

KINGDOM CITIZENS

A Weekly Guide to Walking in Radical Devotion

Week 6

Kingdom Citizens United in a Polarized World

The ballots have been counted, and we now know that Joe Biden has won the presidential election. No matter where you stand on the results, this election season has made one thing clear: Our country is deeply divided—not only over who we voted for, but also in more volatile ways.

My concern is that this division has crept inside the Church, where it has no place. Kingdom Citizens have ONE true King, Jesus Christ. We have been united by a bond so much stronger and more powerful than any election can accomplish.

How do we move forward and do the Kingdom-announcing work God has called us to do?

Here are a few thoughts:

1. Let's seek to understand the other in the love of Christ. It is far too easy to look to extremes and paint every voter with the same brush. Not every Republican drives a jacked-up truck with Trump flags waving from the back. Not every Democrat is championing anarchy and Marxism. Still, Jesus calls us to see even those at the extremes of the political spectrum as image bearers of Christ. Each one is so loved by Jesus that even if they were the one person on earth, He still would have come and died to save them.

Reverend Dr. LeRoy Haynes (a pastor and civil rights leader here in Portland) teaches us that everyone carries that divine image, and it's our job to love them and recognize their true humanity. (This is my summary of his quote. [You can watch my conversation with Dr. Haynes here](#)).

As Kingdom Citizens, we write no one off because no one is beyond redemption. So we love and pray for those we may not understand. The incarnation was God's great act of speaking to us in the language of our humanity, so that we could understand God in the person of Jesus. Let's seek to understand one another like that.

2. Let's draw near to each other. The great challenge of the American democratic experiment at this moment is that we often don't know people who think differently than us. The news media, social media and our geographic boundaries all feed us a constant stream of uncritical analysis and opinion. Additionally, we have unfiltered access to constant information and misinformation. We form our opinions of each other in silos that silence the other.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. -Romans 12:15

When we don't know each other, we don't understand each other. Paul's words to the Church in Rome de-center the people from the comfort and security of their silos and commands them [us] to move toward people who

live, think and experience the world differently.

Paul breaks things down really simply and uses repetition to help us get the point:

Live in harmony—associate with people who aren't like you, don't be proud, don't be conceited.

Perhaps a main driver of our polarization is simply that we don't know each other. Let's draw near to one another as Christ has drawn near to us.

3. Hold One Another's Concerns. The Jesus way is the way of love for others. We bear one another's burdens, weep with those who weep and love one another as Christ loved us. That's the Jesus way and the *only* way Kingdom Citizens are called to live with one another. Keep in mind that some people are experiencing this moment much more intensely. For many, it's not just a lost political race, but also a loss of security, opportunity and agency. I have talked to people on both sides of the aisle who feel that much more has been at stake for them and their families in this particular election.

What would it look like for you to help them hold those concerns? Not fix them or invalidate them, but hold their concerns with them and for them? Let us hold each other's burdens as Christ has held us.

We are called to pray for our new president. The world will no doubt have strong and perhaps even violent reactions to the election results, but we are called to pray and make peace. The divisions within our nation will likely become more deeply rooted, but we are called to be Kingdom Citizens united in Jesus' inseparable love. May

we act out who we have been made to be.

Scripture

Read Romans 12:9-21. Pause, then read it again slowly.

Questions

- Share with another person: What characteristics do you hear Paul inviting believers to embrace? Which characteristics stand out the most for you personally today?
- Earlier in Romans, Paul makes clear that this type of love is only possible when we invite the Holy Spirit to transform us, renew our minds and give us help. What do you want to ask God for yourself today?

Prayer

Pray for one another and for the family of God.

Pray Romans 12 line by line for the Church in America, believing in hope that God will fill us with this genuine love when we ask Him.

- That we the Church would give our bodies to God as a living and holy sacrifice in worship.

- That we the Church would not copy the behaviors and customs of this world, but allow God to transform the way we think.
- That we the Church would not believe we are better than we really are, but would be honest in our evaluation of ourselves and measure ourselves by the faith God has given.
- That we the Church would function as one body that belongs to one another and embraces our gifts in order to share them well.
- That we the Church would have genuine love for one another.
- That we the Church would hate what is wrong and hold tightly to what is good.
- That we the Church would be patient in trouble and keep on praying.
- That we the Church would care for one another's needs and be eager to practice hospitality toward one another.
- That we the Church would bless those who persecute us and not curse them.
- That we the Church would be happy with those who are happy and cry with those who are crying.
- That we the Church would live in harmony with one another and avoid thinking we know everything.
- That we the Church would never repay evil with evil.
- That we the Church would do everything we can to live at peace with everyone.
- That we the Church would not take revenge but leave that to the LORD.
- That we the Church would feed our enemies, give them fresh

water to drink and conquer evil by doing good.