

Can the Post-Election Church Win Back the Culture?

In the aftermath of the election, many of us in the evangelical church will have to reassess our strategies regarding what God is calling us to focus upon as we live out the mandate to disciple our nation (see Matt. 28:19). In my opinion, we have to start studying the book of Daniel to extrapolate strategies because, like the Babylon that Daniel served, Election Day showed that our nation continues on the road toward postmodernism and humanism while attempting governance without God's moral law as its guide.

Daniel was able to serve the pagan Babylonian and Persian kings of his time with a spirit of excellence, while having an open door to disciple and/or challenge the religion and policies of the kings and their kingdom, once he was established as the main problem-solver when those in power were perplexed. It is interesting to note that, even though Nebuchadnezzar possibly repented (read his testimony in Daniel 4, which is the only chapter in the Bible written by a pagan!) and changed the laws to honor and worship Jehovah, the kingdom of Babylon fell and was given to the Persian Empire, which enabled Daniel to minister and change the culture of the next king and kingdom!

Furthermore, we need to realize that most of the books in the Bible were written while God's people were either in captivity or were the minority in a polytheistic pagan culture. For example, the Pentateuch was written while Israel was in bondage in Egypt or dwelt in the wilderness; the books of Daniel, Esther, Nehemiah and Ezra were written in the context of Jewish captivity in Babylon and Persia; all of the New Testament was written while the church was a minority in the Roman Empire.

Hence, God was still able to move mightily and bring transformation while His people were functioning as salt and light in adverse cultural and spiritual conditions.

The lesson here is that God's people and the kingdom of God will continue to grow and outlast every other nation and kingdom in spite of opposition (see Ex. 1:12). We have to think and plan generationally and move away from the quick-fix conference mentality in which we think God is going to change our nation overnight because of either a prayer meeting or a convention.

Furthermore, we as the people of God cannot wrap our ministries in the political construct of the United States or any particular political party! The good news is that the kingdom of God has multifaceted strategies for transformation, with politics as only one of the major spheres or mountains of culture (other spheres include family, education, science, the arts, business, government, media and religion).

The church is really a nation within a nation (1 Peter 2:9). We dilute our identity when there is no delineation between nationalism and our faith. I am first a Christian and second an American!

Regarding our nation, I recently wrote an article on where I see the nation heading if **President Obama** was re-elected (Seven Ominous Storms Facing America after the Coming Election). However, we must realize that he only won by less than two percentage points. Thus he has no mandate for his failed policies; he barely survived this election to lead a nation that is worse off than it was four years ago when he took office—a nation that has great polarity, that some are now calling “the Divided States of America.” He will have to be more bipartisan if he is going to leave with a better legacy, and lead more from the center if he is going to bring the nation back together.

How Should the Church Respond?

In my opinion, it was not due to a lack of united **prayer** that the election turned out this way; I have never seen so many leaders, churches and Christians praying and fasting as I have seen during the past six months. Yet, in spite of all our prayers, many did not get the results they were looking for. (Who would have ever thought just 10 years ago the 2012 presidential election would become a choice between a far-left liberal radical and a Mormon, and that the evangelical church would be galvanized to pray for a Mormon to deliver our nation!)

In spite of the election results, I have peace that somehow, some way, the will of God has been accomplished in this election. We also have to ask ourselves, how much did the Bush presidency help evangelical values and our cause in this nation in the long term? Sometimes God even uses the world to teach and/or chastise the church for His greater purposes.

Consequently, many of the church leaders involved in fighting for a Judeo/Christian America need to reassess their strategies if they are going to be more effective in the future. Some have centered their ministries around the political battles of our time. Now, with a slight majority of the American people electing a president who supports **same-sex marriage** (and with Maine and Maryland legalizing same-sex marriage by popular vote) and **abortion**, many of these church leaders need to read the tealeaves and adjust.

On the other side of the coin, look for some prominent evangelical leaders to capitulate to the surrounding culture and become part of the mainstream for cultural acceptance, instead of facing the cultural onslaught and persecution that will probably be ramped up like never before because of the shift away from biblical values in the cultural landscape.

(To be fair, Romney may have lost because many evangelicals refused to vote for a Mormon, not because the nation espouses

Obama's leftist policies.)

