



## One Nation Under God

Andy Stanley

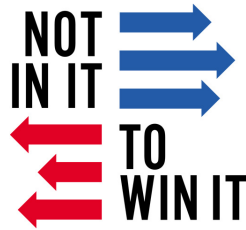
*Note: The following content is a raw transcript and has not been edited for grammar, punctuation, and word usage.*

**0:00:00.3 Andy Stanley:** Last spring, and depending on when you're listening to this, spring of 2021, we were coming out of COVID yet again... We keep coming out of it, and then dropping back into it. We had just finished up a very contentious, as you know, election cycle. And my... The way this impacted me personally... It can be personal for just a minute, I was so grieved and so disappointed, and I would even use... I don't even know if this is an appropriate word, I was just embarrassed by the behavior and the language of several, actually a lot of high profile Christian leaders and high profile pastors, bloggers and radio personalities on both sides of the political aisle, but specifically on the right side of the political aisle. I lean right, politically, and so I feel like they are kind of supposedly my people, and some of them are actually my friends, and I was just... I was just embarrassed. In fact, I was so bothered by it, I decided to write a book. And that's not normally how I write books, but I just felt like I just have to at least get my... I have to rant a little bit, and then it got longer and longer and longer, and I called my publisher, I said, "Hey, I just feel like I have a message, and maybe this is just my opinion, but I have a message to Christian leaders and pastors specifically. I think that they, we..."

**0:01:17.6 AS:** This kind of a warning, 'cause we're one body regardless of kind of what church you're part of, you know, Paul said, "Hey, we're all the body of Christ. If you slap me, I'm not gonna have your hand arrested. I'm gonna have all of you arrested, right? Because the hand is part of the body." So this can't just be me pointing my finger. It's like, "Hey, we have... The church has a problem." Anyway, the book came out this week. It's called "Not In It To Win It", and I'm gonna be super clear about this 'cause I'm super sensitive to this.

**0:01:41.7 AS:** You do not need to buy this book. You do not need to buy this book. You do not need to read this book because for the past 20 years and a half, you have lived the content of this book, and you've modeled this, and we've talked most of it... I've talked about everything that's in the book. We've talked about... There's a few extra things in there, but for the most part, this is what we've been trying to do. Now, the way I think about this, and I learned this the hard way many, many years ago, made a couple of mistakes, the local church, and specifically you and our network of churches in the state of Georgia specifically, you're my first audience. This may not be important to you, but I want you to know this, and my first audience, I mean, I am very careful never to say anything publicly or in media or in an interview that I've never said here first. So sometimes people wanna talk to me about a specific topic, and I think, "You know what, I've never talked about that in church. No, I don't wanna talk about that in media." So that's a really, really big deal to me.

**0:02:38.1 AS:** So what's in this book is basically stuff we've been talking about all along, and really, you have modeled, and not just modeled for the Christian community, but for churches all over the country. A couple of weeks ago, we had 3500 church leaders from all over the country and different parts of the world, and I just bragged on you. I said, "Hey, this is how we've managed the last two and a half years, and it's not been perfect. Of course, we're not gonna get it perfect. But we feel like we've stayed between the guardrails of what we've been called to do as a local church, a group



of local churches, and specifically the marching orders given to us by our King and in the areas that feel like some of our church leaders and the church is messed up. Jesus was incredibly clear. There are some things Jesus said that we still haven't figured out exactly what He was talking about, but there are some things where He was so extraordinarily clear.

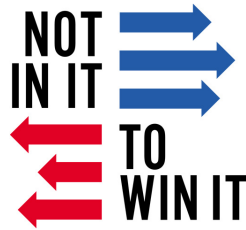
**0:03:28.4 AS:** So today and next weekend, I wanna remind us of a couple of things that I need to be reminded of as a collection of local churches as our nation gears up for another round of... I don't know, a better word, crazy okay? Because it just... It's about to get politically crazy again. And that's okay. And I love politics and I love the conflict, and I love all that stuff like some of you do. Some of you hate it, you just want it to go away. So it's just... It's part of our national pastime. It's a great thing that we have free speech, which gets argued up some time to the point where we're not sure it should be so free. But hey, it's way better than the alternative. I'm not against any of that. But as Christians, as Jesus followers, we have a specific responsibility that we can't abandon even though we all have widely held and strongly held political views. So throughout 2020 and 2021, I encouraged each of you, all of you, to write a pandemic story and an election cycle story that you would be proud to tell. I asked this specifically in a message in 2020. I asked you this. I said, "Hey, when 2020..." We are in the middle of it and COVID and lockdown.

