

A Body of Politics

Two years ago this month the American church was fracturing. Fueled by unprecedented media frenzy, the presidential race between Barack Obama and John McCain had exposed a splintering Body full of bickering Christian leaders, many of whom spoke as if delivering a word straight from heaven.

Standing in the crossfire were countless conflicted believers who found it difficult to cut through the pulpit politics and loaded prophecies and actually hear God's opinion. Most of us could agree that yes, God is concerned with more than just the issues of abortion and same-sex marriage; but how were we to reconcile that with a single vote?

I wonder what we've learned since that contentious season. I wonder if, two years later, the bride of Christ is any more prepared for her bridegroom. Politics can divide a house, but can it ruin a Body? We know the long-term answer to that is no, and yet here we are in 2010, debating just as vigorously over the hot-button issue of immigration reform.

Charisma was heavily criticized for some of the content we ran during the 2008 election, and I'm sure we'll receive more than a few heated responses to this issue as well. So why bother to stir up the hornet's nest by addressing yet another divisive "political" topic? Three reasons:

1) This isn't politics as usual. As Samuel Rodriguez explains on page 34, immigration reform isn't just a political issue. It's an ethical and spiritual concern for every Christ-follower called to welcome the stranger "as one born among you" (Lev. 19:33-34, NKJV) while simultaneously subjecting to the law (see Rom. 13:1-10). Yet I can't recall another issue in recent years as misunderstood as immigration reform. It's become a buzz phrase few can explain and even fewer know how

to respond to. Yes, it is extremely complex. Unlike abortion and same-sex marriage, the Bible doesn't provide explicit direction for a modern-day solution. But as the church, we must at least commit to stand on solid truth rather than just political rhetoric.

2) This isn't church as usual. If the 2008 election taught the body of Christ nothing else, I hope it made us re-evaluate our stance on politics in general. One of my favorite articles in this issue is "Practically Political" (p. 38), in which Harry Jackson and Brian Zahnd—two brilliant pastors—express two very different viewpoints from the same heart. Albeit with different conclusions, both challenge us to aim for kingdom principles rather than entangle ourselves in a political system gone awry.

3) This isn't life as usual. It's no secret our culture and world are all shifting. If we hope to be a people of light during these darkening times, it's imperative that we know what God is saying on the issues of our day. I believe He's not only speaking through servants such as Rodriguez, Jackson and Zahnd, but He's calling us to a higher purpose of unity amid our different interpretations. This time, let's commit to being one rather than a split party.

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CONTRIBUTING TO THIS ISSUE ...

Although he's not Jewish, most of **Troy Anderson's** heroes—Jesus Christ, Keith Green, Moses, Harrison Ford, Bob Dylan—are. That may explain why this reporter is fascinated with the wave of Jews embracing Yeshua as Messiah.

Longtime *Charisma* contributor **Anahid Schweikert** loves Chinese and Armenian food and folk dancing. She pronounces her Armenian first name *Ah'-nah-heed*, but her German surname is, in her words, "her husband's fault."

Senior pastor of Hope Christian Church in the Washington, D.C., area, Bishop **Harry Jackson** also founded the High Impact Leadership Coalition to empower church leaders to protect America's moral compass and heal the nation.

After a honeymoon in a New Mexico cave, Tents of Mercy founder **Eitan Shishkoff** and his wife, Connie, moved into a cleaned-out cellar, only to find a hibernating rattlesnake. By comparison, their move to Israel was a piece of baklava.