

The Time-Tested Prescription to Heal a Divided Nation

Today is an important day—one that dates back to 1863 when the United States was mired in its bloody Civil War. The South seemed to be winning, and our nation looked as if it would not remain united.

Anxiety over America's uncertain future led the U.S. Senate to pass a resolution asking President Abraham Lincoln to appoint a national day of prayer and fasting. President Lincoln designated April 30, 1863 as a national day of prayer and humiliation—the day we now call the National Day of Repentance.

The following July, Union forces defeated Confederate troops in the Battle of Gettysburg, and the tide of war began to change. The North emerged victorious two years later, and the nation was faced with the arduous task of reunification.

While the Union's battlefield success may appear to simply be because of military might, some attribute the Gettysburg victory to the tens of thousands of faithful believers who had fallen on their knees to offer prayers of repentance, confessing the national sin of slavery and racism.

America is again in a dark hour.

A spirit of dissension has taken root in the heart of our nation. Monopoly of opinion, not compromise, is now the only avenue to unity. There is no room anymore for diversity of thought. This absolutist mindset means that anyone who thinks differently must be viewed as an enemy and opposed at every turn. Americans are divided between red and blue, and the political fight has become one of winner-take-all.

Is there any realistic way out of this present darkness?

Repentance.

Just as in 1863, America must repent for its sins for our land to experience healing and renewed unity. The concept was not original to the U.S. Senate of 1863 and President Lincoln, but one outlined in 2 Chronicles 7:14 and repeated over and over again throughout Scripture: repent and obey.

President Lincoln said, "And whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God, to confess their sins and transgressions in humble sorrow yet with assured hope that genuine repentance will lead to mercy and pardon, and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures and proven by all history: that those nations only are blessed whose God is Lord."

America needs the sweet, refreshing salve of the Lord's mercy and pardon. Just as thousands repented of the sin of slavery in 1863, Americans today must repent of the unrelenting political vitriol that has demonized and segregated those with differing opinions.

As people of faith, healing for our nation begins with us. I must confess that I don't always actively take the time to repent. Today that must change. I'll be using this guide to help me get started. The situation is not hopeless. Our political differences haven't yet driven us to physical conflict. So let us all spend time today seeking the Lord's face in repentance and humility. Only then will healing come.
{eoa}

Jason Yates is the CEO for My Faith Votes, a nonpartisan movement focused on motivating Christians in America to participate in local and domestic elections. By partnering with local churches, pastors and national faith leaders, My Faith Votes mobilizes and resources Christians to lead the conversation on the place of faith in culture and politics.

Gov. Mike Huckabee serves as the organization's honorary national chairman.

Website | Twitter | @MyFaithVotes Facebook | My Faith Votes