

3 Things the Church Must Do to Survive in This Culture

In November, I will celebrate 50 years of being given the joy and privilege of ministering. It is and always will be the best thing that God could ever have called me to do with my life.

Over the years I've witnessed incredible miracles and walked through challenging wilderness seasons. These mountaintop and valley seasons have taught me a great deal about myself, my God and His kingdom, and they have caused me to grow and stretch in ways I never could have foreseen at the outset of my ministry career. As I look back, it's clear that my most significant lessons could be summed up in these six words of advice:

1. Be bold.
2. Be broken.
3. Be bright.

While studying the life of David and his desire for the presence of God in his life and in the lives of His people, I realized that throughout every battle and conflict, you can find the evidence of boldness, brokenness and brightness in him. These characteristics in David are what I believe made him a man after God's own heart, and they are why God was able to use him to impact the world around him, including his government. They are what will allow you and me to make an impact on our churches, our communities and our nation too.

As I was watching the Senate hearing in Washington this week, my heart was broken for where we are as a country. We are broken, divided and hostile toward each other. The enemy is saying the church is bigoted, racist, and condescending and

that we doubt the Word of God. The devil wants people to believe the church is a thing of the past, so he whispers lies that cause people to question why we would pay attention to something written thousands of years ago. As for believers, even among our ranks there is little evidence of brokenness before the living, mighty, and holy God. There are very few who are willing to humble themselves and repent, or embrace God's love. Each side is flush with boldness but woefully lacking in the other two characteristics that made David so successful.

I am not at all saying the church should step back, stifling its voice in an attempt to find this balance. On the contrary. We cannot take responsibility for the actions and reactions of those with whom we are at odds, but we have a mandate to serve God obediently—and that service requires our boldness and brokenness before Him, even if it makes us uncomfortable.

Although most people who know me today wouldn't easily believe it, I was painfully shy as a child. Because of that shyness, when I was called upon to do bold things, I would cry. But here's the thing: Crying never stopped me. Even when I felt embarrassed of the spotlight or longed to disappear into the background, I knew I couldn't walk away from what I had been called to do, even if stepping out and being boldly obedient would bring painful tears that might make me the subject of ridicule. Before long I realized an important lesson, one I want you to consider today: Through my tears came the greatest breakthroughs of my life.

When our boldness comes out of brokenness before our God, the light of His presence breaks through, allowing the lost world around us to see the brightness of His glory.

The world wants to see Jesus, and right now they are more ready for Him than the church is ready for the world. But God is bringing balance to this area. I believe God is breaking the times of leanness of Spirit, and we get to witness it

firsthand. He is clearing the air of a lot of junk in America. Don't be surprised but rather rejoice when you hear of outpourings of the Holy Spirit. God is birthing Holy Spirit boldness in the church, but it will only come out brokenness and humility. Watch, see, and move by faith as He releases the brightness of His glory.

The church in our nation must step up and show the world who God truly is and what the power of His love can do in our broken world. We must show them who we really are—bold, broken and bright with the love and light of Christ, the morning star.

Here's another way to put it: "You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, MSG). {eoa}

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