

Our Fight for Religious Freedom

Church, beware: God isn't speaking to only Hobby Lobby as the company stands up for Christian rights

When Hobby Lobby opened 40 years ago, I never dreamed we'd someday have more than 21,000 employees in 530-plus stores across 45 states. God continues to bless us beyond what we ever imagined. But I also never dreamed that one day America would be in such moral freefall that our government would mandate family-run businesses like ours to participate in a health-care program that provides abortion-causing drugs. Yet that's exactly what is happening. As I write this, Hobby Lobby remains in a legal fight that not only threatens our financial bottom line with huge potential fines for each day we've refused to comply with this program, but it also threatens one of the core foundations of this nation: our freedom of religion.

It's easy to blame politicians or a liberal agenda for how we got to this point, but the truth is, the American church has missed it. We've been quiet and passive. Over time, we've failed to equip the saints to stand up for the basic freedoms we've been given. Many of us have succumbed to an interpretation of "separation of church and state" our nation's framers never intended, and as a result, our freedoms have been relegated to our right to worship for an hour or two each week.

Rick Warren predicted earlier this year that "the battle to preserve religious liberty for all in all areas of life will likely become the civil rights movement of this decade." I agree, and though believers are already being backed into a corner, we've allowed much of this to happen by not engaging our faith in the marketplace. If Jesus were here today, I

doubt He'd be in the church; He'd be in the marketplace. Yet too many think we can change our culture by remaining within the walls of a church building.

Laws follow culture; culture doesn't follow laws. If we can change the culture, we can change the laws—but we have to change our culture first. At Hobby Lobby, we're trying to be part of that process by first saying we won't be compliant with laws that require us to be against everything we believe. But it's not just Hobby Lobby at stake here; the American church in general is as well.

If God's people are going to take back this nation for His sake, we must truly understand what it means to be followers of Christ everywhere we go. The church must rekindle in every believer a faith that compels us to witness to others about the goodness of Christ and His love for them, and to show them that He is the answer to their problems. America won't turn around until we turn to Jesus for our answers.

Politics is not the answer. The government isn't our answer. God is our answer. The answer to our problems requires us going back to God and letting *Him* lead instead of the government. If there's any hope for our government, it will be via Christians declaring that our foundation is in going to God's Word to define our laws. This is how we began as a nation and, if we hope to once again be a "city on a hill," it's what we must return to. We cannot be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

At Hobby Lobby, much of what we do regarding our faith is intentionally public. We take out full-page ads at Christmas and Easter in 400 large- and small-city newspapers. We have Christian music playing throughout our stores, carry inspirational merchandise and post signs explaining that we're closed on Sundays so our employees can worship with their families. We're trying to shine the light of Christ in the marketplace. As a company and as individuals, we still have

the freedom—by God’s grace and mercy—to tell others about the Good News of Christ.

But I believe the Spirit is currently sounding an alarm. Those who have ears to hear are waking up to what’s happening in our nation. Each of us must do our part to not let this decline go any further—this continuation of our freedoms being eroded.

I’m often asked these days what we’ll do if Hobby Lobby loses its fight against Obamacare. My answer can be seen in the big billboard we’ve bought out that stands across from our corporate offices. On it is a single verse, Daniel 3:17: “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us.”

For our company, the church and our nation ... He is able.

David Green is founder and CEO of Hobby Lobby, the nation’s leading private arts and crafts store that, amid a down economy, has increased its minimum wage five years in a row.