

Lawmakers Issue Bold Challenge to Believers Hungry for Change

The call came at the end of a sticky summer day, shortly after U.S. Sen. Tim Scott had returned to his office following dinner with his closest friend in Congress, U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy.

There had been a shooting in Charleston, South Carolina. A white gunman entered a Wednesday-evening Bible study at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a predominantly black congregation, and opened fire. Details were sketchy, but there was little doubt the attack was racially motivated.

U.S. Sen. Tim Scott (left) and U.S. Rep. Trey Gowdy (center) speak with Pastor Jack Graham about their friendship, their faith and their hope for a divided nation.

“I found myself just lost,” Scott recalled when he and Gowdy spoke during Worship Services at Prestonwood on April 22. “In a church where Dylann Roof decided to walk in and start a race war, the first person I thought to call was a white guy from the same state.”

Scott knew that his friend would understand his sense of desperate loss and would be there for him. When Gowdy picked up the phone, he responded exactly as Scott expected.

At Prestonwood, the two men spoke about their friendship, their faith, the divisions facing the nation and the role of the church during a conversation with Pastor Jack Graham.

Though both represent South Carolina as Republican members of Congress, their life histories couldn't seem more different. Gowdy grew up in a prosperous family and became a lawyer and a

prosecutor before running for the House of Representatives.

Scott's parents divorced when he was a child, and his mother worked 16-hour shifts as a nurse's aide to support him. With her constant encouragement, he grew up to become the first African-American to serve his state as both a congressman and a senator since Reconstruction.

But despite their backgrounds, their differences pulled them together. In discussing their new book, *Unified: How Our Unlikely Friendship Gives Us Hope for a Divided Country*, Gowdy and Scott talked about their unity in Congress and in life.

"What joins us together overwhelms what stands against us," Gowdy said. "We just innately go to something we have in common." However, in American politics, he lamented that people tend toward "what divides us."

But as believers in Jesus Christ, the men say that Christians can and must make a difference in America.

"I would challenge the church—let's live out who we are," Scott said. "We are at the forefront of all the good things that can happen in a society—faith, hope and love."

Sen. Scott and Congressman Gowdy sign copies of their book *Unified: How Our Unlikely Friendship Gives Us Hope for a Divided Country*

Politics is a "lagging indicator" of where society is moving, Gowdy said. "But the church can break down cultural barriers, as Christ did. He built bridges, including the bridge between us and His Father. If you're waiting for Washington to solve these problems, you'll be waiting. This has to begin with the church."

And what begins with the church begins in the home, Scott said.

"My mother did an amazing job of understanding that there is

dignity in all work," he said. "She was a tough mother as well. She introduced me to something called a switch.

After the congregation's laughter subsided, Scott shared more about her firm hand. "She taught me the psychology of the switch—you get to pick your own switch," he said.

And for those who'd never felt that sting, Scott described the switch as "a Southern apparatus of encouragement."

Scott said "family is the most important unit in our nation. ... It is the institution that must be protected at all cost."

After his parents' divorce, he said he drifted in all directions for a long time.

"I drifted in *the wrong direction* for a long time," he said. "So I say thank you for a praying mom."