

"It's Not About Politics"

By Pastor Joe Stillone

The church, in her 2,000-year history, has always swam against the tide. If it's swimming with the tide, it's not being the church.

The shifts and current seismic fissures in our nation are resulting in ever-growing tension as cultural values clash.

When the culture shifts...

we have 3 options for navigating this tension:

- 1) **Surrender** to the parts of the culture that are becoming the dominant worldview.
- 2) **Separate** from the parts of the culture that are in opposition to our faith.
- 3) **Engage** with the culture with Godly (salt & light) influence.

God shows us the way to respond to the shifting sands of the culture: *live as God's salt and light in the world influencing and impacting both our culture and those around us* (cf. Matt. 5:13-16).

Why would God care that the followers of Jesus have this kind of effect on the world around them? Because as Abraham Kuyper, who as prime minister of the Netherlands in the 1800s, famously said,

"There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"

So practically speaking, what is a Christian to do when the foundations which our culture is built upon dramatically shift right under our feet?

There are two "**Don'ts**" and two "**Dos**" that are vitally important if the follower of Jesus hopes to have a preserving (i.e. salt) and illuminating (i.e. light) influence on their world:

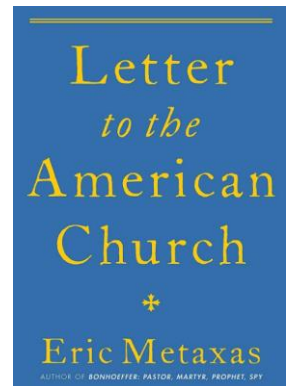
- **DON'T shrug your shoulders and wring your hands.**
- **DO engage and speak up.**
- **DON'T respond with hate or anger.**
- **DO live in hope.**

1. DON'T Shrug...

- We DON'T shrug and say, "that's just politics."
- We DON'T shrug and say, "What can I do?"
- We DON'T shrug and say, "It doesn't affect me or my family."
- We DON'T shrug and say, "It doesn't matter; this is the new normal, get used to it."

This book contains powerful insights into the parallels between the Church in America today and the Church in a previous time in history.

The short dramatization "Sing A Little Louder" starkly highlights how the German Church "lost its saltiness" (cf. Matt. 5:13) when their country needed their influence more than ever.



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ofcs9Y7qL4s>

2. DO Engage & Speak Up

"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34)

- We DO engage the culture and speak up as Jesus would.
- We DO engage people (point them to Jesus) and speak life into the confusion in the world.

"Love does not delight in evil but rejoices in the truth." (1 Corinthians 13:6)

God warns us regarding the consequences of the inaction.

"If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does not He who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not He who guards your life know it? Will He not repay everyone according to what they have done?" (Proverbs 24:12)

3. DON'T Respond with Hate or Anger

Hate and anger are not what the world needs more of.

In fact, Jesus tells His followers to do the opposite (which was radical to the 1st century world's way of thinking): He says, love our "cultural enemies."

Here is something that was hard for me to accept but we know it's true: the only person who can pull off "righteous anger" without sinning, is God. Even with the terrible abuses in the culture of that day, the Apostle Paul tells Christians to "get rid of anger" (cf. Eph. 4:31; Col. 3:8).

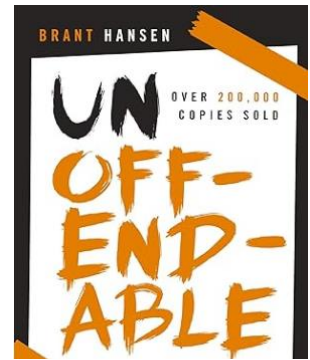
The Pharisees, seeking separation, pulled away from the sinners. Jesus seeking to be used by the Father to bring reconciliation, moves toward the sinners.

UNOFFENDABLE:

“When the church is emulating the Lord, we are not about condemning people and the culture; we’re all about redeeming them.”

I recommend this book for a deeper dive on this Christlike attitude.

Yes, there are things that are terribly wrong in our nation and in our culture that won't be changed by our venting or self-justifying righteous anger. No, God wants us for the sake of the next generation to engage and partner with Him in restoring what's been lost or is tottering toward ruin.



So if we're going to genuinely be light and salt, it will mean keeping our heads out of the sand and removing the tight seal on our lips; and **stepping up to...**

1. engage by learning the Biblical worldview and getting informed about every election.
2. engage & speak up about what values you (and more importantly God) support(s).
3. engage & speak up when talking to and teaching your children (and grandchildren).
4. engage & speak up when talking to friends.
5. engage & speak up by discussing God's worldview with those in your sphere of influence.
6. engage & speak up when you're in the voting booth.
7. engage & invite believers to get out and influence by voting according to our Faith values.
8. engage & speak up with time and dollars invested in civic and community life.

If you want to be inspired by the true story of an unlikely world-changer whose faith compelled her to be salt and light in a very dark time in America, I highly recommend the movie “Cabrini.”

Movie Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uuFkt3w-7kl>

4. DO Live in Hope (that God is at work and in control)

The true King is coming, and He will have the last Word and set all things right (cf. Rev. 7:17 & 17:14). So, when you get discouraged, let the motto of the people of Britain (as the bombs fell during War World II) characterize our approach: “Stay Calm and Carry On” (cf. Jude 17-25).

In the meantime, the Lord Jesus calls us to “*Do the works of Him who sent you,*” while we still have daylight and before the night comes (cf. John 9:4). For the sake of the next generation and the sake of our Christian witness in the world, decide now what faith-filled steps you'll take in the coming season so that God can use you to be an influence in your world?