**0:04:37.5 AS:** I said, "When 2020 is nothing but a story you tell, what story do you want to tell?" I remember I asked you this question, "Do you wanna tell a story of panic and fear and selfishness and divisiveness, or do you wanna look back on 2020 and tell a story of faith, of compassion, of generosity, of fidelity?" And then I reminded us, I said, "Hey, we write our story, the story of our lives, we write them one decision at a time." And I said, "Come on, I want you personally to write a good one. Write a good one. I want us as a collection of churches in our city to write a good story." And I feel like you did.

**0:05:12.3 AS:** We suspended services for almost a year, or right out a year. We stayed connected in small groups and in driveways. We did stuff in the community. We did the... This is what's still amazing to me. I brag about you all the time. We had the biggest Bible study in 2020 we've ever had, and we hadn't met together on a Sunday morning in five months. And then in 2021, you were past the 2020 number in terms of your generosity to the community. We baptized, we did weddings, we did funerals, we gathered outside... continued to stay together and people still criticized me specifically, and really... well. "I wish you shut down your church." I'm like, "We were not shut down. We just did different stuff because we wanted to be good neighbors, because the hospitals were full." And the issue wasn't, what do we think about COVID and these things. The issue is, what is our reputation in the community, because our reputation matters because we're trying to impact our community. The other thing that we tried hard not to do, and you helped us not do this, we didn't politicize the church, and there were people in our various churches, I've talked about this, who wanted to politicize the church and get up, take a stand, and people left our churches.

**0:06:21.2 AS:** Sandra here. She would tell you, any time I got any kind of information, direct message, email, direct... People leaving messages at the church that we're leaving, they're mad, my assistant Diane would look up their numbers, see what their involvement has been. And I called every single person who said they were mad at me or mad at the church and had phone... And had conversations. And they all started the same way, "Is this really you?" I'm like, "It's really me." That's how it started. And it always ended friendly. I made sure it always ended friendly. I'm like, "Okay, so you're not leaving the church because of theology or music or student ministry, you're leaving... You're not even leaving because of something we're doing, you're leaving because of something we refuse to do. And if that's why you're leaving then we will miss you. I hope you'll come back, but we're not gonna..." So because... The feeling was that we had caved to political pressure. And in the state of Georgia, specifically, our governor didn't impose political pressure on churches, but when our church and some other large churches suspended Sunday morning services, he was very grateful because a church like ours, or large churches could be super spreaders.

**0:07:24.8 AS:** So anyway, so some people left and some people have come back. And again, I tried to keep those



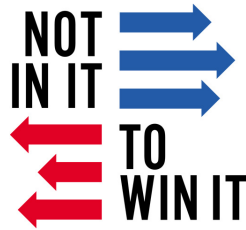
conversations friendly, but it was disappointing. And personally... And don't send me sympathy notes. I'm fine. But the personal part, and maybe you're in this camp, is the people I talked to, they just didn't believe me. They don't believe that we actually suspended our services, and they didn't believe that we weren't more political because of the sermon I gave. It was like, "No, no, there's something else to it." I'm like, "No, that's it. There's no agenda. Our agenda is love our neighbors, love our neighborhoods. This is how we're doing it, and Jesus has given us specific marching orders in terms of the responsibility of the church. There is no hidden agenda." Now, here's kinda what we need to talk about, and this is just a general principle. When life is predictable and when life is kind of wrinkle-free, and we have some wrinkle-free seasons. Everybody's healthy and everybody's employed, and things... When life is predictable and kind of wrinkle-free, it is easy to lose sight of... And this is true of all of us.

**0:08:27.6 AS:** It is easy to lose sight of what we value most, and it's also easy to lose sight of what we fear most. But when a tsunami of uncertainty comes rolling in, things get real, real quick. And this is important, uncertainty, uncertainty does not alter our value system. Uncertainty exposes our value system. And during times of uncertainty... We're gonna talk about this in detail about a month from now in times of uncertainty, our reactions to the uncertainty give us away. Our reaction... And you watch people's reactions to uncertainty, you learn a lot about a person, you learn a lot about yourself. Our reactions give us away. So this is super important to keep in mind as we move on. Our actions... Our actions don't tell the whole story. You've heard actions speak louder than words, and actions do speak louder than words. But our actions, even our actions don't tell the whole story. Because our reactions to circumstances and things around us certainly tell the whole story, and so many people, and so many Christians' response to the political, social and economic and health crisis of '20 and what was exposed in the Christians and these church leaders, what has actually been true all along. It didn't change their value system, it exposed it. And this sounds critical, and I am being critical, but we're part of the same body, and so this is part of our responsibility.

