

# Thoughts From Your Pastor

## *How Did We Get Here?*

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Scripture: Assorted

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So today's going to look a little different than my normal messages because I believe that we have reached or we are getting very close to a boiling point in our society. I get asked questions all the time through emails and texts and people coming into my office about my beliefs and about what I believe is a biblical response to where we find ourselves as a country and as a nation, especially politically.

And sometimes through those conversations and emails, I'm actually told what I should believe. I'm cautious about how I answer these types of questions because I don't want to unintentionally turn somebody away from Jesus because of how I answer their political question. And of course, my number one goal in life is to point people towards Jesus. That is why I am here. It's what I am passionate about. And I believe it's why God has us here.

Now, maybe I'm getting older or maybe it's just more foolish, but I believe that now is a time that I need to address all of these questions publicly. I've never shied away from them. I've answered these questions when you come into my office or send me an email, but I have intentionally not done it from this stage. But today I am going to give it a shot at the risk of offending some.

I actually feel it's my duty with this position to address some of the debate that is going on because up to this point, my idea, my method for how to handle this has just been to remain silent from this stage so that I don't push somebody in the wrong direction. But what has happened, and I believe there's a lot more people like me that need to speak up, is those of us that are in the middle, those of us that are trying to stay true to God's Word, those of us that are trying to use common sense have been quiet, and you have only heard from the extreme views.

We've come to believe that these extreme views are normal and they're not. I think the majority of us would find ourselves more in the middle, and our voice needs to be heard so that we can fix the problem that we have. And so today, I am going to give you my thoughts on how we have arrived here. So I'm just being honest with you, these are just your pastor's thoughts. Of course, my goal is to look at Scripture and to make sure that that is the foundation for everything we discuss.

So the first question that you and I need to answer before we even jump into some of this other stuff is, how did we get here as a country? As I've gotten older, I've begun to enjoy history a little more, and so I study a little more of what that is. And so I am going to share with you my perspective on how we have arrived where we are as a country.

For a long time in the history of the United States of America, most people in our country, I would even say, the overwhelming majority had similar worldviews. Those that started with the foundation of our country. And so our values, our morals as a country, our ideals as a country came from a core Judeo-Christian belief system. That is where the foundation was because the majority of our founders of our nation had that as their belief system.

And I believe for many years because of that, America has experienced common grace, the common grace of God due to those morals and those foundational values of our founders. Now, for some of you, this term common grace might be new. So what do I mean by common grace? What I mean is the undeserved, universal goodness of God to all people through various blessings like health and favor and prosperity.

And we would say as a nation, we have experienced those things. Now, what do I mean? Why are we experiencing God's common grace because of those Judeo-Christian values? Again, it is just common sense for me. As a believer in Jesus Christ, I believe in a Creator God, and I believe that He gave us His Word. So it would only make sense that a nation, a family, an individual will operate better in life if they are following those commands in Scripture than if they're not.

Does that make sense? Country A over here has Judeo-Christian foundational values. I believe that that country is going to be more successful, more prosperous just because of the world in which we live, because of how God has created us than country B who doesn't have those morals. Now, does this mean that it's going to be perfect? Absolutely not. Not going to be perfect. There are going to be mistakes. There's going to be issues that we deal with because we do live in a fallen world.

But generally speaking, as you study the history of our world, societies function better when they follow God's values. But being the melting pot that we are, meaning that we have come from all different lands, all different nations to the United States of America, over the years, these Judeo-Christian values have occupied less and less a percentage of our population. Does that make sense?

More people come in, they have different beliefs, they come into our country, and so now this overwhelming majority that has Judeo-Christian values is not the overwhelming majority. Ideals and ideas and values that used to be givens and common sense to those with a Judeo-Christian worldview are becoming decreasingly common. It's not as common anymore to have those. Now pair that with the fact that a core belief of the foundation and the formation of the United States of America was this idea of freedom of religion.

Our founders felt strongly that it was not appropriate to force a particular religion on people and that everyone should have the freedom to make their own choice as to what they believe to be true. And in case you wonder, I have the same belief. I believe in the freedom of religion. We should not force our faith on other people. Now, as a country, this worked for many years because even though Judeo-Christian beliefs weren't forced on the population, the overwhelming majority held them, including those in leadership.

