



SEPARATION OF CHURCH AND HATE

Civility
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SUNDAY MESSAGE QUESTIONS

The Crossing Church

Las Vegas, Nevada

OPENING

We are beginning a four-week series entitled “Separation of Church and Hate.” We’ve all heard of separation of church and state, meaning that the government can’t impose any one religion upon the people in the

United States, but hate? Do we hate everything that is not associated with our chosen faith? This is an opportunity to evaluate our behavior in this current political environment and respond to it with love and civility. The goal for this series is to teach us to **disagree politically and love unconditionally**. Let’s listen, learn and love.

SCRIPTURE¹

James 1:19-21 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

OBSERVATION

Billy Graham used to say, “I’m not for the left wing or the right wing. I’m for the whole bird.” Humorous, but truly unity is the best possible purpose to hope for, isn’t it? There is a new survey out that says eight of ten Americans believe politics to be their greatest source of stress in life. So we are going to discuss God’s perspective on this subject which will make some of us really nervous and others who are really fired up that Pastor Shane is finally talking about politics, are excited because they want the church to support their side of political issues!

Question: What is the biggest stressor in your life? If you answered “politics,” what about it is stressing you?

Twenty years ago we envisioned a multi-generational, multi-cultural, multi-racial, and multi-ethnic Crossing congregation sitting together and worshiping God – this also includes people with diverse political opinions. The truth is that republicans are absolutely convinced that Jesus would be one of them because of His values; democrats would say He would be a democrat because of His care and concern for people. So we made the decision that we would dedicate our lives to raising the banner of Christ and not the flags of republicans or democrats. Can you imagine how many people we could have turned away from our church and, perhaps, Christ Himself, with that kind of divisive hypocrisy? When we interpret Jesus’ words through our political filter, it’s amazing how often He agrees with us. So, people are viewing everything political through filters of red or blue.

¹ All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

Question: How can you engage your FAITH life filter ahead of your POLITICAL filter?

APPLICATION

Over the next four weeks we are going to talk about four responses to this subject: **Civility, Dignity, Humility and Unity**. Beginning with civility – we have lost it! In the past we could respectfully disagree with someone, but now there is so much anger involved in political conversation. Instead of criticizing content we've begun criticizing character; instead of disagreeing, we decide the other person is an idiot because he disagrees with us! Now we are judging people and we know what God thinks about that. We need to change the way we respond to one another.

Whenever we are having an argument our minds start shutting down, our ears stop listening, and our hearts get hard. James says, in order to produce the righteousness God desires, we have to respond differently. **1) We need to be quick to listen.** Isn't that exactly what we want others to do for us? Most of us do the opposite - thinking about what we are going to say next and not hearing what the other person is saying. We need to listen to people who experience the world differently than we do – listen to their stories, their experiences, why they believe as they do, and listen to people who don't look like us. Sometimes we don't know why they would "do that," or "think that" or "believe that" or "say that." And we will never know if we don't ask. In our Rooted groups we are learning how to listen for God. Lives are being changed as our Almighty Father reaches out to guide us when we pray and listen. **2) We need to be slow to speak.** The minute we start speaking, we stop listening. We have our agenda, your agenda, and God's agenda in the mix of conversation and things can quickly get out of hand if we are speaking and not listening.

Question: How are you listening to your spouse, your children, your friends? How could you improve your relationships with them?

Social media is a culprit in this scenario, too because when we click on a news article, it will feed us many more stories like that one and our lives become narrower and narrower. It is designed to re-enforce what we already believe and not to open our minds to other ideas.

Question: How much is social media influencing your life? How can you objectively evaluate its effect?

3) We need to be slow to anger. This is both a result and a decision. If we are quick to listen and slow to speak, we are less likely to be angry. Some of us blow up and feel better – others clam up and sulk. (Passive-aggressives are so frustrating!) Jesus became angry at the money changers, but it was because they were disrespecting God's temple. This is righteous anger and not what we are talking about. Our human anger produces only what we desire because we know we are right and want others to know it, too. This goes against what God desires. He wants us to get rid of dishonoring others, malice, and getting even. He loves humility and honoring His values.

Question: Tell us about a conversation you have had recently with a republican/democrat that angered you. How did that turn out?

Question: What can you do to short-circuit your anger?

Here are four questions to ask ourselves: 1) Is what I'm going to say true or is it gossip? 2) Is what I'm going to say helpful and intended to build others up? 3) Is what I'm going to say personal and intended to wound another? 4) Is what I'm going to say loving the way Jesus is loving? It takes honest introspection to answer these questions.

Question: Which ones of these four questions are you violating? Have you applied your faith filter?

We need to engage in civil conversations that represent Jesus. When we lead with the kindness of Christ in these circumstances, we don't hinder the faith of others.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, we know that our society is in a mess because of political disagreements. This is not the world You created for us, so help us return to civility, so that we can represent Your Son in a loving way which results in righteousness and harmony. In Jesus' name. Amen.