

Alabama Mayor's Midterm Wisdom: 'We Can All Make a Difference'

Mayor Sandy Stimpson of Mobile, Alabama, doesn't shy away from talking about God. In fact, he says his pathway to political involvement began and continues with prayer. But even for those God hasn't called to run for office, Stimpson has a word of encouragement, especially in this era when political involvement from Bible-believing Christians is at an all-time low: "We can all make a difference."

In a recent "Strang Report" podcast interview, Stimpson took some time to share his journey and his thoughts about why Christians shouldn't give up on the political process.

"I really think that my pathway to being the mayor started with the prayers of a lot of ladies and people in the city of Mobile praying for a God-fearing mayor to step up into the political arena," Stimpson, a longtime businessman, says. "I have to say that I had a very unfavorable view of elected officials ... I did everything I could to avoid getting into the political arena."

Ultimately, the repeated questions of others convinced him that God was the one behind those questions, he says. "One day, I woke up, and it dawned on me that I really didn't want to get to heaven and have God say, 'Sandy, I kept sending you messages—why didn't you listen to Me?' ... I realized that if I was going to subject my family to the things that happen in the political arena, that I was going to fight for my city and for my core values and beliefs, knowing that we could do a better job, in my opinion, of uniting the city than had previously been done."

Even in today's divisive climate, God revealed a way for

Stimpson to keep his campaign positive. "Early in our campaign, we said, 'No matter how we're attacked, we're going to stay on the high road,'" he explains. "Because when you start attacking others, that's a slippery slope—you don't know where it's going to end up.

"And so I think there's a certain amount of respect that follows upon you if you don't embrace that attack mode and try to destroy someone's character," he says. He did face the expected attacks—but, he says, "We just refused to even rebut them. We just kept talking about what we were going to do."

Now in his third term as mayor, Stimpson takes no credit for his accomplishments. "Our success, in my opinion, is based on people who are praying for the success of this city and praying for our leaders and praying for even the differences we have with those that we don't philosophically agree with," he says. "There are 17 people who have agreed to pray every single day specifically for the people in my administration and for the things that we're trying to do."

Those goals, he says, are written on the walls of what he calls a "war room."

"But above all, it says, 'What is God's will?'" he explains. "All of these things on the wall, this is our will, but what is God's will?"

The Alabama mayor realizes his willingness to talk about his faith makes him subject to attack both in the flesh and in the spirit, but he maintains his belief in the power of prayer. "I just feel that's what it's going to take to change things. It changed things in this country. ... I think that's where we are."

But Stimpson pushes back against the idea that a single vote doesn't count. "You and I both know there are so many elections where the margin is so slim, and one vote does make a difference," he says. "And so my encouragement is that you

do need to go vote. ... You can make a difference, and you should go vote."

He adds that a friend who is also a congressman gave him a cautionary word: "This may be the last real election where we can cast our vote and know that it's going to be properly counted." To this, Stimpson adds, "Don't sit back and say, 'I wish I had done this.'"

"All of us can make a difference," he emphasizes. "You really can, whether you're a school board member, or whether you're on the city council, or whether you are the chief of staff, or whether you're an assistant to an elected official—you can make a difference. ... I can tell you that is a recipe for disaster when good folks don't get engaged. And so my hope is that the work that you do, and that so many others do across this country, that it will inspire God-fearing people to realize there's a place for us in that arena. And we've got to be there."

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