

# Staying Centered in Christ

Series: Cracks – Navigating Our Divided Times

Brad Bailey – February 13, 2022

Intro

Welcome...

PRAY – We come to gather around Christ...to join in the life of Christ. For you have revealed that we can once again know belonging in a way we never have. You have called us to come home to the Father's house... and made it possible. We come because you have made it possible to belong to God... and to one another. Come lead us into that reality. Amen

Last week we launched into a new series... a series focused on helping us navigate our divided times. As I shared last week... the recent season of **political divide** and **pandemic debate** has been something like a **cultural earthquake**. Perhaps the **sense of magnitude differs** depending on the community that one inhabits...**but the wider effects cannot be missed**.

The **polarizing divide of beliefs about politics and pandemic restrictions** have **fractured relationships among family and friends**.

And cracks have emerged within Christian culture... in this nation in particular.

Peter Wehner... a journalist for the Atlantic ... wrote an article entitled “The Evangelical Church Is Breaking Apart...Christians must reclaim Jesus from his church.” Himself a follower of Christ... and a journalist... reached out to dozens of pastors, theologians, academics, and historians, as well as a seminary president and people involved in campus ministry to try and understand what has happened. In part, he summarizes...

*There he says,*

***When the Christian faith is politicized, churches become repositories not of grace but of grievances, places where tribal identities are reinforced, where fears are nurtured, and where aggression and nastiness are sacralized. The result is not only wounding the nation; it's having a devastating impact on the Christian faith.***

***In important respects, much of what is distinctive about American evangelicalism has become antithetical to authentic Christianity. What we're dealing with—not in all cases, of course, but in far too many— is political identity and cultural anxieties, anti-intellectualism and ethnic nationalism, resentments and grievances, all dressed up as Christianity. - Peter Wehner [2]***

*It's a striking challenge regarding what has emerged within America's Christian culture. And it has created cracks separating those once enjoyed unity.*

Tim Dalrymple is president of the prominent evangelical magazine Christianity Today, said,

***“As an evangelical, I've found the last five years to be shocking, disorienting and deeply disheartening. One of the most surprising elements is that I've realized that the people who I used to stand shoulder to shoulder with on almost every issue, I now realize that we are separated by a chasm of mutual incomprehension. I would never have thought that could have happened so quickly.”- Tim Dalrymple (President Christianity Today magazine) [3]***

Pastors across this country are feeling deep dismay at what has emerged within the Christian culture.

At the beginning of last year, 2021, a survey conducted by Barna Research found that 29% of Protestant pastors said that they had considered quitting full-time vocational ministry in the past year. It gets worse. By November of last year that rose to 38%.

And of pastors under the age of 45 ...an alarming 46% are thinking of quitting ministry altogether. [4]

And the number one [cause](#) has been the challenge of maintaining unity within their church ... realizing that many people have more allegiance to their political tribes than they do their communities of faith... that people are being disciplined daily by political pundits who have no value for unity in Christ the Gospel. With every viral video being sent... they wonder if truth even matters to so many. This is why pastors are quitting. [5]

Many of those considering quitting can't reconcile their commitment to Christ...with what is being embraced by the Christian culture they find themselves in. Many lives and leaders feel lost.

I am not one of the 38%... not because I am stronger or better...but perhaps because I am old enough to have seen these culture wars... and I feel called to engage them.

As I noted... **after an earthquake** has caused visible damage... some fear ever going back inside...they don't trust it's safe...they need some assurance that things are sound. **Many are standing on the edge of Christian Church... wondering if it's safe. They deserve some clarity.**

**Some may be quick to just go back** to freely living in the house because they see they some form of walls and roof are still there. They **may think that the best way to get past the drama** is to try and **ignore the cracks... and the questions they raise.**

But before someone can just consider repairs...they have to

**That is what this series is about.**

It's about **identifying those cracks** that **may be vulnerable...** assess the damage... and **seeking God's word** to provide **foundations** that are **sound and solid...foundations that will allow us to build a strong future on.**

Last week... was we began with hearing Jesus heart... that we would be united in him... and how the apostles... called us to make every effort to keep that unity. [1]

In the weeks ahead... we will begin to engage some of the specific cracks that have emerged...but today I want to set forth the primary issue that underlies our calling in such times... s that of **staying centered in Christ.**

**The call to stay centered in Christ may initially sound like a safe, if not vague, value to propose. However, it actually reflects the radical discovery that something bigger is now at the center of life... to which everything else that seeks to define and divide us becomes secondary.**

In Christ, God is reconciling all things to Himself. If we become reconciled with God through our union with Christ...we become united with one another.

