

Navigating These Times Without Going Nutty

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By Pastor Tim White

As he sat down next to me, he sighed, “I am mentally exhausted from all the stuff in the news.” Such were the words of a fellow pastor and friend at a recent pastor’s prayer time. We all expressed our similar feelings. One of the most exhausting things for me is navigating the flood of lies and gaslighting, which have hit pandemic proportions during this presidential election year.

For example, we watch as the party of the presidential incumbent believes he cannot win; the party “elites” do what appears as if they staged a soft coup and removed him. And then, in an unprecedented move, they prevented an open convention by convincing the now-former candidate’s delegates to support the new appointee. And now, in the only move that allowed them to keep the removed candidate’s funds, they selected his vastly unpopular Vice President, who had never received a single delegate vote. Is this even legal?

These same political elites want you and me to vote for them so they can fix all the things they broke by their failed policies (severely cut domestic oil production) and deceptively named bills (i.e., “Deficit Reduction Act”). Even more disturbing is seeing that millions of Americans want to put them back in office again so they can “finish the job” (said like a mob boss). My head is spinning.

The Apostle Paul spoke of a time like this in his second letter to another Pastor Tim: “For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the Truth and turn aside to myths.” (2Ti 4:3-4 NIV84).

I am sure Pastor Timothy’s head must have “spun” as he encountered people who were willingly blind to the truths before them and their unreasoning adherence to a lie. The Apostle then instructs Timothy, “But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry” (v. 5).

We cannot control or change others, but we can, and we must learn how to “keep our heads in all situations.” Let me share some basic ways to position our hearts and minds best to safely navigate today’s labyrinth of deceit, lies, and gaslighting.

The most fundamental element enabling us to “keep our heads” is to realign our definition of “worship” with Scripture. We see this definition in Romans 12:1, “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship.”

“Worship” in song is a vital part of our regular church services, and an entire music industry is devoted to worship music today. As wonderful as this form of worship can be, anyone can sing a song, but not everyone engages in what Paul calls “your spiritual ACT of worship.”

To engage in a “spiritual act of worship” means that one willingly surrenders all aspects of their life and activities to the Lord – their “body” becomes a “living sacrifice.” The “worshiper” offers themselves as one set apart (holy) from typical worldly ways and selfish pursuits to live in the way that pleases God – the deeds or opinions of the rest of society have less impact.

Can you see how this “worshiper” is better positioned to “keep their mind in all situations”? When we live to please an audience of One, we will cease seeking the world’s approval or fear their rejection.

Secondly, it only follows that one “living sacrifice” would see the importance of joining with other “living sacrifices” in their region to obey the great commission together. When these “worshippers” join together, they do so to serve as differing parts of a body rather than sit in a pew and “consume” the work of the few. In this type of congregation, Jesus can build His Church, which He declared that not even “Hades” could overcome (Matt. 16:18).

I think it is fair to say that there are too many “attendees” in our Churches today who think being there on Sunday is what it means to be a Christian. Ever since COVID, many believe viewing a service online when they could be there in person is enough. In addition to these realities, the unnecessary division of Christians through many denominations and independent churches amplifies our weaknesses and limitations even more.

I am not campaigning for some ecumenical one-world Church, but instead, something like I am already part of locally – a team of local pastors and congregations who love and pray for one another while seeking ways to fulfill the Great Commission corporately. The unity created here does not require one big Church, but I believe it brings the favor and blessing of God (Ps. 133).

One final, yet essential, spiritual gift that will better position us to “keep our heads in all situations” – the “power of the Holy Spirit.” Weeks after His resurrection, Jesus instructs his followers to wait in Jerusalem until they are “clothed with power from on high” through the “baptism of the Holy Spirit” (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4-5). Jesus’ promise was fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost, and from there, they “turned the world upside down” (Acts 17:6).

I have a more in-depth teaching on the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and although we may view some points differently, we all agree that Jesus’ Church needs the power and presence of the Holy Spirit like never before. What the early Church experienced – greater boldness, courage, healings, delivering from demons, powerful preaching, and more (Mark 16:15-18, Acts 2, 3, 4, etc.) – we need today. And what is encouraging is that these very things are occurring in some parts of the world – do it here, Lord, we pray.

Navigating through these trying times is more than possible; it is guaranteed! Suppose we genuinely offer our lives as a living sacrifice in His service in unison as His Church seeking His pleasure alone, and the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit upon us – I believe the Lord will

“do immeasurably more than all we could ask or imagine” (Eph. 3:20). He could even “Make America Godly Again.”