Because every person that had those beliefs would pass them on to their children and then pass them on to their children. And naturally, you believe what your parents would teach you. And so for a long time in our history, these Judeo-Christian values and morals were the foundation of our culture. Now, for much of our history, because of that, both political parties held similar views on moral matters, but had differing views on issues like fiscal management, government regulation, foreign policy, and taxes.

And just so you know, the Bible doesn't talk about those things. Those are not moral, ethical things. Those are just preferences. And we can argue and debate about those things. But morally, both political parties were on the same page. Therefore, as a country, no matter who was in charge, we naturally worked from a Christian worldview for much of our history. As the population continues to grow, so does the number of individuals who adhere to a different worldview.

What once was a small minority with little power or voice has now grown into a significant percentage of our population. At some point along the way, political figures discovered that as a country, we no longer held common beliefs on moral issues. Political people started to recognize this, and so politicians began to run on platforms that had at its foundation moral stances.

No longer things like taxes or government regulation or business or things like that. Now, people were running on a platform that had moral issues as the very foundation of their platform. And these politicians found that

they could seduce, and I use that word intentionally, they could seduce a large segment of society to vote for them by standing on one side of a moral issue or the other. We're all tracking, right?

So now morals became a part of our political system, things that naturally we believed were right or wrong. And when those in the minority recognized an opportunity to be the majority, they took it. And as always, it's about power. It's about money. It's about influence. And this minority believed that if they could change the dynamics of our country from the inside out, they would eventually have the numbers that they need to vote into power, those who held their beliefs.

And this is where things start to get political because you need the numbers of the population in your favor to accomplish your agenda or your goals in a democracy. You guys get that, right? So you have to win over all of these little pockets of the country. You have to get their votes so that you can get in power. And so they began to recognize this. And for the first time in our country, moral issues became political issues. And we have been in this death spiral for at least a few decades now, and it seems to be only getting worse.

Am I the only one that sees that? I call it a death spiral because I think that's what we're in. We're in this death spiral where moral issues have become political issues. Now, I'm going to make a very dangerous and risky statement. I have never heard anyone come to kind of this conclusion before about what is happening, but as I pray that God would allow me to use my voice to speak reason into people, this is what I feel has happened. A large portion of our country, many of us probably included in this, looks back at the history of America with fondness, good memories.

Why? Because we can see God's grace and His blessing upon our ancestors. We think about our parents and our grandparents and our great-grandparents. And for many of us, they had good lives. They worked hard. They had the freedom of religion and freedom of speech, and they lived in a great country, and they fought for what was right. And so we look back on that with fondness. And because of that, you and I often also have the ability then to overlook some of the atrocities and evils that existed because overall it was good.

Does that make sense? Nobody's going to say it was perfect, but we can overlook some of those things because it was good. And so when these individuals that I've just described hear the slogan, "Make America Great Again," it strikes a chord. They become positive for believers that hear that phrase. This slogan, when they hear that, it represents going back to Christian conservative values that then impacted the laws and the ideals of our society.

That's what they hear when they hear "Make America Great Again." For unbelievers, the slogan represents going back to a time when those in the minority didn't have a voice. Understand the difference here. The same language, the same words, they're hearing something different. Therefore, even on that side of the political party of the aisle, you see very different and competing views and ideas. One sees moral, Christian values, good things.

The other people on the same side of the aisle see a time when the minority didn't have a voice and they actually prefer that. This is on one side. I'm not speaking for everybody. I'm just saying some. The rest of our country, those that aren't in the majority, look back at our history, those that are not in the majority, and they see an abuse of power and a lack of love. And so when they hear a slogan like, "Make America Great Again," it strikes a different chord, and it brings up fear. For believers that would be on the other side of the aisle, this slogan represents going back to unbiblical ideals.

And for the unbeliever, it's even worse. They view the slogan as going back to hate and racism and abuse and hurt. And so there's all of this fighting because people are hearing the same words but having two completely different messages. And so the enemy, Satan, has used this to his advantage and is causing division even amongst believers in the church. And I think it's time we fight back against it. Here we have politics.