This became the clarion call of the apostles... and what we hear run throughout the writings of the New Testament.

Listen to what the Apostle Paul set forth n the Biblical Book of Ephesians.

**Ephesians 1:22-23**

**And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.**

Christ is over all... he is bigger than every other source of reference... and we the church are his body... those who are to embody this reality. He continues declaring...

**Ephesians 2:20 (NLT)**

**Together, we are his house, built on the foundation of the apostles and the prophets. And the cornerstone is Christ Jesus himself.**

Something bigger had come... something that ruled over all...and something that transformed them. They had been a people who had so identified with their ethnicity....and as a nation. They had understood God as protector of their ethnicity and national power. But in Christ...that was transformed. Jesus had brought a larger reality.

***Jesus brought a transforming reality that confronted all human separation and superiority. The people needed to be saved not from Rome but from their sin... and their sin could not be reduced to some outward laws but to the heart. The “Gospel”... is a call to turn and receive forgiveness and join God’s kingdom that has come. Jesus was quite clear that the challenge is that of letting go of attachments to this world’s false claims of righteousness and vain forms of power. This call creates a new community united in it’s one true Savior and King.***

***They no longer were focused on the national identity in relationship to the Roman Empire. They would no longer be looking to have their own King...such as King David... back on a throne. God’s own kingdom had come ....and rules not by force...but by love.***

No earthly governance can become a substitute for this call be forgiven and saved by grace alone and to allegiance to the king of a new kingdom come. [8]

This unity **isn’t simply about our ability to get along...it is nothing less than the only hope for a world that defines and divides us by our differences... to discover that which allows us to belong to life and one another.**

This is why our unity in Christ is profound.

As Carey Nieuwhof expresses...

***“Our culture isn’t craving an echo of itself, but rather an alternative to itself.” - Carey Nieuwhof [9]***

**This is why we should understand that staying centered in Christ is not about being less radical ...but more truly radical.**

Many of us may be drawn to think we are more “radical” Christians when in fact we are just more like a particular political ideological “side.”

In this sense it is helpful to understand that this idea of being “centered” is not intended to reflect the common idea of choosing “the middle of the road”... but about defining what the middle is.

The word “radical” has become associated with “extreme” ...whether referring to others as dangerous “radicals” seeking what is extreme.... or oneself as “radically committed” to something by way of extreme ideas. So within Christian culture it may be natural for people to think of being a radical Christian... whether by ways of being more extreme in either conservative or progressive definitions of extreme.

However, the word “radical” actually refers to the "root" of something. Mathematically, the “radical” or “radius” refers to identifying the true center. In this sense, we are most truly radical, when we are most rooted and representative of the true center. It is the center that defines and distinguishes the circle...and defines the church.

To be centered in Christ is not about the middle ground... it is about a distinct ground.

If we are being pulled off center... and centered in anything other than Christ himself... we are actually less radical. He is not the servant of another political center. He is to be our king... our king of a kingdom which defies any other claim for loyalty upon us.

To this we must contend with that which pulls us off this center. So let me identify four elements that have been pulling us off center in this recent season... and four ways to help us stay secured and centered.

## Some Unique Influences on the Current Divide

These are not particularly new or novel issues for some... but they are issues we do well to recognize... because they are part of what has impacted this current culture war.

### 1. The Age of More Divided Influences (Voices that depend on forming and fueling the grand drama to save the world... of “narratives” that reduce good and evil to “us vs them.”)

We have seen a sweeping transition from “news” as a source of information to that of identity affirmation. What was once primarily a reporting of the significant events, has now become increasingly a commentary that serves to establish the superiority of it’s views and viewers.

