

## The 3 R's of Christian Engagement in the Culture War

I know, I know—you really don't like the term "culture war." The mission of the church is not to "reclaim" America. The growth of the church does not rely on political victories or societal approval. And we don't want the people we are trying to reach to think we are at war with them. I understand the phrase sounds more aggressive, confrontational, and militaristic than we like.

But call it what you want—a culture war, a battle of ideas, an ideological struggle—there is no question we have deep division in America. The most obvious division right now concerns homosexuality. When Dan Cathy's off-handed, rather ordinary comment in support of traditional marriage sends big city mayors out on their moral high horses wielding the coercive club of political power—and when the subsequent response from middle America is a record-breaking avalanche of support for Chick-fil-A—you know there is more than a skirmish afoot. I know every generation thinks they are facing unprecedented problems, but it really does feel like free speech, religious freedom, and the institution of marriage are up for grabs in our day.

Given this reality, how should Christians respond?

Let me suggest three R's.

**1. No Retreat.** In the face of controversy and opposition, it's always tempting to withdraw into friendlier confines. But working for the public good is part of loving our neighbors as ourselves. The pietistic impulse to simply focus on winning hearts and minds does not sufficiently appreciate the role of institutions and the importance of giving voice to truth in the public square. Conversely, the progressive impulse to stay quiet for fear that we'll invalidate our witness is a misguided strategy to win over the world by letting them win. Either that or a disingenuous attempt to hide the fact they've already sold the ethical farm.

**2. No Reversal.** No matter the pressure, we must never deviate from the word of God to please the powers of the world ([Rom. 12:1-2](#)). This principle does not automatically determine the course of action in every sphere, for politics must sometimes be the art of compromise. But as far as our doctrinal commitments, our pulpit preaching, and our public values, we mustn't give a single inch if that inch takes us away from the truth of Scripture ([John 10:35](#)). He who marries the spirit of the age becomes a widower in the next. The church is not built on theological novelty, and souls are not won by sophisticated ambiguity. Whoever is ashamed of Christ and his words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man also will be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels ([Mark 8:38](#)).

**3. No Reviling.** If this is a battle, then the followers of Christ must be a different kind of army. Even when our passions run high, our compassion must run deep. There is no place for triumphalism, cynicism, and settling scores. We must be happy, hopeful warriors. When reviled, we must not revile or threaten in return, but entrust ourselves to him who judges justly ([1 Peter 2:23](#)). We must not be surprised by suffering ([1 Peter 4:12](#)). We must not hate when we are hated ([Matt. 5:43-44](#)). And when we rest peacefully at night may it not be because all men think well of us or because the culture reflects our values, but because our conscience is clear ([1](#)

[Peter 3:16](#)). In the fight against powers and principalities we must never go away, never give in, and never give up on love.

More from Kevin [here](#).