



Contact Us:

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Meeting Times:

Sunday:

Bible Study9:45 AM
Worship10:40 AM
Care, Inc. Service N/A
Worship 6:00 PM

Wednesday:

Ladies Bible Class N/A
Bible Study 7:00 PM

Elders:

Gene Bannister..... Billy Chism

Deacons:

Mike Bannister..... Don Smith

John Barnum

Preacher:

Johnny McCaghren

Works We Support:

Cherokee Home for Children
Gospel Broadcast Network
Heart of Texas Bible Camp (Bangs)
Mission Printing
Rohan Jones, Africa
World Bible School

America's Divide Has Invaded the Church. How Will We Stop It?

We've known for years that the ideological divide in our nation was growing, but this year certainly feels like we've crossed a point of no return.

The debate regarding masks still rages daily as state and local governments hand down their decisions and people view each other as either enablers of tyranny or endangerers of life. Black Lives Matter has provoked people to make passionate arguments about the nature of the movement and its influence on society, with the pro side viewing the anti side as racists, and the anti side viewing the pro side as destructive Marxists. And, somehow almost relegated to a footnote, we have the Trump vs. Biden presidential race, in which both sides view the other as stupid and/or evil for supporting their candidate. Cancel culture has been the undercurrent to it all, as both sides begin to agree that the other should not be allowed a platform or even a livelihood. For example, a Cato survey found that 50% of strong liberals and 36% of strong conservatives believe corporate executives should be fired if they donate to the opposition's candidate.

While these are the issues of today, they will not simply go away as BLM protests disperse, the Coronavirus fades, and we move forward with whichever President is elected for the next 4 years. Underlying issues are driving these divisions and will inevitably cause further divisions down the road. Can the media be trusted despite a possible slight bias, or are they irredeemably dishonest? Should we move toward a more socialist government, or should we run in the opposite direction? Are conspiracy theories true, or is the official story true? Has America been a mostly good nation with a few glaring flaws, or has it been broken from the start and in need of complete restoration?

The biggest problem about the divide is that it is not merely ideological. It is personal. It's not a disagreement about the best way forward but about who has the moral high ground. The people on the other side don't just disagree, the thinking goes. *Rather, they're bad people who must be defeated.* People in the middle are also bad because their compromise is letting the bad guys win.

Here's where the problem comes home: these divides exist in our pews, too. As the national split grows more tangible, we are foolish to think it won't become more tangible among Christians, too. I know Christians who post about how stupid and wrong Trump supporters are, and I know Christians who post about how stupid and wrong anti-Trump people are. And they sit in the pews together every Sunday. I know Christians who believe BLM should have our full support, and anyone who disagrees is a racist, and I know Christians who believe BLM should receive our full opposition, and anyone who disagrees is a racist. And they sit in the pews together every Sunday. I know Christians who feel anti-mask people are cruelly inconsiderate of other people's health, and I know Christians who feel pro-mask people are tacitly accepting a new tyranny. And they sit in the pews together (virtually now, in many cases) every Sunday. People from both sides of each of these issues are reading this list, taking their side on each issue, and nodding their head at the characterization of the other side while disagreeing with the characterization of their side.

For the nation, the tug of war will not end with one side accepting the other's victory. The ideological gap is too wide when giving in means living under ideologies that are abhorrent. I don't know how far down the road the finish line will be crossed, but as of this year the march toward a national breakup seems to be well underway. If we don't turn the ship around, we in the church are heading to the exact same fate. Our unity is in the process of being shattered as we take sides on every single news issue.

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Let us know if you want to study
the Bible to know more about
Christ and His Church.

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I hope we can agree on one thing to this point: we cannot move forward this way. To any Christian who has ever read John 17, the existence of this kind of distrust and dislike of each other within the church family should be a stomach-turning, tear-inducing, heartbreaking thought. Jesus commanded us to love each other with His brand of self-sacrificial love, and yet here we are dividing over politics. John told us that if we hate our brother then we can't say we love God, and yet we have Christians posting about how stupid their fellow Christians are. Something has to change.

So what's the solution? Let's explore a few options.

"We just need to set them straight." Unfortunately, the people on the other side feel the exact same about you. On an issue such as masks, for example, America's ideological divide means no matter where a person stands, they can find sources that tell them they are in the right and everyone else is in the wrong.

"We're going to have to go our separate ways." I have no doubt that some, if given the choice, would rather drive their ideological opponents out of the church by their efforts to save America than maintain the unity of the church even though it might mean America's demise. This attitude must be repented of anywhere it exists. If our plans to fix the world weaken the church in the process, we stand in opposition to God and should have no expectation of success.