**0:09:51.8 AS:** Beneath some of that Bible-laced rhetoric, [chuckle] and all those faith claims, there is actually a bit of a hidden agenda, an agenda that people outside the church have suspected all along. People outside the church suspect that we're just like people outside the church, that the same thing that drives them drives us. And the same thing that drives every ideological movement in the local church. And at the end of the day, their suspicion is, and unfortunately what Christians and Christian leaders tip their hat to, was what we value most, is winning. And apparently, a lot of Christians and Christian leaders fear the same thing that every other ideology and every other group fears as well, that is losing influence, losing our voice, losing our rights. And here's the irony, which is exactly what happens whenever the church abandons its Christ-ordained mandate.

**0:10:52.5 AS:** Whenever the church loses sight of our mandate as a local church, we do in fact lose our voice, we do in fact lose our influence, we do in fact lose our ultimate opportunity, which is to be the conscience of the nation. And so whenever a local church stoops to and reduces itself to kingdoms of this world aspirations, which is to win at all costs and to have our way and to protect our rights, we just become like another political group, another party, another constituency, another group, to be wined and dined and divided and sort of ferreted out to different political parties to support whatever they're about.

**0:11:35.8 AS:** Whenever the body of Christ in general, or a local church, loses or loses sight of its Christ-ordained mandate, we in fact become a self-fulfilling prophecy. We lose the very thing that so many Christians feel like we need to fight in order to maintain. But we're not here to win anything, and the church isn't here to win anything. And yes, there's a time in which we're here to win hearts and souls, we're gonna talk about that, but we are not here to win culture wars, and we are certainly not here to win elections. So in 2021, church leaders, and this was happening on both sides, the left and the right... This was the most amazing part to me, where I wanted to call some of my friends and go, "What are you thinking?" Okay? Churches alienated half the souls... I mean, if the church is all about reaching people, reaching souls for Jesus, I'm gonna use some old-fashioned language, churches on the left and the right alienated half



the souls in America through their un-Christ-like behavior and rhetoric and political fear-based p... Now, this is probably way further than I need to go, but I just kinda say this to you. Don't tell anybody I shared this with you, so...

**0:12:52.5 AS:** So, you know, the pastors on the right, it's like... Who got so political, and they demonized all the Democrats. The Democrats, the Democrats, the Democrats. And then the pastors on the left demonized the people on the right and the Christians on the right and the pastors on the right. And I wanted to say to be... "Wait a minute, you guys on the right, so you think most of the Democrats are lost and going to hell? That's right. Well, doesn't that make them the mission field?"

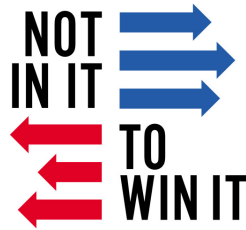
[laughter]

**0:13:22.2 AS:** "And everything you're doing in your church says 'we wanna reach people for Christ but you don't come.'" Then I wanna go to the left and say, "Wait a minute..." "Come I've sat in these services before, ooh, and say, "Look, you think all the people on the right are... Certainly aren't God followers and following Jesus, they're just playing a game and they're lost and going to hell? Well, aren't they the mission field? Look what... You're alienating half the people in America because of political views and you're abandoning what Jesus has called the church to do and church to be, and consequently, we are divided." And the other thing... We'll talk about this a little bit next time.

**0:13:58.9 AS:** The one thing Jesus was most concerned about when it came to future church was not our theology, or our music or how we baptized or how we did Communion was unity. He said, "The unity of my people is ultimately the essence or the message of people believing that I was actually sent from God." So, the last couple of years, I feel like the church in general has missed an unprecedented opportunity to live and to react in contrast to the world around us. Too many Christians, and also us to some extent are probably guilty of this. Me too, right?

