

The Real Reason Donald Trump Is Leading the Polls

Donald Trump is the leading Republican presidential candidate by nearly two-to-one. He is clearly dominating the agenda for tomorrow night's debate. Why?

According to David Brooks, Trump is a product of our cultural chaos. A columnist for *The New York Times*, Brooks is one of the most insightful commentators of our day. I think he's spot-on: "The times are perfect for Donald Trump. He's an outsider, which appeals to the alienated. He's confrontational, which appeals to the frustrated. And, in a unique 21st-century wrinkle, he's a narcissist who thinks he can solve every problem, which appeals to people who in challenging times don't feel confident in their understanding of their surroundings and who crave leaders who seem to be."

Brooks notes that only 29 percent of Americans think the nation is on the right track. Just 3 in 10 Americans believe their views are represented in Washington. He concludes: "Never before have we experienced a moment with so much public alienation and so much private, assertive and fragile self-esteem. Trump is the perfect confluence of these trends. ... He is deeply rooted in the currents of our time."

Popular leaders reflect their times. Transformational leaders redeem them.

In *The Jesus Agenda*, Albert Reyes challenges Christians to be "agents of redemption," people of "courage, compassion and conviction on mission with Jesus to turn what was intended for harm into good." After narrating the stories of Zacchaeus, the Samaritan woman at the well, and the Philippian jailer, he notes that each responded to grace by sharing grace. Zacchaeus made restitution to those he had harmed; the Samaritan woman

brought her village to Jesus; the Philippian jailer led his family to faith. Each became agents of the redemption they experienced.

Years ago, Frederick Buechner taught me that only what happens to us can happen through us. We must experience the gospel before we can give it to others. But Dr. Reyes taught me that the opposite is also true: In giving away the gospel, we experience it more fully ourselves.

Think of the last great movie you saw or book you read. Did you immediately recommend it to others? Why? How did sharing your experience enhance it? The apostle John told his readers, "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1 John 1:4). The more we share Jesus, the more we know Jesus.

Is your faith vibrant and joyful today, or routine and complacent? (Buechner warned, "We are in constant danger of being not actors in the drama of our lives but reactors, to go where the world takes us, to drift with whatever current happens to be running the strongest." To find joy in Jesus, serve Jesus. To experience His love, share His love. To embrace His redemption, be an agent of redemption.

You can reflect your times, or you can choose to redeem them. And you will know the answer to Buechner's question: "Is the truth beyond all truths, beyond the stars, just this: that to live without Him is the real death, that to die with Him the only life?"

Jim Denison, Ph.D., *is founder of the Denison Forum on Truth and Culture, a non-sectarian "think tank" designed to engage contemporary issues with biblical truth. Join over 100,000 who read Dr. Denison's daily Cultural Commentary: . For more information on the Denison Forum, visit . To connect with Dr. Denison in social media, visit or*