

IN THE MARGINS: Remaining positive in a culture of outrage

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Editor

In the last week or so, people seem to have lost their ever-loving minds. Specifically, it is mostly in response to Mr. Trump's trial and conviction.

I'm not going to step into that buzzsaw. I'll keep my own counsel, thank you very much; nothing I could say would add anything positive to the conversation. Ask me in private, and I'd be happy to share. My sense, though, is that many of the world's problems would be solved if folks would just keep their mouths shut. That's not the same as not speaking out when appropriate – it's appropriate, for instance, to shout the Gospel from the rooftops. But I'm prone to privately over-engage in political doings, and that isn't healthy for me. We have to guard our minds and hearts, right?

But some people just enjoy being mad. That strikes me as perverse, but that's just me. I don't know their story, so it's not right for me to judge.

In today's world, outrage seems to be the default response to almost everything. From social media rants to heated news debates, it can feel like anger and negativity are everywhere. As Christians, how can we navigate this landscape of outrage without losing our peace or compromising our values? How can we be a beacon of positivity in a seemingly negative world? Here are some reflections on these questions, guided by Christian principles and scripture.

Understanding the Culture of Outrage

First, it's crucial to understand what fuels this culture of outrage. Often, it's a mixture of genuine concern and a sense of helplessness about global issues, amplified by the instant and widespread nature of social media. People feel empowered to voice their opinions louder and more frequently than ever before, sometimes without a filter or a moment's pause for reflection.

Responding as Christians

As followers of Christ, our response should be different. We are called to act and react not out of anger or despair, but from a place of faith and love. Here are some ways we can do this:

1. **Seek Understanding Before Judgment:** Before reacting, we should strive to understand the situation fully. James 1:19 reminds us, "Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry."
2. **Focus on What We Can Change:** It's easy to be overwhelmed by the scale of global issues. However, Philippians 4:6-7 teaches us not to be anxious but to present our concerns to God through prayer and petition, trusting in His peace to guard our hearts and minds.
3. **Be a Source of Light and Salt:** In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, meaning we are to bring taste, preservation, and illumination to a decaying and dark world. This can be as simple as offering words of kindness instead of joining in criticism, or showing compassion where others show indifference.

Remaining Positive Amid Negativity

To remain positive in a negative world, consider these actions:

- **Cultivate Gratitude:** Regularly count your blessings and acknowledge everything you are thankful for. This shifts focus from what's wrong to what's right.
- **Limit Exposure to Negativity:** Be mindful of how much negative news and social media you consume. Balance it with positive content and activities that uplift your spirit.
- **Connect with Community:** Engage with fellow believers who encourage and support each other in faith. As Hebrews 10:24-25 urges, consider how to spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together.

Trusting God's Sovereignty

Amidst the chaos and outrage, it's essential to remember that God is sovereign. Proverbs 21:1 tells us, "The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will." This reassures us that God is directing all affairs, including the hearts and actions of leaders and individuals around the world.

No matter how chaotic the world seems, God has a plan, and He is in control. This doesn't mean we should be passive; instead, we engage the world through the lens of God's ultimate sovereignty and purpose.

While the culture of outrage shows no signs of slowing down, our approach as Christians can be radically different. By choosing to respond with understanding, focusing on actionable changes, and trusting in God's overarching plan, we can maintain a positive outlook in a negative world. Let us not be swept away by the currents of despair but anchor ourselves in the hope and faith we have in Christ. Let this be our guide as we navigate the complexities of today's world, always remembering that we are called not to be part of the problem, but a vital part of the solution.

Navigating today's cultural landscape with a Christian perspective isn't just about avoiding negativity; it's about transforming it through our actions, prayers, and unwavering faith in God's sovereign plan.