We’re all vulnerable to wanting to have our sense of being on the right side fed. But we can’t ignore that that this comes with the goal of creating an enemy ... and losing a grasp of our common humanity.

If we allow ourselves to become passive to the storytellers...we will begin to live in the story of a war... that casts many of those we know as enemies... that justifies hate... and disregard for others.

### 2. The Widening Extremes of Political Positions

American politics have long had divides...even volatile in their contempt for one another. But there has been a recent emerging in both political parties of more extreme positions.... and these more radical ideas are not the fringe...but have become the primary force of the two sides. As a result...those ideas have moved large segments of the population to positions... which are not only more radical departures from the historic mainstream...but also further polarized and offensive to the opposite perspective. [11]

What these shifts represent, are the context by which so many see something “on the others side” which can be deemed “evil” and call for a war to save the future.

### 3. The Unique Nature of President Trump

As I have said...I have no interest in the idea of simply denouncing everything Trump. But beyond all issues of positions and policies, no one can simply ignore the fact that President Trump was unlike anyone who has held the office of president ...and dramatically so. No president has ever been so known for their openly “rich and famous” lifestyle and so intentional with their offensive nature in speaking about people.

He became the source of the most polarized narratives. To some, he was the great savior, a heathen king whom God choose to save the righteous. For others, he was closer to being a servant of the devil... the most self-serving and destructive force to have ever been given leadership of this country. [12]

Regardless of his positions or policies... his has changed the tone of public discourse... within the cultural war at large... but within the Christian culture as well.

The most recognized historian of Christianity in America, George Marsden. describes how through the 2000s, even though the religious right drew its energy from the culture wars—as it had for decades—it abided by some civil restraints. He says... then came Donald Trump.

**“When Trump was able to add open hatred and resentments to the political-religious stance of ‘true believers,’ it crossed a line,” Marsden said. “Tribal instincts seem to have become overwhelming.”**

And to be clear... the tone and tenor of those on the opposite side has included a breadth of voices that speak with their own smirks and disdain.

### 4. A Pandemic Looking For A Narrative

I am using the term “narrative” to refer to the way we seek some way to explain what is happening around us. The pandemic is no exception. In it’s most basic sense it is a virus... which like others in the past... can be

dangerous to human life. But as the different cost of this pandemic rose... it seems we become ripe with a desire to blame someone.

And all this has put pressure on the fault lines beneath the surface... and struck at the unity of America's Christian culture.

The result is that those who had been able to find unity in Christ...have now become divided...divided by how they assessed the former president.... by their response to racial injustice...and ultimately...by how a church community should connect and protect one another during global pandemic.

I believe that these divides ...these cracks... reflect that our foundations are not secured well... that we have been pulled off center.

## **What will keep us from being pulled off center?**

### **1. Don't allow what is secondary to define and divide us.**

This isn't a simple matter...or a small matter.

This is why the apostles began to define what was primary. It led to the creeds... the central truths that defined what was deemed orthodox... meaning fundamental and central.

There is far more that any community believes than simply the orthodox creeds of the faith...but the point is that such beliefs or positions are not that by which the faith of others is judged.

One of the central lives during what is called the reformation, declared something that has served through the ages...

***"In the essentials - unity; in the non-essentials - liberty; in all things - charity."***

**- Philipp Melancthon**

### **2. Don't allow legitimate fears pull us off center ... and become our "Gospel."**

Culture wars are often rooted in very legitimate fears... whether related to the culture losing it's moral compass... or the government gaining too much control.

Some see danger in the nature of former President Trump and those who downplay the legitimacy of the pandemic. Some see danger in the liberal and progressive nature of the Democratic Party and the threats to freedom in an increasingly secular-socialist direction. I believe that there are truly God-given reasons for some of the fears that may arise in either group. I share many of these fears... more deeply than many may know.

I don't believe that God needs us to dismiss those fears... but they cannot shift the central purpose and passion around which we gather.

When the gathering of the church becomes a pep rally for a cultural war... the center has shifted.

When the greatest applause come when decrying a political foe... the center has shifted.