"We need to listen to each other." I understand the sentiment. I've pushed for it numerous times over the last few years. But I no longer believe we're in a place where that is a valid strategy anymore. People who view others as bad people, as a threat to their family and their way of life, aren't interested in hearing each other out. They don't seek to spend time together. What are church leaders going to do? Lock people in a room together and hope it leads to fewer controversial Facebook posts by the two parties?

"We should just keep our politics to ourselves." I've also advocated this approach previously, and I also believe it, too, is now outdated. The vitriol is such that even if a person isn't broadcasting their views, they will inevitably have a Christian or an evangelistic contact in their life who will hold opposing views. If the person has not dialed back their consumption of the good vs. evil narrative, then it will damage their ability to love the other.

I'm going to offer this next point as merely my recommendation. I don't offer this authoritatively as "the way" to reunite us. It's simply the only way I see in which we can be faithful and refrain from splitting the church going forward.

Redevelop a sense of mission. Most Christians seem to have no sense of mission whatsoever, and that alone is the cause of much of our strife. When we aren't humbly submitted to serving others in the greater service of God, we start getting defensive of our desires. The answer to the coming political split is to begin discipling Christians – both from the pulpit and especially through relationships – to have a sense of mission. As Paul became all things to all men to win some, so must we (1 Corinthians 9).

To give real world examples, a Christian who is mission-minded will not broadcast his every opinion on the issues of the day, because he knows it will alienate some of those around Him. When the government says you have to wear a mask, you wear a mask. Is it a gateway to tyranny? Maybe. But carrying a Roman soldier's pack a mile was a hallmark of an established tyranny and Jesus said to carry it two miles (Matthew 5:41). When the world says you have to choose between BLM and the police, the Christian chooses neither. Our churches can affirm that racism is wrong, and they can affirm the importance of respecting our authorities, but that does not mean we must go so far as to take sides with people who are not on our side.

Our side is the church, and our duty is to side with each other in the mission of proclaiming Christ. This precludes us from joining a side in an earthly conflict that will take precedence over our loyalty to our church family.

Notice how little socio-political commentary the New Testament offers, despite dealing with a political system that affected the church greatly. The emperors are hardly named, and almost not discussed at all. That is not an accident. A mission-minded disciple knows that our mission is not to build a perfect life here but to help people first see the eternal. *"No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier,"* said Paul (2 Tim. 2:4). **God is not going to fix the world before He saves it, and we'd be wasting our time trying to fix it without God's help.**

So, here's the unpopular part. For the time being, I believe

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Television

In Search of the Lord's Way (Phil Sanders)

Sunday @ 7:30am on KTAB

Life In The Light (Chris McCurley)

Sunday @ 10:00am on KTAB

Radio

Preaching the Word (Michael Light)

Sunday @ 9:00am on KOXE 101.3

Internet

TheGospelRadioNetwork.org

Gospel Broadcasting Network (Gbnv.org)

God's Plan for Redeeming Man

Hear Learn the saving message of Christ's sacrifice (1 Cor. 1:18; Rom. 10:17).

Believe Jesus is the Son of God (John 8:24)

Confess Jesus as your Lord, Lawgiver, and King (Rom. 10:9-10; Matt. 10:32-33)

Repent of your sinful conduct (Luke 13:3,5)

Complete your initial obedience to the gospel by being **baptized** for the forgiveness of your sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16)

Live faithfully (Rev. 2:10; 2 Tim. 4:7-8)

Bible Reading Schedule

video.wvbs.org/access/interactive-bible-reading-plan/

Aug. 2	1 Samuel 16—18; Psalm 32
Aug. 3	1 Samuel 19—21; Psalm 33
Aug. 4	1 Sam. 22—24; Ps. 34 (video)
Aug. 5	1 Samuel 25—27; Psalm 35
Aug. 6	1 Samuel 28—31; Psalm 36
Aug. 7	2 Samuel 1—3; Ps. 37
Aug. 8	2 Samuel 4—6; Psalm 38
Aug. 9	2 Samuel 7—9; Psalm 39

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."

(2 Timothy 2:15)



Visitation Meeting

- ◆ Last week **30** contacts were made.

