

The right response for turmoil

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In a time of national change and culturally defining moments, there is one thing that every side seems to agree upon, that we are a people who are woefully divided.

Despite which candidate is your favorite or position you hold on measures and propositions, most matters of consequence seem to reflect splits that are cut near the middle. That usually means that friends, co-workers, neighbors, and teammates will probably disagree on stuff that is near to your heart. We all know how to argue, and some of us are experts at winning. Today I want to challenge God's people to answer a higher call.

One of the most beautiful and amazing parts of the message of Christ is the principle that is explained in 2 Corinthians 5:21. "For God made Him (Jesus) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. "While all of us fall short, the only one who did it "right" bore our sin that we might take on his attributes of righteousness. This is a deep and glorious concept and I know we cannot adequately explore it in a handful of paragraphs.

One thing that is clear, however, God's purpose in Christ is to directly impact you and me, and an unearned standing in righteousness is the result. So what is righteousness and what does it have to do with our election turmoil?

Growing up we used the term "righteous" as part of our own dictionary of street slang describing something really great. The actual definition is really quite simple. It speaks of doing the right thing in any given circumstance. This relates not only to our values, if we vote or not, and who or what we vote for, it also deals with how we conduct ourselves among people who carry a diversity of viewpoints.

Throughout our state this past week there have been varied forms of disgraceful conduct, localized forms of terrorism, and intimidation tactics used to suppress free speech.

There is a family who expressed their views through a sign on their front lawn in favor of Proposition 8.

Opponents warned all neighbors against expressing similar views by using lynch mob strategies of parking a truck in front of their house with a huge billboard saying "Bigots Live Here. "While there is a lifestyle movement to come out of the closet, some are attempting to force others in.

Don't participate!

Reports of angry people turning to violence to sequester the voice of those who disagree with their choices are rampant; black eyes, bruises, even bomb threats against churches. Locally, they took sign stealing and marches to whole new level. Ojai Valley Baptist experienced a bit more than I thought our little community would be capable of. Not only was their ProtectMarriage.com sign vandalized, the church itself was the target of the aggression of criminal activists with spray paint.

Where is the tolerance? I believe this is indicative of the concerns that freedom of speech

and freedom of religion are both under fire. But here is my admonition to all of us, please do not conform to these types of responses.

Jesus said, "My Kingdom is not of this world." As a follower of Christ, we are called to love everyone, whether they agree with your positions or not. We also do not judge the hearts of people. What is often missed is that the Kingdom of God has always been made up of people who came out of various lifestyles, positions and ideologies.

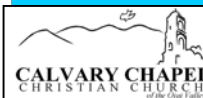
From the time of Jesus to now, people who used to fight against the things of God now stand for them. The personal life stories of my friends and me prove that the message of Christ is for everybody and the very ones who are so adamant today in opposition to God's word might be the teachers and preachers of a future generation.

We are not asked to compromise truth or behave as though we don't know what is right, but to handle all things with grace and peace. "The work of righteousness will be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance forever."(Isaiah 32:17)

In this tumultuous time in our history, I want to challenge us to choose righteousness. Let's ask the question: "What is the right thing to do? "Whether in selecting your candidate, your position on issues, or how you'll respond to opposing viewpoints, choose the "right" response. "Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34)

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
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Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday
Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

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