

Has America's Political Division Completely Nullified the Church's Power?

We have just witnessed one of the worst partisan spectacles in history in the Kavanaugh hearings and now are heading into the elections with a bitterly divided electorate.

We Christians have no one to blame but ourselves for this sorry state of affairs.

Over 70 percent of Americans say they are Christian—about 250 million. We are a majority in both major political parties. Yet neither party exhibits Christian character or convictions. How is it that we exercise so little influence in modern American politics?

The answer is division, which dilutes and often nullifies the power of the church. The pope has referred to the “ecumenism of blood,” where our enemies see us as one and persecute Christians all the same without regard for our divisions. Yet we remain divided in the face of our enemies, sending a mixed message to the world and spreading doubt about the gospel (see John 17:23).

This division plays out in the political realm as evangelicals concentrate on evangelism, often ignoring hurting people, while the “liberal” churches focus on social issues without bringing in the life changing power of the gospel. One group wants to fight sin while another wants to ignore it. Because of these divisions hot-button issues like immigration, abortion, same-sex marriage, economic opportunity, law and order, and foreign policy are left to partisan fighting without a clear message from the church. And our freedoms of religion, speech and self-defense are increasingly at risk.

We understand that there will always be different opinions about public policy matters, just like there are differences between denominations. However, the church is called to be the salt and light of society. It must rise above politics to keep the Christian message and hope alive in the public square. This we call transcending politics.

As an example of the transformative power of transcending politics, remember the genuine Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. Up until that point, the church had been divided, with some opposing equal rights for black people. Then a movement led by a black Baptist pastor, Martin Luther King, awakened the church to the need for racial justice. The church captured a majority of Republicans and just enough Democrats to pass the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Today, while we may have some disagreements, no significant Christian denomination is opposed to racial equality. The issues that vex us today can be solved by a united church in the same way.

As Lou Engle has famously said, only a united church can heal a divided nation. Let us then pray that the church can come together in unity to transcend politics and bring healing to our divided nation. {eoa}

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