

These Are the 'Hidden Costs' of Christian Disengagement

Rob McCoy, Pastor of Calvary Chapel and the newest City Councilman for Thousand Oaks, California, tells the story of his idyllic upbringing in Coronado, California. Ronald Reagan served as Governor, and the state possessed the fifth largest GDP in the world. California was a pro-family, low-tax state, and led the nation in innovation and public education.

Parallel to the rise of Reagan's governorship, California Pastor Chuck Smith birthed the Calvary Chapel movement in 1965. Over the last half-century, the Calvary Chapel movement experienced explosive growth, constantly planting new churches and baptizing new believers. In California, three of the top five churches in attendance are Calvary Chapel churches.

I believe the secret to Calvary Chapel's 10,000% growth during this time comes from the consistent teaching of God's Word, expositional preaching that works through Scripture verse-by-verse and chapter-by-chapter, for God exalts His Word above His name (Psalm 138:2).

However, Calvary Chapel pastors "don't do politics." And what comes of that?

"As a result," says Pastor McCoy, "by focusing only on the Gospel and avoiding politics, California has deteriorated as a state. Now, after 50 years of political retreat, California has gone from the 5th largest GDP to now having the 8th largest GDP. California leads the nation in sales tax, gas tax, energy costs, income tax and corporate tax. It is the author of no-fault divorce and transgender bathroom bills. California leads the entire nation in abortion. Our children can no longer afford to live here, and they are leaving the state in droves; as fast as our businesses."

What are the hidden costs to Christian disengagement and uncaring apathy in society?

Last week California's Biola University President Barry H. Corey circulated a letter informing "our community" about California Senate Bill 1146. This bill will force religious colleges and universities to give up all state funding and state financial assistance for their students unless these institutions give up the right to maintain their religious convictions.

In other words, take the money and run ... away from your religious heritage and beliefs.

Below is a portion of President Corey's letter regarding California State Senate Bill 1146:

Dear Biola faculty and staff,

It is unprecedented for Biola University to reach out to our community regarding legislative issues, but California Senate Bill 1146 could significantly challenge Biola University's ability to continue in the mission that has guided us for 108 years. Though Biola and other faith-based colleges and universities continue to work with California lawmakers to find an agreeable compromise on the language of this bill, if passed without amendment, SB 1146 would substantially interfere with the ability of California's faith-based colleges and universities to educate students according to our convictions...

Dr. Corey needs a wake-up call to California reality—a state that exalts evil. Homosexuals served as the last two Speakers of the California Assembly. The Assembly and Senate, a nearly veto-proof body of legislators comprised mostly of Democrats, are dominated by secularists and LGBTQ activists. Because Christians "don't do politics," these legislators are elected by overwhelming margins. These officials now champion "causes" dear to their supporters. The voters sent them to Sacramento

to impose a secular, pro-homosexual agenda through legislation, while the Evangelical and Pro-life Catholic Christian constituency stayed home on Election Day.

Those who show up determine every election.

Does Dr. Corey truly believe that California legislators—men and women that he probably:

1. doesn't personally know
2. didn't financially support
3. didn't campaign door-to-door on behalf of

—will have a significant interest in hearing about his biblically based worldview? Or defending the religious liberty of the institution he leads?

This is simply not how politics plays out in the real world. If “it is unprecedented for Biola University to reach out to our community regarding legislative issues,” then the political reality is that it would be unprecedented for legislators to care suddenly about Biola University's religious liberty concerns—or any concerns.

How did we, a once biblically-based culture, arrive at this crisis?

All too often, Christian seminaries and universities run from politics, believing the canard about “the separation of church and state” and self-applying a piece of duct tape over their mouth. The tragedy is that the last two to three generations of Christian pastors and leaders have surrendered the public square to a non-biblical piety that separates the secular from the Holy. Is it any wonder that “Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers, our homes to foreigners” (Lam. 5:2, MEV)?

Recently, a former elected official from Texas wrote me and said:

"G. Campbell Morgan did an analysis of each parable in Matthew Chapter 13, and then illustrated that together they formed a composite, helping to understand each one further. I never forgot the mustard seed parable. He pointed out that 'mustard seeds don't make huge trees,' only a bush, at the most 6 feet tall. That a mustard seed, likened to the church (Kingdom), has the capacity through abnormal growth, to become something it was never intended to be, not humble like a small bush, doing what it was designed to do, but becoming huge, powerful, dominant, imposing its will on others, so huge that birds (parable of the sower, the evil one/unclean spirits) can nest (live/reproduce, occupy, spread) in its branches.

"That is what has happened in today's churches. Houston is the poster child for this ... 5,000 churches, some of the largest in America, \$4 billion+ in church property assets! Collective annual budgets of at least a billion dollars. And yet, a lesbian is elected mayor—and reelected twice, sworn in each time with her partner at her side. Christians have huge 'trees' everywhere you look, sitting idly by."

Huge trees ... but very little influence in the public square.

Politicians will never respect our policies, our marches, our sermons, or our prayer rallies until we begin to remove those from office that are doing this to our country. To put it in "Christianese," since the most important thing is bringing people to Christ, then doesn't it make sense that the second most important thing is to preserve the freedom to do the most important thing?

The Church is playing checkers, while the game is chess.

The last two or three generations of Evangelical pastors and leaders in America have concocted a heretical, cultural-Christian subgroup that now sits secluded and impotent in a corner within the four walls of the church. Franklin Graham is

right: "Do pastors belong in politics? Absolutely—if God leads them to be."

We need a Gideon or Rahab to stand.