And you can go back even a little further besides what we're dealing with now and the slogan, "Make America Great Again." And you go back to an administration before that, and the slogan for that administration was hope. Well, that can mean different things to different people too, can't it? Hope can mean hope for the minority to be able to have more power and have a voice and do what they want. And hope can mean I hope we go back to Christian values and Christian morals. And so the enemy takes these slogans. He takes these words and he twists them. And he causes infighting even amongst believers.

And so my goal today is to give you what should our response be? What should our response be as the church? So I'm going to pray because two of the things that you're not supposed to talk about amongst family and friends are politics and religion. And now we're going to talk about both. But again, I feel that those with common sense and yes, I'm assuming I have common sense. Those with common sense need to talk about this because the extremes are so far out there, and I don't want you guys to think that's normal.

It's not normal, and it's not helping. It's only making things worse. So let me pray, and then I will tell you what I believe our response should be. Heavenly Father, these are not easy topics. They're topics where we can be easily offended. They're topics that the enemy can weasel his way into and cause division and cause hate and cause hurt. And so my prayer is that your spirit would fill this room and the rooms of anybody that's listening or watching, and that we would be focused on you today, that you would grant us wisdom as how we move forward in this crazy world in which we find ourselves.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Here's the first thing that I think we need to do, and I've said it over and over again in many Sundays and even in this message already, but stop letting politics divide the church. Stop letting politics divide the church. I wish that there was a way for me to accurately explain to you how frustrated I am with how much division there is in the church because of politics. I feel that we have lost our focus.

We have lost what it's important so much so that I even feel bad about taking a Sunday to do a message like this because Jesus was very clear in Matthew 6:33 where our focus was to be. Jesus said, "But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well. We cannot go wrong if we keep our focus on Jesus and His Word. We should not get distracted by other things.

We all to that point then should be willing to lose so the kingdom can win." You and I should all be willing to lose so the kingdom of God can win. And instead, we have allowed the enemy to deceive us. And when I say us, I mean the American church into believing that as the American church, our number one goal again, notice I said number one goal as followers of Jesus is to make sure that America remains a Christian nation by whatever means possible.

I'm going to say that again. We have been deceived into believing as the church that our number one goal as followers of Jesus is to make sure that America remains a Christian nation by whatever means possible. And now I'm going to say an even more dangerous statement. As a side note, I personally believe that if that is our goal, our number one goal as a church, we are a lot closer to starting a crusade than a revival. I told you it was a dangerous statement. Now, do you guys think I want America to be a Christian nation?

I hope you can say yes. Yes, of course I do. Of course I do. But is that my number one goal? No. My number one goal is to point people to Jesus. And some of you may say, "Well, Pastor, how can you say that? Isn't it important?" Of course, it's important. Of course, I look at the things that are happening in our world and I think we've lost our minds. Of course that. But can I say this loud and clear? It's not what Jesus focused on.

When I read in the Gospels about what Jesus wanted and what he did, he had very little concern for the nation of Israel when he came, and he was not concerned about overthrowing Rome. You guys read the same gospels I read, right? Becoming a nation again in Israel becoming a nation and becoming a world power. That's not what Jesus' agenda was. That's what the Jews wanted. That's what his disciples wanted. They thought he was going to establish this new kingdom. It's certainly what the religious leaders wanted, which is why they had him killed.

Because he wasn't focusing on what they wanted him to focus on. He wasn't focusing on an earthly kingdom. He was focusing on a heavenly kingdom, the kingdom of God. He did not fight against Rome. He did not look to establish a Christian nation. Do you know that Jesus could have done that with just a snap of his fingers? He could have established a Christian nation overnight, but that's not what he did. Instead, he came to establish the kingdom of God through his death and resurrection. Isn't that how you and I are supposed to fight?

Through our death, be willing to lose because somehow when you lose, you win. Listen to this. Jesus didn't need worldly power to transform the world, and neither do we. Jesus didn't need worldly or political power to transform the world, and neither do we. And so here is the encouragement. I hope I'm not yelling at you guys. I'm just passionate. All right. I'm sorry. This is for me too. You and I need to spend more time worrying about the kingdom of God than about the kingdoms of this world.