**0:14:34.9 AS:** Too many of us do exactly this. This is amazing, exactly what the Apostle Paul warned first century believers not to do. Are you ready for it? Now, if you think this is unrealistic for us, what I'm about to show you, you can't even imagine how realistic this was and sound in the first century. He said this, "Do everything without grumbling or arguing." But wait a minute that's not American. Grumbling and arguing is how... That's how you know I'm an American, by how I grumble and argue. How unpatriotic is this? Do everything without... And the assumption behind this statement is... The assumption was, there was something to grumble and to argue about. So Paul, come on, why not grumble and argue and defend our way? What's the win in that? He says, "Well, I'm glad you asked. So that you may become blameless and pure children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." So, kinda didn't look in here a second. We've all said this or thought this, "Oh my gosh, what's happened to our country? What's happened to our country? We're going the way of this. We're going the way of that." And then there was what you're saying, you just haven't said this word. You're like, "Oh my gosh, we're warped. We're..."

**0:15:49 AS:** You know what warped is? It's just... It's out of balance, it's out of balance, it's out of balance. So Paul says, "Look, if you're concerned about your warped generation or your warped community or your warped culture or your warped generation." He says, "Hey church, I've got some good news for you. You have the potential to make all the difference in your warped and crooked generation, but you're not gonna make any difference by grumbling and arguing with everybody else. If you grumble and argue with everybody else, people are gonna think you're just everybody else." And then he says this... And again, if we think this seems unrealistic, there's just no way to exaggerate how crazy this sounded in the first century. He said, "If you get this right, then result... Then..." This is amazing. "Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky. The contrast will be so apparent, and the contrast will be so evident, people will stop and stare." Well, thanks for the last two and a half years for a variety of reasons, the church has lost some of its shine. And Christians have lost... We've lost some of our



shine. And I say, "We'll get it back."

**0:17:11.2 AS:** I say, "We try to fix this." And it's not gonna be easy, but it's not complicated, because we gotta stop arguing and grumbling with one another. Because in 2021, we argued and grumbled with one another, Christians argued and grumbled with state and local authorities, with their neighbors and with their pastors. I heard from so many pastors. "AS, the people in my church have lost their minds." [chuckle] I'm like, "I know. It's happening here in our city as well." And, again, they said the same thing I said a minute ago, and they're saying, "The people in my church are not mad at me for what I'm doing, they're mad at me for what I'm not doing that I've never done and don't plan to do. It's like they have some new gear they think that we're supposed to shift into because of what's happening in our country." I'm like, "I get it. I understand. And it's our responsibility as church leaders and pastors to lead the way regardless of what it costs us along the way." To use Jesus' words, I mean... Okay, Paul has one thing. Here's Jesus, He says, "You are too, we are too..." He's talking to his first century followers.

**0:18:10.0 AS:** "Let our light shine before others that they may see something different that there might be... See a differentiation, that there might be a contrast, that they may see our good deeds, not necessarily what we think on the inside, but see something on the outside and glorify Our Father in heaven. Instead, we went to... So many pastors and churches went to war with state and local governments [chuckle] over their rights to meet shoulder to shoulder in recirculated air during a pandemic. And you know what it left... And again, again, every state's different. Every church is different. There's not a one-size-fits-all, I got friends all over the country who handled this lots of different ways, but here's the problem, and here's where you got it right because you understand. We are committed to being an outward facing set and group of local churches. For the ones that decided, "Oh, we gotta get back at it," they left the impression... This is what just... Oh, this just grieves me.

**0:19:07.0 AS:** They left the impression with people in the world that the church would suffer irreversible harm, "The church will suffer irreversible harm if we can't meet shoulder to shoulder every seven days. Oh my goodness, the end has come, the Church cannot... The church will not survive if we can't meet shoulder to shoulder in buildings with recirculated air every seven days. The end is near." I'm like, "Do you know how fragile that makes the church sound? Do you have any idea what the church is? Do you have any idea what's happening in other countries?" And then, again, this is the other embarrassing part, and I gotta move on. All of us and all this talk about, "We're losing our religious liberty, we're losing our religious freedom, and Christians in other countries are like, "No, you're not."