As I mentioned above, the strategies for societal transformation according to Scripture are multifaceted. Thus while remaining firm in our message we have to pray about changing our methodologies and focus. The following are some of my ideas:

First, many in the church need to bite the bullet and shift from praying against President Obama to praying for the president (1 Timothy 2:1-3). If God can use Daniel to shift the ideology and life of a pagan king like Nebuchadnezzar then he can use the prayers of the church to deal with both the private life and public policies of our president and all our local and federal political leaders.

Second, some of us (including myself) must maintain our prophetic voices against systemic sinful policies like same-sex marriage and abortion while assessing how to be involved in the political process and battles regarding these issues. This election showed that at least half the nation doesn't care as much about these major moral issues as they do the economy, with many believing that Romney doesn't connect to the average person and favors the rich over the "47 percent." Thus, we are dealing more with a pragmatic populace who is not as ideologically driven by moral values as we hoped.

Politically speaking, in my opinion we need to focus on protecting religious liberties and the First Amendment, and get behind organizations like Alliance Defending Freedom. With the re-election of Obama and the first two states to legalize same-sex marriage via popular vote, there will be a call for hate-speech laws that will attempt to censor what is preached from our pulpits and on the airwaves. We may also see a wave of intolerance (in the name of tolerance) toward those who adhere to biblical Christianity, resulting in more persecution, both verbal and political.

The left will seize upon this election and the passing of same-sex marriage in Maine and Maryland as an opportunity to further brand **conservative evangelicals** as bigots, racists and homophobes. As a result we are going to have more legal and cultural battles on our hands just to protect the ability to preach the whole counsel of God.

Third, it seems we are losing the battle for the minds of the majority youth culture (2 Cor. 10:3-5). I propose that we focus on discipling the next generation by giving them a **biblical worldview** in politics, economics, science, the arts, education and family, and even setting up schools of government so that we can have a grass-roots movement of young people running for political office, school boards and policy-making positions that will shape the world in the coming decades. (We have an institute that does this:)

Fourth, the way the evangelical church in the New York region responded in the aftermath of **Hurricane Sandy** is an incredible example of how serving our cities and ravaged communities is the greatest bridge-builder because practical love breaks down the barriers between political parties, gay and straight, black and white, and the rich and poor!

Many of us in New Jersey, the five boroughs of New York City and Long Island have been involved in facilitating massive relief efforts that have exceeded anything FEMA or the government has been able to do. This is the wave of the future as more natural disasters and social disorientation comes upon our nation as it continues to pursue policies that make us vulnerable to our enemies. Truly, if we want to reach our cities we must love them and serve them, especially when they are in crises in their darkest hour!

I have seen firsthand how this disaster has spawned a great move of unity among churches in numerous regions and activated the members of my own congregation to serve their city in a way I have never seen before. Out of the ashes and rubble we

may see the start of the next **Great Awakening** in the Northeast!

Fifth, the church needs to walk in the power, purity and humility of the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:2-12 before we have earned the right to become the salt of the earth and the light of the world. We must have more than good preaching and political rhetoric if we are going to turn the next generation to Christ; we need to value brokenness, humility, transparency, and showing mercy and love to our enemies if we will once again regain the trust and respect of young people. There is way too much religion, hype, entertainment and rhetoric in our churches. What the next generation wants to see more than anything else is authenticity, in which Christ's love and power shine through our broken humanity.

Finally, we need to have a continual move of fasting, prayer and holiness along with serving our cities and working for reformation—the dual role of the church since its inception.

When the early church was the minority culture in the ancient Roman Empire they changed the laws and turned the culture in just several hundred years. They didn't do this because of political power or votes, but by taking care of the sick and dying, nursing abandoned infants back to health, giving dead bodies proper burials, giving new meaning to marriage by honoring women and wives as equal heirs of salvation with men, by starting hospices that led to hospitals, by loving and praying for the Caesar instead of burning incense to him, and by never denying their faith even to the point of death! While serving their communities they refused to worship or burn incense to the image of Caesar and spoke out against slavery, abortion, infanticide and the violence of the gladiatorial games.

When believers love more, serve more and do more than anyone else in their communities, it gives them the moral authority to speak truth to political power and change nations.

This is the kind of church we need to be in America if we are going to win back our culture.

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