

I appreciate Greg's response to his radio interview and I'm glad we posted it on our church's website. Greg didn't have much of an opportunity to explain his comments while on the air, and while there is always a risk in sounding defensive when "explaining" one's self, I think the risk was worth it for both Greg and our church community. Some positions are more complex and nuanced than others, and an explanation, such as the one Greg gave, can be very helpful.

I had two main reactions to what Greg had to say. First, I agree wholeheartedly with his position on how the Kingdom of God differs from the kingdom of this world. It seems as though many evangelicals have lost the ability to think through the distinctions between these two kingdoms. They each play a distinct role in the world. They influence each other, without a doubt, but to blur the line between church and state would be, and has been, disastrous. It's disastrous when Christians (the church) use force (the state) to defend the gospel and spread their faith (as happened during the Crusades). It's disastrous when a good friend of mine was told in no uncertain terms that she wasn't a Christian because she happened to vote for John Kerry during the last election. It's disastrous because the most important kingdom, the Kingdom of God, is diminished when this kind of force and hatred is used in the name of God.

The Kingdom of God changes people from the inside out; the kingdom of this world can only deal with the external. The Kingdom of God is a choice between right and wrong; the kingdom of this world is often a choice between the lesser of two evils or the best of many less-than-ideal possibilities. The Kingdom of God is about objective truth – things that are true even if a person doesn't believe in them. The kingdom of this world is about truth based on individual perceptions and relativity. There is a difference, and we shouldn't confuse the two!

My second reaction, however, was not so agreeable. I respect the fact that Greg has a right to his own political position concerning abortion. I also understand that his

position on this volatile topic does not need to call into question his effectiveness within the Kingdom of God. I do, however, think his political position on abortion is dangerous and based on irrelevant issues. While he personally abhors abortion and wishes its demise, he is willing to allow an abortion to be legal during the first trimester because neurologists tell him that the level of brain activity in a pre-born baby before the 12th week is below the threshold to be considered a "legal person." When a birthed person's brain activity falls below this threshold they are pronounced "brain dead." I appreciate Greg's ideas, but I believe his reasoning to be flawed. There is a huge difference between a fetus with low levels of brain activity and a person on his deathbed with similar levels of brain activity. The difference can be summed up in one word: potentiality. In the case of the person on his deathbed, there is either injury and/or disease that precludes the possibility of recovery and reaching again the potential that existed before. In the case of the unborn, we have every reason to believe that, if cared for, the fetus will indeed reach the status of a "legal person." It seems very simple to me: when a fetus is killed, a "person" is killed because "personhood" is inherent within the potentiality of the fetus. The unborn will become a person, even by our legal standards of brain activity.

That is why I find Greg's idea of political compromise so offensive. Compromise is often necessary when reaching a political solution, but not when life – human life – is on the line. This is a battle where winner takes all, and no compromise is appropriate. Nothing less than the overturning of Roe v. Wade will suffice, and that is what I believe our country must work toward.

There may be many reasons to oppose Greg's political views concerning abortion. I have simply chosen one argument out of many to refute his position. However, his view is not the main issue here. The issue is: how should we react to Greg himself if we should find ourselves disagreeing with him on such a personal and emotional issue. Those who do not separate the Kingdom of God from the politics and legalities of this

world may call into question the integrity of Greg's walk with God. I find this to be just as offensive as Greg's view concerning abortion. Remember, Greg is not saying it would be "ideal" to legally allow abortions during the first trimester; politics and the law are rarely about an ideal solution. He is proposing the notion that if we can politically come together on this issue, and use a test that we as a country can all settle on (brain activity threshold test), that we could actually reduce the number of abortions done every year. That would be progress. Much less than ideal progress, but progress nonetheless. And while I may find his reasoning flawed and ultimately dangerous, I still have every reason to trust in his character, his intentions, and his effectiveness within the Kingdom of God. While I may hold to a different political solution to this grave issue, I can agree completely with our church's "Position on Controversial Issues" statement. It states that we will not endorse any particular political position on this matter as a church, but we will affirm the preciousness of life in the womb and we will encourage women to continue their pregnancies. How we go about this as individuals is up to us as individuals. I can be passionate about my approach to this issue and not demand that others agree with me or judge them as spiritually immature if they do. If I take any other stance towards those who disagree with me, I sacrifice the principles of the Kingdom of God for political gain.

The Kingdom of God is black and white, but the kingdom of this world is often gray. No political or legal solution that I know of will meet the standard of God's ideal. In a pluralistic society, the solution for one group of people may become the problem for another. The Kingdom of God is simple, but not easy. The kingdom of this world is often complicated and messy. Let's not confuse the two.

- Lyle Larson, Board of Overseers Chairperson, Woodland Hills Church