

Voices: A call to love in a moment of division

September 1, 2020

“If I speak in human or angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. And if I give away all my possessions, and if I give over my body in order to boast but do not have love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:1-3).

Church, I am concerned we are showing our hearts lack the love we are called to show. We are in a moment of great anger and fear. Some of it is right; some of it is sinful. But above all, love should mark the people of Jesus.

Love is relational

Love is not just a concept; it is a relational reality. To show love, we must be in relationship with others. We must be able to speak into their lives and be an ambassador of the presence of Christ to them.

We are seeing a tearing apart of the relational fabric of our society. If we have not love, we have nothing. If we tear apart every connection and relationship, we have nothing.

I am pleading with you, fellow follower of Jesus: Don't let partisan politics divide the church. Don't let social media destroy your witness. Let's be marked by love and grace, instead of fear and anger.

We can see the division. We feel the tension. We must be peacemakers. We

are called to be agents of reconciliation.

We are called to be salt and light. This means we are to be agents of healing. We aren't called to be the salt rubbed in the wounds of division. We aren't called to be the light blinding the eyes of those different than us. We are to be those who announce and welcome the lost and hurting into God's kingdom.

Live for what lasts

This pandemic will wane, and what will be left is how we loved our neighbor in the midst of it. This election will pass, and what will be left is how we honored the image of God in those who disagree with us, or how we marred it. As for our response to protests, what will remain is whether we stood for justice and with the marginalized or as defenders of our own way and power.

We won't agree on every issue or proposal for how we accomplish the advancement of God's kingdom and for his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. But we can live with respect and show the love of Jesus even when we disagree.

"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry" (James 1:19).

How can we apply this? How about we log off of social media more and do the work of connecting and loving those around us?

What would happen if followers of Jesus committed to pray before we shared an article or meme? What would happen if we asked ourselves if our comments show love and honor the image of God in others before we posted them? What if we asked God to give us a bigger vision for his kingdom than our partisan team?

If we win the election and have not love, we have lost everything. If we prove to be right and have not love, we are wrong. If we excoriate our partisan enemy on social media and have not love, we are just agents of division, not reconciliation.

We are called to more than the next argument. We are called to live out the realities of God's eternal kingdom in love.

Zac Harrel is the network missionary for the Heart of Texas Baptist Network in Early. The views expressed are those solely of the author.