When we are focused on the need to win... we will focus less on the One who has already own.

C.S. Lewis captured this in his classic work "The Screwtape Letters" in which a senior devil, named Screwtape, advises his apprentice devil and nephew, Wormwood, on how to undermine the work of God. At one point he advises his apprentice regarding whether it would be better to make his "patient"—the young man whom he is tempting—into a patriot or a pacifist.

***"Whichever he adopts, your main task will be the same. Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the 'Cause,' in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce in favour of the British war effort or of pacifism."*** - C.S. Lewis [13]

We do well to guard ourselves from this subtle shift. Let us not allow even legitimate fears to form a cause that justifies false claims and replaces Christ as our true hope.

### **3. Don't compromise our commitment to truth to "serve a narrative."**

The whole prospect of knowing what is true and good has become rather challenging through these times. It's become the age of "fake news" and "alternative facts"... and next week we'll engage this further.

But it's valuable to include here that our commitment to truth is one of the major elements that is often compromised in times of cultural wars.

Many lives and leaders have made so many definitive declarations that at the very least carry a sense of certainty that defies their knowledge...and in many cases...is patently false.

We are all vulnerable to creating truth by fit more than facts.... to grabbing the facts that fit our sides narrative... while avoiding all that doesn't fit. And in the end... those around us...will have less reason to trust the truth we clam about anything...including Christ.

If one affirms the truth of Christ... and denies that there is a pandemic... they may think that they have stood boldly on the side of God... but I believe that they have simply communicated that their relationship to truth is more about fit than facts.

### **4. Don't give wholesale allegiance to any party or person...but Christ.**

When the **day came to vote in the 2020 election**... early in the morning I was sitting and feeling the tension of all the divided allegiance that had become so destructive... and the tension of feeling trapped within the choice that voting called for. And something arose in my spirit... brought forth this **simple affirmation...that Jesus is my king.**

A simple truth ... but in that moment... in my spirit it represented a spiritual defiance that I needed. It was a spiritual declaration I needed to make....a spiritual declaration I found freedom in...and still do. I would vote as faithfully as I could discern but ...I will not let my spirit become morally defined and divided by either side.

**I was reminded that it is the endless effort** of our human nature is to **divide our world between the good and the bad**...and then affirm our goodness. **When Jesus entered a world, the religious leaders** of his "own people" had formed various litmus tests that defined good and evil... and may have welcomed a Messiah to come join the right side. But he didn't. Jesus the Messiah...the savior...didn't just join their defined good side to defeat the bad side. He didn't see the world that way because it isn't that way. He saw a world divided not by those who were good and those who were evil...but those who lacked true peace with God and others.... and could realize it and receive God's work of peace.... and those who lacked true peace with God and others and would deny it and refuse God's work of peace.

**Today I invite us to affirm that Jesus is our king.**

**Pray**

#### **Some Additional Reading:**

The Dissenters Trying to Save Evangelicalism From Itself, David Brooks (The NY Times), Feb. 4, 2022 - [here](#)

The Evangelical Church Is Breaking Apart: Christians must reclaim Jesus from his church. By Peter Wehner (The Atlantic) - [here](#) / Excerpts [here](#)

How To Unite A Divided People: 5 Keys To Leading In An Angry Era By Carey Nieuwhof - [here](#)

#### **Notes:**

1. As J. Warren Smith stated:

“Through the Spirit of adoption, we become sisters and brothers of the Son who is united to the Father. By this union, we become partakers of the divine nature (II Peter 1:4) and so participate in God’s unity. If Christians are united to God the Father through Christ in the Holy Spirit, then they are united to all who are similarly united to God. Our union with other Christians is no more a nominal or metaphorical union than is our union with God. Therefore, all who confess Christ are in their very being bound to each other and so ineluctably share a common identity in Christ. Another way to put it is that because we as individuals are *really* united to Christ Jesus we are necessarily *really* united to all others who are united to Christ – that includes those with whom we share much in common as well as those with whom we are different in just about every way imaginable. This union of believers in Christ is the precondition for the Church’s fulfillment of its mission to be “a light unto the nations.” - J. Warren Smith. From: Once Again into the Breach: Returning to the Mandate for Unity, J. Warren Smith, Sept. 14, 2021 - [here](#)

