

A Radical Prayer in Today's Cultural Climate

I get it. You get downright upset with people whose politics or worldview is diametrically opposite of yours. They're so in-your-face about it, pushing their agenda and worldview. They belittle your opinion. They're such blockheads they can't even begin to see the rightness of your viewpoint.



I get it—because it often hits me the same way too.

Disagreement is nothing new, but our culture has hit a new low in how we react to any disagreement. We've developed an "us v. them" theme stance ... an "if you're not completely for me, you must be completely against me" attitude ... an "if you disagree with me about anything, you obviously disagree with me about everything" mindset. How do I know this? Because it's regularly broadcast in the media and shared on social media. For example:

- Disagree with *anything* a gay person says, and some will label you homophobic.
- Disagree with *anything* a person of color says, and some will call you out as a racist.

As a believer, how do you react when you are unfairly labeled and judged? Unfortunately, too many of us respond in kind. We label, judge, and cast aspersions with the best of them. I know someone who does this frequently and when I point it out, the response is typically the same: "Yes, I know—but they do it too." In other words, *what I'm saying may be harsh, but their words are harsher. So I'm not as bad as they are.*

Friends, the standard by which we judge ourselves is not the behavior of others; it is the person and character of Jesus Christ. We are called to follow His example; we are to be like Jesus.

We are called to "seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). Let that mindset be reflected in your attitude toward those you disagree with—and let it be reflected in your prayers. Your

prayers might include requests for God to remove so-and-so from office ... for Congress to pass laws that support righteous standards ... for the Supreme Court to not let a certain verdict stand. I'm calling us to take our prayers to the next level.

Let's pray for the salvation of those who oppose us or oppose what we stand for.

*"But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, **pray for those who mistreat you**" (Luke 6:27-28). [Note: pray for them, not against them.]*

*"First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, **who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**" (1 Tim. 2:1-4).*

Think such prayers are a little far-fetched? Consider Paul, who penned those words in 1 Timothy. In the early days of the church, no one expected Saul of Tarsus, a murderous opponent of the church, to ever come to faith in Christ. And yet here he was, living a life radically changed by Christ and calling us to pray for the salvation of others, including "kings and those in authority." That means Paul prayed for the salvation of Nero, the emperor bent on persecuting believers.

We are to do the same. Let's pray for the salvation of our political opponents. Let's pray that those who hate us and what we stand for would encounter the love and grace of Christ. Let's pray they experience the same forgiveness and salvation we have experienced.

Be warned: genuine prayers for the salvation of others will change your heart toward them. You won't change your convictions about their viewpoints, but a heart of anger and self-righteousness will change to a heart of compassion for their souls.

This is a radical prayer. But if you want to see God do something radical in our culture, there's no better prayer to pray.