

Hopefully, Not a Trend

I was bothered by a Facebook post this weekend from a friend, writing on behalf of her husband, who is also a cherished friend of mine. Her husband, who is of Hispanic origin, was leaving the polling place after early voting. Someone in the long line of waiting voters yelled out “USA” referring to the ethnicity of my friend, implying he was not welcome here. I know the person well. The intended recipient of this harassment is as good as it gets: a credit to the community, generous towards others in need, highly educated with a very good job. He is a wonderful family man. He is very welcomed in my life.

We are less than two weeks from Election Day. Many Americans can't wait for the campaign to end as many races have centered on mudslinging and constant negative comments about an opponent. I have learned to use the “mute button” on my TV remote. I have had enough! There doesn't seem to be any respect for candidates of the opposite party. To make it worse, Princeton University historian Julian Zelizer said, “The toxicity of the campaign will be remembered not simply as a fluke ... but as part of a trend.” This means that other future campaigns may also be as distasteful.

Disliking people merely because they are different is very much against the teachings of Jesus. *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7).* It is easy to say this passage, but sometimes is hard to do in real life. The reality is, Jesus Christ accepted you when you didn't deserve to be accepted. You only have a chance of a heavenly home because Jesus not only accepted you, but He died for you as well.

What does God say about this negative campaigning? *How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye (Luke 6:42).* We all are far from perfect, so pointing out flaws in someone else ignores our own. Remember that saying about being critical of someone else, “when you point a finger at someone else four fingers are pointed at you.”

God has even stronger words for people who hate others. *Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him (1 John 3:15).*

What advice might God give to candidates running for office? *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others (Philippians 2:3-4).* Humility, valuing others and seeking to really serve others would be outstanding.

And what might God say about welcoming strangers? *Do not oppress a foreigner; you yourselves know how it feels to be foreigners, because you were foreigners in Egypt (Exodus 23:9).* Very few of us were native to this country, and come to think of it, we don't treat Native Americans very well either! Instead, it is all about pushing the other person down to try and make us look better. People see right through that behavior.

Did God tell us to be worldly in seeking others? The Great Commission told us to go out and seek, not avoid others. *Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20).*

We need to reverse the current trend taking shape in our country. We need to accept all people as creations of God. We need to treat each other with respect. We need to seek to do what God wants us to do. This world and our country, in particular, needs to seek the right kind of leadership. Maybe on Election Day I should write in the name of Jesus Christ, or at least, act the way He would want me to act.

Prayer: Dear Lord. Open our hearts to accept others as part of your wonderful creation. Help us to focus our thoughts and words on the positive and understand that we all have faults. Thank you for accepting us as strangers seeking entrance into your Kingdom. Amen.