

Our Time To Shine

We are seeing a phenomenon unlike any other time in our nation’s history. God needs us at our best to re-center the emotions of those around us.

Our nation has been rocked by polarizing events, especially in the past year. We have become a divided country with emotions running high. Good people, who in their heart feel strongly about an issue, are being infected by a pervasive environment of anger, mistrust and hurt. We are being egged on by news media and campaign rhetoric – all meant to stir us up, even if not entirely objective and truthful. It is working. People are looking at friends who have an opposing point of view differently than ever before. People who used to love unconditionally are now expressing anger and hate towards people they once loved. We have easy access to public resentment through social media. We are living in a revolution of disenchantment that is becoming part of our everyday culture. In effect, we are experiencing a modern day civil war.



So, what would God want us to do in a time like this?

As Christians, we need to rise above the hatred and be an example of treating others the way Jesus would want us to do. In the heat of the moment, it is easy to forget that Jesus did not come into the world to change the politics of his time. Instead, He came to change people. Do you remember, during Jesus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem the people yelled “Hosanna” as He passed by? Hosanna isn’t an expression of rejoicing. It meant “save us.” They wanted Jesus to save them from the oppression of Roman ruler. They didn’t agree with the way their government was ruling them. Sound familiar? But, Jesus knew all along that His kingdom was not of this world. He came to be a beacon of light and show people how to live. Jesus hated the sin, but loved the sinner. He loved his enemies – even the people who would take His life just a few days later.

In a world caught up in the emotions of the moment, loving others is more difficult. Arguing and name calling won’t accomplish anything, other than create more unrest. We are responsible for how we act. Do you want your actions to be similar to the sinful, chaotic world or do you seek to as Jesus would? If you would rather act in a Christ like manner, consider these verses from the Bible to help you understand what God feels about some of the issues of our time:

Hate

- *Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs (Proverbs 10:12).*
- *Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness (1 John 2:9)*
- *Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good (Romans 12:9)*

Encouraging Others

- *Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29).*

Love – the better alternative

- *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).*
- *Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?” Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest*

commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:36-40).

Accepting Others In Spite of Their Beliefs

- *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God (Romans 15:7).*
- *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Romans 5:8).*

Role of Government

- *Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves (Romans 13:1-2).*

Handling Disappointment

- *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).*
- *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." (John 16:33).*

Enemies – People who oppose your point of view

- *But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44).*
- *"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you (Luke 6:27-28).*
- *But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:35-36).*
- *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:19-21).*

Be a beacon of love sharing it with others. Resist the urge to criticize others who have different views. Don't take the bait to enter into negative conversations or social media posts. Don't let your reaction to the news be about protest. Instead, take action to help people in need. Honor God by acting in a way that would make Him proud. The bottom line is: *Let all that you do be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:14).* In a world of chaos, this is your chance to shine.

Closing Prayer: We ask you Lord, to help us. Heal the wounds of anger and resentment our nation is feeling today. Instead of aimless talk, help us to focus our energies to serve others in love. Help us to address the issues of our time and treat all people with respect as fellow children of God. Amen.