More time worrying about the kingdom of God. Now, I had four points that I wanted to get through today, and first service only got through two. We're probably going to only get through two as well. So this is point number two. Stop viewing the world through a political lens and start viewing it through a biblical lens. I'm going to give you some examples. This might be tough for some of you. For others of you, you're going to be right in line. Example number one, I am against abortion because of my understanding of Scripture, not because I'm republican.

So this is how I get there. Some of you might say, "Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Wow wow Let me tell you how I get there. I'm looking at Scripture." Genesis chapter 1:27 says, "So God created mankind in His own image. In the image of God He created them, male and female, He created them. With that verse and many other verses, I can come to a foundational truth of my belief and about Scripture, that all humans are created in the image of God. And because of that, they have intrinsic value. Every person I run into has intrinsic value.

Born, unborn, male, female. It doesn't matter. Everybody has value because they are created in the image of God. That's point number one. Point number two, Psalm 139, and again, there are other verses I could point to. Because then the question becomes, "Well, okay, pastor, I also think that people have intrinsic value. But when does life start?" Well, here's how I answer that question based on Scripture. Psalm 139:13 says, "For God, you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb." And there are other verses that lead me to believe as I read Scripture that life begins at conception.

That's what I believe to be true as I read Scripture. How else can I interpret the fact that God is knitting someone together in their mother's womb? Isn't that when life begins? That's my belief. Then we go on to Exodus chapter 20, verse 13, "You shall not murder." So taking all of these things together, I believe that taking the life of a child in her mother's womb is murder. Therefore, my biblical opinion, not my political opinion, is that abortion is immoral.

I don't care what side of the aisle people want to take that stance on. That's going to be my stance because of the Bible, not because of politics. Now, you guys are all with me on number one. Let's get to example number two. I believe that we should take care of immigrants and the less fortunate because of my understanding of scripture, not because I'm a Democrat. Leviticus chapter 19 verses 33 and 34. Why do I believe that biblically? Because we read, "When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them.

The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native born. Love them as yourself." Why? Because you were foreigners in Egypt as speaking to Israel, and I am the Lord your God. As God gives this command, he's speaking to the Israelites, and he says, "You guys know what it means to be a foreigner in a foreign land, don't you?" And how you were mistreated, and how people thought you were a second-rate citizen, and how people didn't care for you. Since you know that, and since it is God's heart to take care of the less fortunate, you should treat them well.

I want you to notice as we read that in Leviticus, there was no precursor for how they got here, right? Now, I'm not going to get into the political debate of whether we should have walls or not walls because that's political. I can't use scripture to determine what's right or wrong there necessarily. People can make an argument, but I can tell you once they're here, what am I to do? Love them. Love them. Care for them. This is the heart of God. Psalm 82:3. Defend the weak and the fatherless. Uphold the cause of the poor and the oppressed.

All over through Scripture, you see this over and over again that our call is to love others. It is the heart of God. Therefore, my biblical opinion is that we should treat immigrants and the weak and the fatherless with love. My biblical opinion, not political opinion. Let's do one more because I haven't offended enough people yet. Example number three. I don't support gay marriage, not because I am against them having rights or because I think they are evil or because I am a Republican.

I don't support gay marriage because I believe Scripture teaches us that it is immoral and it is not what God intended. Therefore, it is not what is best for us and it is not what is best for you. I'm not talking about being same-sex attracted. I am talking about the active gay lifestyle. I am making a separation there because I can't control who people are attracted or not attracted to. And I'm not even going to say that's a sin or not a sin. It's a struggle. We all have struggles.

And because of all the different ages in here, I can't go into the details, but you understand what I'm saying when I say the act of lifestyle, right? Talking about the act. Now you say, "Well, pastor, where do you get that?" That's all. People want to argue with me all the time. They say, "You're looking at the Old Testament. There's other things in the Old Testament that were part of the Old Law that we don't follow anymore." And so I say, "Fine. I don't need to begin my argument there.