[laughter]

**0:19:54.0 AS:** Let me show you a loss of religious liberty, come spend a month with me, come spend six months with me, miss, sorry all over the world were like. "No, you're not." And we're like, "Oh, the end is near." We look pathetically weak and fragile, when Jesus was clear, "I'm going to establish my Ecclesia and the gates of hell aren't gonna be able to shut it down." Rome didn't shut it down. The temple didn't shut it down. Communism didn't shut it down. Nothing is gonna shut it down. It's not fragile. Quit freaking out and quit being so afraid and quit grabbing the sides of the canoe. Have you ever done whitewater canoeing? The last thing you wanna do is grab the sides, what are you doing? You're in the water, okay? If you're just like, "Oh, I gotta grab the sides," you're wet, okay? You just don't do that, right? And so watching all this fear, all this panic, I'm like, "What has happened to us and them?" I told you, it's kind of sad.

[laughter]

**0:20:54.7 AS:** Social media, watching pastors and Christians, and maybe some of you, right? Demonize and criticize by name people you've never met. People you don't even have access to. People we don't even know. Okay, this is

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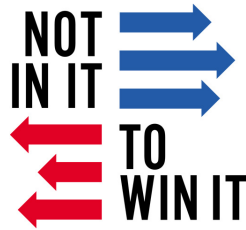
Christianity 101, we gave up the moral high ground. You know what we did? We confirmed what some of your kids and some of your grandkids and some of you... We confirmed what the next generation suspected about what perhaps we don't actually believe what we claim to believe. Demonizing people in the other political party, resorting to name-calling, exercise in virtue. Now, if you're not a Christian, have at it, right? There's no rules for you, this has nothing to do with you, you can do whatever you want, right? You can be as mean as you want, use all the tactics you want, call... I mean, just have at it. It's entertaining, okay?

**0:21:44.7 AS:** But come on, if you are a Jesus follower, and if you are a pastor and you have responsibility for the spiritual development of people, you have no business participating in anything that, even if you're convinced you're right, and even if you are right, because Jesus spoke to these matters and spoke on these issues. But I understand, "We are standing up for the truth, we're not gonna be intimidated, we're demanding and protecting our religious rights, we're fighting the good fight, we are in it to win it..." Which honestly, for a man, an American, as a human being, that sounds good to me. That appeals to me. We're gonna win. We're gonna fight the good fight. We're gonna stand our ground. We're gonna argue, it sounds good. Until you follow Jesus through the gospel. Oh oh. Until you follow the Apostle Paul from Greece to Jerusalem to Rome. Oh oh. So un-American as it sounds, as pathetic as it sounds and as passive as it sounds, the church is not here to win.

**0:22:58.7 AS:** Think about this, I know this is disturbing, but we talk about it all the time, by every human measure, by every human measure, our Savior didn't win. He lost. He lost on purpose, with a purpose. And we are His body. So like our Savior, if you're a Jesus follower, if you're not a follower of whatever, if you're just a Christian who likes to believe things and not do anything, have faith, you're a hypocrite, but just believe stuff and act like everybody... No, you are. Jesus said you're a hypocrite, right? Not me, I wouldn't say that, right? But you are. I mean, Jesus put it this way, "Hey, anybody who hears these words of mine, and goes, "Mmmh, Mmmh, Mmmh Mmmh Mmmh," and doesn't do 'em..." He says you're like somebody who built your house on the sand, it's not gonna do you a bit of good, the doing is in... The difference is made in the doing, this is why Jesus said, 'I want you to let your light shine in such a way that people see something different about you, let your good works and look up and shine.'

**0:23:57.7 AS:** So like our Savior, we're not in this to win anything, we're in it for something else entirely, and then... And I gotta move on. When... This is important, and I know I'm kinda preaching to the choir, I just don't want us to lose sight of this, 'cause it's about to get complicated again, right? When we allow our faith, and this is true of you as an individual when you allow your faith, or we as a group, when we allow our faith to be subjugated to our political party of choice, when we allow ourselves to be adopted by our political party of choice, we lose our voice, we lose our direct distinction, and we lose our way, and we lose our opportunity to be the thing that we have been assigned to do, to be the cornerstone of our nation, which means the nation that we love... I love our country. Like you, I love our country. But when we do this wrong, the nation that we love suffers, because Jesus didn't come to win the way that we define winning, He came to lose and he invited us to follow Him with a different win.

