

Let's Unite Around Jesus, Not Divide Over Trump

Have you ever seen American evangelicals this divided? Have you ever seen followers of Jesus so torn apart over politics?

Obviously, during the Civil War era, Christian divisions were even deeper and more pronounced, as believers were literally killing each other over slavery and the actions of President Lincoln.

But in our lifetimes, have we seen such intense feelings, such passionate emotions, such virulent disagreements over politics within the evangelical church?

During the Obama presidency, there were certainly deep differences between Christians who supported his policies and Christians who opposed his policies. But for the most part, those divisions fell along racial lines, with white evangelicals overwhelmingly opposing Obama and black evangelicals overwhelmingly supporting him.

And I doubt that many holiday dinners were disrupted over these divisions or that many people were unfriended on social media because of their political disagreements.

Today, things are different—and I say this without ascribing blame to any particular side or to the president himself. In fact, the last thing on my mind is to ascribe blame.

Instead, I write this to underscore the urgency of the hour and to emphasize why it is so important that we come together as followers of Jesus despite our political divides. (At present, there is even division between Kellyanne Conway, the president's senior counsel, and her husband George over support for Trump.)

Both the pro-Trump evangelicals and the anti-Trump evangelicals can make their cases, and each side can show why it believes it is right. But it's unlikely that, at this juncture, either side will convince the other.

What each of us can do is this.

First, you can sit down with a fellow believer who differs with you and say, "Tell me why you feel the way you do. I really want to understand your point of view."

Hopefully, that will lead to Step 2, in which you ask: "May I share my point of view with you now that I've heard and understood yours?"

If that succeeds, move on to point three, which is the one that really matters.

You can say, "Now that we understand our differences, can we agree that America is hurting and that we, as followers of Jesus, have the only message that will bring healing? Can we agree that there is no political solution to our nation's greatest problems? Can we agree that if the church is divided, the world will mock? Can we agree that the most important thing is that we unite in our love for the Lord and for our neighbor? Can we agree that the reputation of Jesus is far more important than our political affiliation?"

Jesus said, "By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35).

Can we demonstrate this love across the political divide? Can we demonstrate this love without total agreement on all points? Can we demonstrate this love by talking more about Jesus than about Trump (or Hillary or whoever)?

Shortly before He was crucified, the Lord prayed at length for our unity (see John 17), saying, "I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfect in unity, and that the world may know

that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved me" (John 17:23). What an incredible prayer!

To put it bluntly, it is Satan, the evil one, who wants to divide us (and thereby destroy us) while it is Jesus, our Savior, who wants to unite us (and thereby bless us). To whose voice are we listening? Whose promptings are we following? Whose example are we emulating?

I'm not for a moment suggesting we bury our differences. I'm not advocating some kind of superficial, *Kum ba Yah* unity. Far from it. Personally, I detest such shallow shows. They do more harm than good.

But what I am saying is that, as important as politics may be and as consequential as Trump's presidency certainly is, there are more important, even more consequential matters that deserve our attention.

We recognize this during times of national calamity, like hurricanes or forest fires or floods. We all work together to save lives. We don't see color. We don't see ethnicity. We don't see political affiliations. We see people in need, and we help them. Period.

That is how we need to view our nation today.

America is sinking. America is burning. America is suffering.

We have the answer in the Gospel. We have the answer in the preaching of the cross. We have the answer in the power of the Spirit. We have the answer in the wisdom of the Word. We have the answer in practical, hands-on, demonstrable love. We have the answer in the power of unity. We have the answer in Jesus. And the world desperately needs what we have.

If you are committed to the lordship of Jesus and the authority of Scripture, if you are a born-again follower of the Lamb, I'm willing to stand arm in arm with you to touch

this broken nation, whether you think Trump is our greatest president ever or our worst president ever. I'm willing to put aside our political divisions in order to put Jesus first. Are you willing to do the same with me?

As someone called to offer cultural commentary (in writing and on radio and TV), I plan to continue to address relevant political issues, which means that I plan to comment more on the president in the days ahead (as someone who voted for him, unashamedly, in 2016). And it's very possible that you will take issue with some of what I say.

But why must that challenge our deeper unity? Why must the secondary become the primary, no matter how important the secondary may be?

First is still first, and there's only one person who comes first in that way.

That's why I continue to shout from the rooftops that Donald Trump is my president, not my Savior. It's a positive message meant to unify, not a divisive message meant to provoke.

So, what it will be?

My hand of fellowship is extended, open and ready. How about yours?