Let's begin in the New Testament in Romans chapter 1, where we are given very clear commands from Scripture." Romans 1:24, we read, "Therefore, God gave them mankind over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another." Now, if you just stop there, of course, there's sexual impurity in all types of relationships, even male-female relationships. So you say, "That's not enough proof, pastor." Well, let's keep reading.

Verse 26 and 27. "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones." Can he be any more clear there? So there are natural sexual relations that God has created. There are natural, normal, expected relationships in the created order. And there are unnatural ones because we live in a sinful and fallen world.

He goes on, "In the same way, the men also abandoned their natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another, so much so that men committed shameful acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their error." Therefore, I don't need any more Scripture. My biblical opinion is that gay marriage and the lifestyle that goes along with that is immoral. But I should still love them because of example one and two above.

Everybody has intrinsic value because they're created in the image of God. And so I'm to love them and I'm to take care of them and I'm to watch over them. Do you think it's possible that I can live in this world and I could have somebody sit across the table from me that's living in a homosexual lifestyle and tell them that I believe their lifestyle is wrong and sinful while at the same time still tell them I love them. I do. I hope so because that's my goal. That's my goal. Now some of you may say, "Okay, when pastor, how does that flesh itself out?

What does that mean? What does it mean to not condone their lifestyle and not agree with their lifestyle but still love them? I have a granddaughter. I have a grandson. I have a nephew. I have a niece. They're living in this lifestyle and they're going to get married and they want me to go to the wedding. What am I supposed to do? I'm not going to answer that question. I'm not going to answer that question because I don't know what it looks

like for you to not condone their lifestyle and yet still love them. And I've had many people come into my office and ask that type of question.

And if I'm honest with you guys because I have nothing to hide, I would not give you an answer to that question from the stage because the answer would be different when I hear your story and your situation. Because every situation is different. I don't know the conversations you've had. I don't know what they know you believe or think. I don't know any of that. I can't give an answer to that question, just a blanket answer. I can't do that. Now, there's many more examples that I could share, but I know that I didn't want to offend everybody. So I'm going to stop there, but you get the point.

We should be seeking the Word of God for our guidance and direction and not seeking a political party or a candidate or anything else. We should be focusing on the Word of God. Now, in first service, I didn't know how to end because I didn't get to go where I wanted to go. And I asked that service if they promised if I continue this message next week, if they would still come back. I'm going to ask you the same thing. You're still going to come back? I'll continue this next week. I have two more points that I want to make. Making sure that I'm pointing us towards Jesus.

I hope you guys are getting that. I am pointing us towards Jesus. Even though this has to do with politics, I'm not pointing you anywhere. I'm pointing you towards Jesus. And I hope you also recognize that many of our struggles in this area come from misplaced priorities, not bad things. Of course, I want us to become a Christian nation. Of course, I would love that Christian values rule the decisions that are made in our world, but in no way am I going to allow that to be more important than leading somebody to Christ? I'm going to end it this way.

Before you react, as you have conversations with neighbors and family and friends, before you speak, take a minute to process your thoughts and filter it through the Word of God. I know that this has become cliché, but I'm going to go back to my teenage years. What you should really do when you're having a conversation about this topic, as you're making decisions about what you are going to do, you should answer the question, "What would Jesus do?" That should be our response. What would Jesus do?

How would He respond? And then you and I should move forward in that same way as we follow His example. I know it's cliché, but it's true. And we can find out what Jesus would do by looking at His Word. All right, I'm going to close in prayer, and I'm not going to open my emails this afternoon, all right? You guys can send me whatever you want. I'll see it tomorrow. Let me pray. Heavenly Father, again, just as a moment of confession before this family here, I only talk about this issue because I feel you have called me to talk about this issue.

No intention to offend anybody or push anybody away but to speak truth into a difficult situation. And I know that we as a family are wrestling with it because I have had the questions that have come. And Lord, as always, it is my desire to point people back to you and to point people back to Your Word that we would grow in our understanding of who you are. And Father, that we would fight against the enemy in this area, that He would not be allowed to use it to cause division, cause us to lose our focus, or to know what our main intentions are.

And so, God, would you receive the praise? We ask this in Jesus' name.