**0:24:56.7 AS:** The Apostle Paul certainly understood it, right? The Jesus followers in Antioch... We'll talk about this maybe sometime next week, the Jesus followers in Antioch... This is amazing, they were called Christians, like you call somebody a bad name, they were accused of being Christian. Wouldn't that be great to be accused of being Christian? Let's bring that back, right? They were accused of being Christians because it was so evident they weren't following Caesar and they weren't following the governor, they were partisans of a different king, they understood it, Peter understood it and it, the gospel chases the thing I don't want us to lose sight of that historically is undeniable. It changed the world. It changed... The gospel changes communities. It changes families. It changes cultures. Most of us would say, "Hey, it changed my life." Now, to be clear, I'm not advocating that we withdraw from the political process, just the opposite, you should be more politically involved, everybody should vote, I mean, what a stewardship of opportunity we have, and we aren't ruled by Caesar. We are we the people. Any time you have an opportunity to vote,



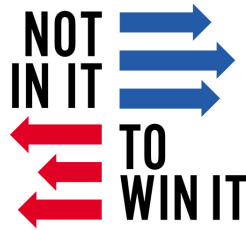
your law of Christ-informed conscience, you should vote. Some of you need to get involved in local politics, state politics, maybe national politics, who knows? So lean in to the process, okay?

**0:26:10.2 AS:** Don't withdraw because we've been called to love and to care, so we have to do everything we can, we have to do everything we can to create and protect a culture of human flourishing, which is modeled by the love and care of God, as we love and care in His name, but, and this is the jumping off point, and this is the point of deconstruction, and if you think, "AS, I think you're talking out of both sides of your mouth." I want to hear that up right now. There's the issue, we should be extremely involved because we're extremely grateful for our nation, but our posture, our tone and our approach must reflect that of our Lord. Our posture, our tone and our approach has been prescribed for us. You have the freedom to choose whether or not you follow Jesus, but you don't get to choose what following Jesus looks like, sounds like, acts like or reacts like, because that has been prescribed for us as Jesus followers, the instructions are on the label. Now, in his letter to Christians, the crazy church in Corinth, the church Paul describes as win. He uses the word win. Okay, he uses... There is a win, but it's not the win the way the world understands and kingdoms of this world defines win. He says there is a win and he tells us what his strategy for winning is.

**0:27:30.1 AS:** Now, he's the ultimate church planner. He's doing the impossible job of going into Gentile pagan cultures and not just talking about Jesus, but asking them to abandon their... it's impossible to imagine, he's asking them to abandon their entire... Not their religion, their entire world view. He is asking Gentiles to think differently about everything and everybody. So here's his strategy, it is so lame, it is so passive, it couldn't possibly work. FYI, his lame ideas along with Jesus' lame ideas and passive ideas and total couldn't work ideas, shaped western civilization. It's why every woman with a car should have a bumper sticker that says, "I love Jesus," whether you are a Christian or not, because he elevated the dignity of every single woman, every single child, every single person, it shaped Western civilization. And how did he do it? He did not go about it the way we are tempted to go about it, because he was not kingdoms of this world, anything he was kingdoms of God, the king that came to reverse the order of things and has invited us to follow. Here's the Apostle Paul's approach, it's disturbing, but remember this, it worked. He says this, "Though I am free and I don't belong to anyone, I have made myself a slave to everyone."

**0:28:53.9 AS:** Now, in this word, and we think that figuratively, remember, he's writing in a time when the entire economy of the world rose and fell on the amount of slaves, the ability of slaves to function and the ability to purchase slaves. And when he wrote this, every single person, including Paul, every single person, except for just a handful of people, was potentially someone's slave. It wasn't ethnic slavery, it was poverty slavery. It was, "Hey, my husband died" slavery. It was "The crock pot" slavery, it's, "I didn't have any children to support me" slavery, everybody was a potential slave. This was a really, really big deal, owned and traded people. In fact, the Apostle Paul's grandparents or parents were probably slaves that had been set free, but in this case, he chose, look at this, "I have made myself, I have made myself a slave." Wait, Paul, woah, woah, woah, woah, but to everyone? You said everyone, like even the people you don't like? "Especially the people I..." Even the people you disagree with? "Especially the people I disagree with, seriously." He decided to place himself under, to serve under, to go second, but he had an agenda, this wasn't just to be a nice guy, he had an agenda, he had an others first strategy, an agenda that had been given to him by his king.

