

Jackson on Same-Sex Marriage: 'It Will Get Hotter'

Bishop Harry Jackson is the senior pastor of Hope Christian Church in Beltsville, Md., and a leading advocate in the protection of **traditional marriage**. Jackson is the leader of the High Impact Leadership Coalition that is mounting a current national campaign against same-sex marriage.

Charisma News: The issue of **same-sex marriage** is a hot-button issue for you. Are you surprised at how much this thing has escalated over the past year or so?

Jackson: It has gotten much more intense and it will get hotter. The opposition is using its fame and influence. It seems as though, a few months back, when the North Carolinians decided they were going to vote in a marriage amendment, that the administration was all set to say that they were going to come out in favor of same-sex marriage, except that the other side lost. At that point, there was a disconnect, and there was a litany of individuals that were prepared to do what they thought was going to be a home run push for same-sex marriage, starting with the president and moving on to guys like Anderson Cooper. They thought they were going after the New York victory earlier in the year; that they were just going to sweep it in before the election so that the Democratic Party would use it as some sort of rising tide. Something is going on now where there is resistance. Democrats and Republicans and Independents are all saying "no" in the political realm. There also are Christians who are who are standing up against it. I don't think the people that advocate same-sex marriage know what to do or spend their money at this strategic juncture. But, they are desperate to try to make this happen in 2012.

Charisma News: You and others in the black pastoral community

have said that the president has ignored your concerns and you have called his support of same-sex marriage “an insult.” Why do you believe that he won’t respond to your concerns?

Jackson: I believe that he really wanted to make it a black-against-Obama issue. He didn’t really want to take on the whole church. Part of the trap that many of us fell into was that we took it as a personal affront when really it was a challenge to the entire evangelical community. I went back, rethought it and reframed it. The movement that we’re part of at this moment really is a multiracial, multicultural movement designed to bring in the whole evangelical community. We’re also reaching out to independents and even the non-Christians saying that marriage is an institution that must be protected.

There was very wise messaging on the part of the president and on the part of the mainstream media right before Mother’s Day. His announcement was made and then he actually went and made phone calls only to black clergy to talk about the ramifications of this thing. No other calls were made during that period of time. So, I began to think, wow, he is picking his fight, solving his problem knowing that there was going to be some sort of potential for reconciliation with African-American clergy. He should have made it the battle that it really is with the broader faith community and the broader pro-traditional marriage community.

Charisma News: Talk about this Defense of Marriage Summit and what your goals are.

Jackson: Our little community is one little island by itself. What we needed to happen is that we needed a broader, multiracial, multicultural community. Many non-black pastors and churchgoers were almost afraid to talk about this because they were accused, as has been the case throughout all of President Obama’s administration, of being racist for criticizing this issue. We started talking and we found that there were many people who shared our opinions about where

things were going and simply didn't have a platform to discuss them. They, too, were not able to get any forum to him or with others.

We just decided that we would go to swing states. We would not focus on addressing the president himself. We see that, based on the Constitution, that there are three dimensions of the government—the executive branch, which is the highest pinnacle; the legislative branch; and the judicial branch. The way our government is supposed to work, once a law is put in place, the president is not supposed to be able to say, 'Hey, I am not going to enforce DOMA (**Defense of Marriage Act**).'

We want to send back to Washington people who are willing to say that we won't let the president or anyone else not follow through with the DOMA law. It should be an impeachable offense. We should be able to empower Democrats and we should be able to challenge people in the GOP to grow a backbone. I am a preacher, and it's the moral issues that actually unify blacks, whites, Asians and others. It brings us together under what I like to frame as a new moral, biblical rainbow coalition. We need to steal the rainbow back. It's a biblical sign anyway. We need to say we'll stand together.

Charisma News: Other than the sagging **economy**, what are some of the other issues that you believe need to be a priority of the politicians in this country right now?

Jackson: Some of those are quazi-social issues. The economic problems we have originate out of social issues. Poorly run families create social problems. The breakdown of the family creates poverty problems. I would also look at education. There are major problems with education that we must address. It is predictive of imprisonment and poverty the test scores of third-grade students in our urban areas. I think we need a lot more charter schools. We need more testing. You've got to deal with education and dropout rates in urban America. We need more infusion of capital accountability in the

educational environment. That's absolutely critical.

Also, there needs to be great accountability within the context of many of our retirement programs. Also, the empowerment of small businesses is critical, especially in urban communities. Urban minority unemployment has risen, so we need jobs. These are many of the problems that are not being addressed by the current administration and they are not even on the discussion list in any of the debates I am hearing about.

Charisma News: Do you see a lot of disharmony in the body of Christ right now?

Jackson: I do. If I can say this without casting blame on anyone else, there is an increase in both racism and what I term as class warfare. Also, there is a form of socialism in the body of Christ, and I think it is a shame. When I say racism, it's when people are accused of misusing their race, specifically the problems we're having with immigration. Those need to be addressed. Some of the arguments we have had politically about the president and some of the underlying issues that feed into the mistrust between various political parties, they are feeding on racism and the church is falling into it. Voter suppression, voter fraud in the form of ballot-box stuffing; you hear both parties talking. They are feeding on fears of race. The Trayvon Martin case, what is happening with that, is a racial issue. The body of Christ could bring some healing to those issues if she were courageous enough to go up into the gap—Ezekiel 13:4-5 talk about that. We can be a real ambassador in that area and in the other areas we have talked about.

Catch Part 2 of this interview with Bishop Harry Jackson on Monday, Aug. 27.