Announcements

- ◆ The **Summer Youth Series** Tuesday night went off without a hitch. Weather was perfect. Neil Stidolph brought an excellent lesson. Foy Forehand did a great job leading our singing. **Thank you so much to everyone who helped!** (We had about 20 folks who helped physically, and I'm sure others helped financially and prayerfully.) **This was the last SYS for this year.**
- ◆ If you are visiting with us, welcome! Please fill out the "visitor" side of an attendance card on the back of the pew in front of you and place it in the collection plate.

Upcoming Special Events at 4th & Stewart

- ◆ October 11-14—Fall Gospel Meeting w/ Denny Wilson

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this means it's time for us as Christians to disconnect from the political. I don't mean to say the Christian can't vote, but our everyday advocacy is contributing to a split that we simply cannot let happen. It's my contention that the political climate has become so toxic and controversial that a Christian cannot vocally participate without driving a wedge between them and their fellow man. The news media has convinced us that the sky is falling every single day. Social media has convinced us that we have a platform to do something to keep the sky from falling. Both are lying to us. All we're doing is fracturing the church and driving outsiders away.

Growing up there was a summer in which my brother, sister, and I were banned from playing Monopoly together. It wasn't that my mom had a moral objection to the game of Monopoly, it was that we couldn't seem to play without the situation devolving into a gigantic fight. "If you can't play this game without getting mad at each other, then you're not going to play at all," she ruled. You could rightly say that Monopoly wasn't the problem, and that there was a bigger heart problem that needed to be fixed. But since that wasn't an overnight fix, the game had to be taken away first to prevent the deterioration of our relationships in the meantime.

If we can't participate in the political game without developing a dislike for people on opposing sides, we shouldn't be playing it. If our Facebook posts are going to make people choose sides for and against us, we should not be posting them. If watching and reading our preferred news sources makes us view fellow Christians or potential evangelistic targets (in other words, anybody and everybody) as an enemy, then we shouldn't be consuming those news sources.

Yeah, you can make the case that as with the Monopoly mayhem, it's not the political game itself that's wrong, but the immature, unchristian way we play it. And that may be true. But that problem isn't going to be fixed overnight, and so the only short term answer I see is to broadly push for Christians to disengage for the time being. Turn the news off, unfollow your partisan social media pages, stop posting about the controversy *du jour*, and get busy taking up your Christian mission.

I understand this is an unpopular recommendation. You are free to disagree with me, even to think I'm ignorant or naive. I may be wrong. But we can't move forward without a plan of some kind. How are we going to prevent Christians from losing their allegiance to each other due to their allegiance to their political side? I'm open to any comment you may have. We have to do something.

Jack Wilkie (focuspress.org)

Celebrate

"Rejoice with those who rejoice..." (Romans 12:15)

August Birthdays: Rafe Smith (11), Don Smith (14), Royce Ford (16), Deacon Dennard (17), Ryan Rudloff (20), Roy Dodson (29), Coyce Reed (30).

August Anniversaries: Matthew & Kaci Churchwell (15), Terry & Pam Teague (16), Don & Darlene Smith (29).

Mistakes? Left Out? Let Johnny know...

Records

	July 19, 2020	July 26, 2020
Bible Class	35	37
AM Worship	36 + [15]	45 + [8]
PM Worship	32	35 + [7]
Wednesday PM	28	31
Contribution	\$2,027	\$2,182

	This Week: 8/2/20	Next Week: 8/9/20		
Sunday AM:	Song Leader: Ken Maninger	Song Leader: Tom Wilcox	<p style="text-align: center;">August 2020 Make Announcements: John Barnum Prepare Communion: Maninger Family Clean Building: Randy & Laura Huckaby</p> <p style="text-align: center;">September 2020 Make Announcements: James Fuller Prepare Communion: John Barnum Family Clean Building: John Barnum Family</p>	
Greeters	_____	_____		
Opening Prayer	Gene Bannister	John Barnum		
Communion	James Fuller*, Randy Huckaby Dex Dennard, Ryan Rudloff	Chase Churchwell*, Ken Maninger Coyce Reed, Don Smith		
Closing Prayer	Chase Churchwell	Dex Dennard		
Attendance Cards	_____	_____		
Sunday PM:	Song Leader: Ken Maninger	Song Leader: Tom Wilcox		
Opening Prayer	John Barnum	Gene Bannister		
Scripture Reading	_____	_____		
Communion	James Fuller	Chase Churchwell		
Closing Prayer	Tom Wilcox	James Fuller		
Wednesday Devotionals:	August 5 Prayer Night	August 12 Ryan Rudloff	August 19 Rafe Smith	August 26 Don Smith