2. The Evangelical Church Is Breaking Apart: Christians must reclaim Jesus from his church. By Peter Wehner - [here](#)

3. From The Dissenters Trying to Save Evangelicalism From Itself, David Brooks (The NY Times), Feb. 4, 2022 - [here](#)

Another pastor of a large and predominantly largely Black church in Washington, D.C. said, *“It’s been at times agonizing and bewildering. My entire relationship landscape has been rearranged. I’ve lost 20-year friendships. I’ve had great distance inserted into relationships that were once close and I thought would be close for life. I’ve grieved.”* - **Thabiti Anyabwile** (Thabiti Anyabwile is pastor of [Anacostia River Church](#) in Washington, D.C. From The Dissenters Trying to Save Evangelicalism From Itself, David Brooks (The NY Times), Feb. 4, 2022 - [here](#))

4. From: From: Add Pastors to the Great Resignation JANUARY 17, 2022 [here](#)  
See also: Nones Just Keep Rising JANUARY 6, 2022 - [here](#)

5. From: Are More Pastors Quitting Today? – Lifeway: Insights- Church Life & Ministry, May 13, 2021 - [here](#)  
And further regarding pastors, from: Why Pastors Are Stepping Down – and What Congregations Can Do to Help, Mike Leake, 9 July, 2021 - [here](#)

One pastor shared how his frustration came to a boiling point when at the very moment he was attempting to provide care for a family who had just lost a loved one, his phone kept alerting him to notifications from another member. Those notifications were a flood of QAnon theories coming from a church member hoping to enlist the pastor’s help to inform the congregation of the real truth about a “made-up virus.”

“... what many pastors are finding is that their congregants have more allegiance to their personal preferences and political tribes than they do their communities of [faith](#). This has led some pastors to feel as if they are simply feeding the machine instead of making a kingdom impact. Why walk through a field of landmines, give thought to all the differing views, labor to preach biblical sermons, give your heart to engaging hurting and confused people, all to have it dismissed because much of the congregation is disciplined daily by political pundits who could care less about gospel unity? This is why pastors are quitting.”

As one pastor I interviewed put it:

“If the way that the church I was serving is how people are going to respond to their pastors trying to guide through a public health crisis, then I don’t want to be a part of that. Further, if the viewpoint is that pastors should be pushing specific political parties or agitating for overturning elections and that we don’t love Jesus if we won’t fight for a politician, then I don’t want any part of that, either.”

6. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; Galatians 3:26-28; also Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 2:11-19; Ephesians 4:1-6; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Philippians 2:1-3; Romans 14:19; Colossians 3:13-14; 1 John 4:12; Romans 6:5; Romans 12:5; Romans 15:5-6; 1 Peter 3:8)

## 7. We hear this reference to unity across the New Testament:

Acts 2:42

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

The call to be united in Christ... to recognize that the differences that once divided have been done away with... is heard throughout the apostolic calling in the New Testament:

Ephesians 2:11-19 (NIV)

<sup>11</sup> Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called "uncircumcised" by those who call themselves "the circumcision" (that done in the body by the hands of men)--  
<sup>12</sup> remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. <sup>13</sup> But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. <sup>14</sup> For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, <sup>15</sup> by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, <sup>16</sup> and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. <sup>17</sup> He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. <sup>18</sup> For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. <sup>19</sup> Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household,

1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup> For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free--and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Philippians 2:1-3 (NIV)

<sup>1</sup> If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, <sup>2</sup> then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. <sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

1 John 4:12 (NIV)

<sup>12</sup> No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us.

Romans 6:5 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.

Romans 12:5 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.

Romans 15:5-6 (NIV)

<sup>5</sup> May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 3:8 (NIV)

<sup>8</sup> Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble.

