

How You Can Bring Healing to a Deeply Divided America

The young 25-year-old Methodist revivalist and preacher George Whitefield arrived in America in 1738 with a prayer on his heart that the inhabitants of this new land would “No longer live as 13 divided Colonies but as One Nation under God.” He recognized the deep lines of division and hatred that ran between the various groups, but he was hopeful that he would see those lines erased as he preached the message God had given him for America.

The Deep Divisions of Colonial America

Most do not realize the deep divisions that existed in Colonial America between the Anglicans who settled Virginia, the Puritans who settled New England, the Baptists who settled Rhode Island, the Quakers who settled Pennsylvania and more.

Back home in England, the Anglican Church, as the official state church, had harassed and imprisoned Puritans, Baptists and Quakers, even putting some to death. In Virginia, the Anglicans made their church the “official” church of the colony and jailed Baptist preachers who dared come there to preach. Puritans detested Anglicans because of how they had been treated, but they persecuted both Quakers and Baptists: evicting them from their colony, jailing them and even putting some to death. Baptists and Quakers did not get along and considered Puritans and Anglicans apostate Christians, part of the false, harlot church of Revelation.

It seemed these groups would never reconcile; their history was too long and their pain too deep. But God had an answer: a great spiritual awakening based on the preaching of the gospel wherein Jesus was presented as the central object of faith.

Whitefield Confronts the Divisions

Whitefield had an oratorical gift that attracted thousands to his open-air meetings. In Philadelphia, he preached from the steps of the courthouse to crowds estimated at 10,000-12,000 at a time when the city's population was around 13,000. According to Benjamin Franklin, the impact on the city was transformative. He wrote:

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