

Theme Introduction

There's Still Hope!

By Carol Madison

I was just out of college and relatively inexperienced as a leader when the chairman of my church's elder board asked me to facilitate a small group discussion about the proposed budget. I was a bit intimidated as I sat in a group of about 15 people—all of them older than I was.

As I invited people's input, we began a rather friendly discussion. But then it turned hostile when a couple began complaining about things that weren't even connected to the budget. They had strong, negative opinions about all areas of our church's ministry—from the worship to the preaching to which missionaries we supported. I didn't know the couple well, but I couldn't think of any way they were involved in the church apart from attendance.

I was unsure of what to do as they brought up issue after issue that concerned them. Suddenly the husband let it slip that—because of their discontent—they chose not to tithe to the church. They instead gave their money to other missions.

Perhaps it was my youthfulness and inexperience, but I blurted out, "Hey, wait a minute. Are you saying you do not support this church in any way?"

"No, we don't," he confessed.

"You mean, nothing?" I asked incredulously.

"Well, no," he said, starting to sound sheepish.

"Nothing?" I repeated in disbelief.

I didn't mean to make a point, but apparently I did. They both suddenly got very quiet—and we moved on with the discussion among the rest of the group.

The Right Kind of Voice

I still remember how stunned I was to hear these people complain and demand changes even though they did not serve the church in any way. They thought they should have a voice. But, in fact, they were merely observers and critics of the ministry going on around them.

I see a parallel when it comes to having a voice in the direction our nation is headed. Most of us have deep concerns about what we see in politics, culture, families, and other societal struggles. In our discontent, we want to see change.

But are we engaged in that change process?

First and foremost, are we praying—truly praying—for our leaders, that they might have humble hearts and wisdom from God? If we do not follow Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2:1–2 to put our leaders at the top of our prayer list, we should not be surprised when our nation is in turmoil.

Second, are we exercising our voices in the right way by voting and participating in the political process? It matters who leads our nation. Both prayer and action are crucial responsibilities of every believer.

In this issue, Joel Rosenberg writes about our need for a Josiah—someone who will step into leadership with a heart tuned to God's will and purposes. He notes that we are quickly headed toward implosion, but there is always hope when believers humble themselves in repentant prayer. Lea Carawan reminds us that we have a history of trusting God in this nation and that we should not hold back in praying boldly for redirection. Dave Butts provides scriptural ways to pray effectively regarding the upcoming elections.

I believe there is still hope for our nation. Every day I pray for revival and spiritual awakening. We are commanded to pray. We must pray—instead of just complaining about what we see happening without investing in change through prayer and action. This nation needs every believer to be engaged and confident in Jesus' power to change everything.

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