Colossians 1:17



“all things hold together in Christ”

Colossians 1:15-18 (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup> He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

8. As Jesus expressed in his prayer for our unity, speaking of those who receive him he said, “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.” (John 17:16)

9. How To Unite A Divided People: 5 Keys To Leading In An Angry Era By Carey Nieuwhof - [here](#)

10. In the more charismatic circles, there are also the particular effects of “prophetic movements” which have grown as independent networks. These networks often create an independent space claiming special revelation so that people can “know what God is really saying and doing.” The emphasis on special revelation can tend to draw lives into a false sense of significance about what must be “discovered” at the expense of what is common and central.

10b. We do well to recall the words of the Apostle Paul....when they faced divisions... that related to following different figures.

*I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. <sup>11</sup> My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." <sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? - 1 Corinthians 1:10-13*

What's he referring to? They had begun to align with different leaders... and it came out when they began to quarrel. And Paul reflects back how foolish this is. Because the one they share in...is the one that matters. Only one was crucified for them... they have only one Savior... one allegiance that they must be united in.

11. Democrats on the left have long sought government involvement to serve equality...but now the progressive element speak openly against wealth and for more “socialism.” Democrats first began to embrace a platform which included supporting a women’s right to have an abortion, when President Bill Clinton, in 1992, set forth the goal that abortion should be “safe, legal, and rare.” Now the phrase has been expunged from any Democratic Party discourse as well as it’s platform. The progressive element simply champion abortion without any room to pause for concerns of conscious. (Captured in: [Losing the Rare in ‘Safe, Legal, and Rare’](#) - DECEMBER 6, 2019, [Caitlin Flanagan](#), *The Atlantic*)

President George W. Bush, deemed a champion on conservatives by most, made a major proposal of the “The Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2007.” This provided the security that conservatives demanded along with the pathway liberals called for. By 2016, Donald Trump would win the Republican race and then presidency based on the most anti-immigrant posture and policies to have been raised by any leader.

See also: [The Partisan Divide On Political Values Grows Even Wider](#) Pew Research, October 5, 2017

12. I believe that it is vital to consider the difference between supporting some “Christian values” and his presidency’s impact on the Gospel and it’s witness of Christ. President Trump clearly gave support to three significant positions which conservative Evangelical’s have valued: support for changing the legal status of abortion in the future through judges, support for Israel, and support for some form of “religious freedom.”

What I believe must be recognized, is that however significant these positions may be, they were positions largely devoid of a personal regard that matched. If one imposes positions that are to reflect care... bit shows little regard for valuing others... it can raise more resistance than righteousness. To those who see Trump as simply "rough around the edges"... his positions will seem to further the work of Jesus. To those who see Trump as more centered in himself... his name, his fame, his power... and defined more by a narcissistic need for loyalty that demeans all that threaten him... his nature will not be deemed fitting to associate with the name and nature of Christ.

As George Marsden notes, "Many Christian followers of Trump "have come to see a gospel of hatreds, resentments, vilifications, put-downs, and insults as expressions of their Christianity, for which they too should be willing to fight." (From: *The Evangelical Church Is Breaking Apart: Christians must reclaim Jesus from his church.* By Peter Wehner - [here](#))

David Brooks wrote:

"The proximate cause of all this disruption is Trump. But that is not the deepest cause. Trump is merely the embodiment of many of the raw wounds that already existed in parts of the white evangelical world: misogyny, racism, racial obliviousness, celebrity worship, resentment and the willingness to sacrifice principle for power. Power is the core problem here."

I asked many evangelical leaders who are wary of Trump if they thought their movement would fracture. Most said it already has. Roughly 80 percent of white evangelical voters supported Trump in 2020. But it is often a minority of this group who spark bitter conflicts and want their church to be on war footing all the time.

There can probably be no evangelical renewal if the movement does not divorce itself from the lust for partisan political power. Over more than a century, Catholics have established a doctrine of social teaching that helps them understand how the church can be active in civic life without being corrupted by partisan politics. Protestants do not have this kind of doctrine.

Those who are leading the evangelical renewal know they need one."

From: *The Dissenters Trying to Save Evangelicalism From Itself*, David Brooks (The NY Times), Feb. 4, 2022 - [here](#)

13. C.S. Lewis, "The Screwtape Letters" (Letter VII)