this nation have to go underground as is the case in China and other nations

where Christianity is forbidden before we lay our American dreams on the altar?

Christianity is already becoming illegal. Christians in business cannot adhere to their faith anymore as they are at risk of bankruptcy inducing government fines as was the case in Oregon:

The Oregon Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) awarded \$60,000 to Laurel Bowman-Cryer and \$75,000 in damages to Rachel Bowman-Cryer for "emotional suffering." "This case is not about a wedding cake or a marriage," the final order read. "It is about a business's refusal to serve someone because of their sexual orientation. Under Oregon law, that is illegal." According to the BOLI, the lesbian couple suffered great angst. One of the women "felt depressed and questioned whether there was something inherently wrong with the sexual orientation she was born with." They said she had "difficulty controlling her emotions and cried a lot."

Apparently if our faith results in someone having difficulty controlling their emotions we are operating our business illegally.

It's time to cry out, church.

"Israel was made weak before Midian and cried out to the Lord" (Judg. 6:6).

STEP TWO: God sends a prophet.

Too often we presume our prayer, our cry, should result in God flipping the switch from bad to good, from crisis to help. This is rarely how it works.

After we rend our hearts and cry out to God he most often

sends clear instructions to us. We need to resolve the issue that resulted in the crisis, and God will grace us and empower us to do so.

“When the children of Israel cried out to the Lord because of Midian, the Lord sent them a prophet who said, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: I brought you up from Egypt and out of that place of slavery” (Judg. 6:7-8).

Through a prophet God encourages the Israelites by reminding them of His faithfulness and His ability to rescue and redeem. Even though they aren't out of the crisis yet, God is so loving that his first reaction is to comfort them—even as they are still suffering and hiding in the caves.

His encouragement then continues, along with a clear indictment:

“I delivered you from the hands of Egypt and all your oppressors. I drove them out from before you and gave you their land. I said to you, ‘I am the Lord your God. Do not worship the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living.’ But you have disobeyed Me” (Judg. 6:9-10).

The reason they were cowering in caves, being plundered by their enemies and fearing annihilation was not because their enemies refused to honor God or to establish laws that are scriptural. It's because they were disobedient. Similarly, we can't point the finger and blame a corrupt, perverse, godless society for our troubles! The legalization of homosexual marriage is the expected outcome in our culture! Don't be shocked. More is coming—unless the church figures things out quickly.

STEP THREE: Obey.

Now is the time to hear God's voice and obey!

"Now the angel of the Lord came and sat under the oak tree in Ophrah belonging to Joash the Abiezrite. Gideon his son was threshing wheat in a winepress to hide it from the Midianites. The angel of the Lord appeared and said to him, 'The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.' Then Gideon said to him, 'O my lord, if the Lord is with us, then why has all this happened to us? Where are all His miracles that our fathers told us about? They said, "Did not the Lord bring us out of Egypt?" Yet now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites'" (Judg. 6:11-13).

Gideon was complaining that things were bad, that things weren't changing, but he didn't realize that he was the reason! It was his fault and the fault of the Israelites that things were bad ... and it was him who must turn things around.

God refused to listen to his complaints. He was done with the excuses. He called Gideon according to his true identity!

"Then the Lord turned to him and said, 'Go in this strength of yours. Save Israel from the control of Midian. Have I not sent you?'" (Judg. 6:14).

It was time for Gideon to obey.

His excuses continued, and God gave him one more striking vote of confidence:

"And he said to Him, 'O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the youngest in my father's house.' Then the Lord said to him, 'But I will be with you, and you will strike the Midianites as one man'" (Judg. 6:15-16).

Gideon proceeded to tear down his father's altar, form a remnant army and advance against the enemy as one man!

This is your calling, friend. You are called to cry out, receive prophetic instruction and obey the command of the Lord as you route the enemy of the church and our nation as one man!

Our call to cry out will have some pretty powerful results. The cry will shift from the people of God to the enemy as they run for their lives:

“The three combat units blew the horns and broke the jars. They held the torches in their left hands and the horns for blowing in their right hands. They called out, ‘A sword for the Lord and for Gideon!’ Every man stood in his place all around the camp, but the men in the camp ran, shouted, and fled” (Judg. 7:20-21).

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