

Why We Engage in the Culture Wars

Read Time: 5 Minutes 20 Seconds

Have you ever wondered if the church should continue to engage in the culture wars? After all, we will never eradicate evil from the world, and sometimes it feels like the water is pouring into our boats faster than we can bail it out. Plus, every time we gain ground on one front, we seem to lose ground on another.

Why bother fighting these time-consuming, emotionally draining, financially costly battles? Wouldn't it be better if we put all our efforts into winning the lost, thereby making an eternal, irreversible impact?

Some would also argue that things will only get worse before Jesus returns, and since we know He's coming very soon, there's no use trying to slow down, let alone stop, the onslaught of evil. We're just trying to forestall the inevitable.

How should we respond to these objections and concerns?

When it comes to the theological objection, namely, that things will only get worse before Jesus returns, I have two responses.

First, although there are verses that speak of darkness and apostasy before the Lord returns, there are also verses that speak of a glorious harvest of souls coming into the kingdom at the end of the age. Some passages even speak of light shining brightly in the midst of gross darkness.

In short, as I understand the relevant portions of Scripture, the end of the age will be characterized by parallel extremes

of good and evil, of divine activity and satanic activity. I hardly see a picture of only gloom and doom.

Second, none of us know how soon the Lord will return, which means that we can't say, "We know this is the final generation, so why bother to impact the culture?"

I came to faith 51 years ago, and we were told Jesus was coming any minute back then. The prophecies were all lining up and the bestselling Christian book of the day made it clear that we were in the tail end of the last days. That was more than one-half century ago!

Just think of how completely paralyzed the church would be if every generation had this same mentality. "Why bother taking a stand? We're out of here any minute now!"

That cannot possibly be a biblical way to think.

Having addressed this theological objection, let me respond to the larger question of why we as followers of Jesus should engage in the culture wars at all.

Why should we fight against abortion? Why should we oppose racism? Why should we stand up to injustice? Why should we push back against LGBTQ activism?

First, if we don't engage the culture, the society will collapse. After all, if we are called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16), without us, the saltiness will be gone and the light will not shine. And with the culture in freefall, it won't be long before anarchy reigns, before our liberties will be taken away—perhaps even our children taken away.

Second, if we don't push back against a sinful society, we will lose our conscience and our souls. How can we see evil on full display in front of our eyes and do nothing? To do nothing is to desensitize and dehumanize ourselves.

Third, as Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:8–9, “at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true).” It is in our spiritual DNA to do what is right and good because, by our very born again-nature, we are light.

This is the opposite of the fable of the scorpion and the frog, in which the scorpion stings the frog as it sits on the frog’s back while the frog swims across the river, as a result of which they both die.

When the frog asked why he did it, the scorpion explained that he couldn’t resist the urge, since this was his nature.

In the same (but totally opposite) way, standing up for justice and contending for mercy is what we do as light. It’s our nature.

Fourth, doing good also means opposing evil, and there are many verses in the New Testament that clearly call us to do what is good. What then, does that good look like in action? What would doing good look like if you were a slaveowner who became a Christian? Just giving your slave a cup of cold water? Or setting your slave free?

Fifth, as we oppose evil, as we call out injustice, as we push back against immorality, we are becoming more like Jesus, being conformed to His image. This is part of our preparation for eternity.

Sixth, God makes clear over and over again in His Word that the kind of spirituality He is looking for does not consist of long-winded prayers or pious displays of fasting. Rather, He says clearly, our fasting must be the backdrop for our holy actions, setting the captives free, caring for the orphan and widow, standing up to injustice in the courts (see Isaiah 58).

Seventh, just as we feed the hungry and give to the poor,

helping those we can even while knowing that we will never eradicate hunger and poverty, we do the same with the culture wars. We help those we can help. We save a baby's life when we can. We get an ungodly sex-ed curriculum removed from our local school. We expose discriminatory treatment of a minority colleague in the workplace.

Every life counts, and every battle won has significance.

Eighth, since the Messiah's mission includes bringing justice to the nations, and since we are His voice and His hands and feet in this world, pursuing justice is part of our divine mission (see Isaiah 42:1-8).

Ninth, by standing up for the downtrodden and hurting, we demonstrate the depth of our relationship with God. As the Lord said with regard to the godly King Josiah, "He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Is not this to know me? declares the LORD." (Jer. 22:16) That is a truly striking verse.

Tenth, when we oppose evil and do good, we are functioning as the Lord's witnesses, thereby calling the society to account and setting a standard for others to follow. This, too, is part of our gospel calling.

The reality is that, until Jesus returns, we will be in a tug of war with the world, sometimes making real progress and sometimes losing ground.

But either way, we must keep our grip and maintain our resolve, wanting to hand things to the next generation in better shape than we received them while knowing that ultimate victory awaits the Lord's return.

And while we also keep the Great Commission first and foremost in our hearts and minds, we recognize that Jesus didn't simply call us to win the lost but to make disciples.

This is how disciples live. {eoa}

(For my related article, “Not Enough Fingers to Plug Up All the Holes in the Dike,” see [here](#). For hundreds of free ministry resources, download the AskDrBrown Ministries app on Apple and Android.)

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