Search the Scriptures

Be like the Bereans who "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so." (Acts 17:11)

Studies for the week of August 2, 2020

Sunday Class *1 Corinthians 11:17*
 Wed. Class *Exodus 19:6*

<p>Qualifications of Elders: "Not Quick-Tempered" (Tit. 1:7); "Not Quarrelsome" (1 Tim. 3:3); "Not Violent" (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7)</p> <p>I. An Elder Must Not Be "Quick-Tempered" (Titus 1:7) ["not soon angry" (KJV/ASV)].</p> <p>A. What does "quick-tempered" mean?</p> <p>B. How can you tell if a man is quick-tempered?</p> <p>C. Instead of being quick tempered, elders are to be patient and longsuffering.</p> <p>D. Why should an elder be "not quick-tempered"?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A quick-tempered man will bring reproach upon the church. A quick-tempered man will not show patience in solving problems in the church. A quick-tempered man will quickly give up on studying with people. A quick-tempered man will constantly have trouble in his family. <p>E. Is it wrong to be angry? "Be angry, and do not sin" (Eph. 4:26).</p> <p>II. An Elder Must Not Be "Quarrelsome" (1 Tim. 3:3). ["peaceable" NASB, "not a brawler" KJV, "not contentious" ASV, "abhorring strife" Coverdale].</p> <p>A. What does it mean by "quarrelsome"?</p> <p>B. How can you tell if someone is "quarrelsome"?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Is he argumentative? Is he a gossip? Does he seek to divide the Lord's church instead of uniting it? Does he fit the description "he's not happy unless people are unhappy"? <p>C. Instead of being "quarrelsome," elders should be "peaceable" (NASB).</p> <p>D. Why should an elder not be quarrelsome?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> An elder is supposed to help protect the flock as well as helping them grow. A quarrelsome person will find it very difficult to encourage people to convert. A contentious elder will cause strife in the congregation and in the eldership. A contentious person usually seeks to elevate himself (Phil. 2:4, Matt. 7:12). <p>E. Does this apply to all Christians?</p> <p>III. An Elder Must Not Be "Violent" (1 Tim. 3:3, Tit. 1:7) ["no striker" KJV/ASV, "not pugnacious" NASB, "not a bully" HCSB].</p> <p>A. What does it mean to be "violent"?</p> <p>B. How can you tell if a person is "violent"?</p> <p>C. Why should elders not be violent people?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> These would try to be "lords over" those entrusted to them (1 Pet. 5:1-4). They would bring reproach upon the church. They would be bad examples to the rest of the congregation. <p>D. Does this mean that violence is never permissible by God?</p>	<p>Christ's Life Prior to His Ministry: Mary Visits Elizabeth; Birth of John; Announcement to Joseph (Lk. 1:39-80; Mt. 1:18-25)</p> <p>I. The Visit of Mary to Elizabeth (Lk. 1:39-56).</p> <p>A. Elizabeth praised Mary (41-45).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> As soon as Mary greeted Elizabeth, John leaped in her womb. Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! (42). <p>B. Mary praised God (46-55). The poem is divided into three parts: God's favor toward (1) Mary (46-49), (2) the humble (50-53), and (3) Israel (54-55).</p> <p>II. The Birth and Early Life of John the Baptizer (Lk. 1:57-80).</p> <p>A. John's birth (57-79).</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> When John was born, neighbors and relatives gathered to rejoice. According to Jewish law, baby boys were circumcised on the 8th day. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Despite neighbors' and relatives' opposition, the baby was named John. When the name was confirmed, Zacharias' "mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke, praising God" (64). <ol style="list-style-type: none"> He first words are inspired praise for God's promises to His people. To John, "And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways" (76). <p>B. John's early life (80).</p> <p>III. The Announcement to Joseph Regarding the Coming of Jesus (Mt. 1:18-25).</p> <p>A. When Mary returned pregnant, Joseph must have been devastated.</p> <p>B. Joseph had 3 options.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> He could ignore Mary's condition and proceed with the marriage. He could have Mary stoned as one unfaithful to her betrothal vows. He could divorce her – the path he chooses. <p>C. God delivered Joseph from his dilemma, sending an angel who told Joseph 3 things.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Mary was not defiled. She is going to have a baby boy. This will be a special child – "He will save His people from their sins." <p>D. To establish that Jesus was the promised Messiah, Matthew inserted an inspired observation (22-23; from Isa. 7:14).</p> <p>E. As a result of the angel's message, Joseph accepts Mary as his wife.</p>
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