**0:30:12.1 AS:** Here's the agenda, "Though I am free and belong to no one, I've made myself a slave to everyone to win," that's the win, as many as possible. "So you're into winning?" "Yes, I am into winning. I am into winning as many people as possible." And again, Paul's goal, it's impossible, was to win people away from a generationally ingrained world view, to a new way of seeing everything and everybody. How naive, how pathetic? I mean, what kind of strategy is that? Okay, let me get this straight, Paul. So this is your strategy, this is never gonna work, you're gonna submit to and serve people as a way of influencing people? Paul, dude, that's not gonna work. You can't influence people by serving and placing yourself under them, that didn't work for... It's not gonna work for you and it didn't work



for Jesus. Well, anyway, he continues, he says this, he says, "To the Jews..." this is very confusing. "To the Jews, I became like a Jew to win the Jews." We're like, "Paul, dude, you are a Jew. What does this even mean?" He says, "I became like a Jew to us. He wasn't a Jew to him. In the first century, he wasn't a Jew. In the first century, he was an Aramean from Tarsus."

**0:31:17.4 AS:** In the first century, Jesus was a Galilean from Galilee, from Nazareth specifically. See, in the first century, if you lived in Judea, you were considered a Judean or a Jew. So what he's saying is this, "I became like one... I... Even though I'm from Tarsus, even though I was raised in a different culture... And ultimately, he ended up moving to Judea and he blended in with the Judeans who ran the temple, he said, "When I'm around the Judeans who run the temple and have that very specific form of religion and very kind of buttoned up," he says, "I've learned to play the game with them." He says this, "To those under the law, to those under the law, I became like one under the law. Though I myself I'm not technically under the law, but I can get along with people under the law, I can go along with that." Why? "So as to win those under the law. To those who don't have the law, Gentiles, I became like one who didn't have the law, though I am not free from God's law." And then here's the kicker, he says where suddenly his little story intersects with my story and your story.

**0:32:17.5 AS:** "Though I am not free from God's law..." What do you mean? You're talking about Torah? "No, let me be clear. But I am under..." Let's say this together, "Christ's law." One more time, "I'm under Christ's law." So let me get rid of the word Christ and go right to what it means. I'm under the law of a king. I'm under the law of God's final King, God's one and only anointed one. And my question is if you consider yourself a Christian, you too are accountable to the law of Christ. And the law of Christ is very simple, you don't even need to write it down. There's not 10, there's just one. You are to love one another as God through Christ has loved you. You are to love the people around you. I'm to love the people around me, the way that God through Christ loved me. That is the law of Christ.

**0:33:02.8 AS:** And Paul says, "I make my way into all these different cultures and interface with all these different people in order to win them over. The new way of seeing the world, I am under... I am under the law of God. I am under Christ's law." Here's why this is important. And Christ's law will determine my tone, my posture and my approach. Christ's law, to love one another through Christ, love me, will determine my tone and my posture and my approach. I'm gonna love others. He loves me. I'm gonna love one another, one another regardless of the political views of the one another I'm encountering. Why Paul? "One of the reasons. So as... Oh, so as to win those not having the law." I said, "Come on Paul, make up your mind. You just waffle, waffle, waffle, whoever you're with, you just... You're just a chameleon. You just blend in with the crowd. You just blend in with the crowd. You can't stand in the middle. Don't be... You gotta be hot or cold, you can't be lukewarm." These are the kinda things that people threw at us, pastors, you know, in 2021. So like, we're a stand...

**0:34:08.6 AS:** "You're afraid..." Here's one. "You're afraid of losing followers?" I'm like, "No. If I was afraid of losing followers, I wouldn't take a stand. It's lonely in the middle. Nobody likes you, right? You get shot at from both sides. I learned that from Dr. King, you know?" By the way, he has a statue on the mall, the people who hated him, we don't even know their names, just moving on.

[laughter]

**0:34:28.1 AS:** Anyway. So, pastors who... I'm talking about... I'm talking about the pastors who refused to politicize... Come on, The Ecclesia of Jesus. A refusal to, you know, take a political stand was viewed as a, you know, not taking a stand, but we did take a stand. We took... Our stand was simple. We're not gonna politicize the Ecclesia of Jesus. We're standing for the posture, the tone and the approach prescribed to us. We don't get to make this part up, prescribed to us by our king. We're standing against alienating half the people in the United States of America by siding with one



# NOT IN IT TO WIN IT

political party over the other. We chose to stand with Jesus in the lonely, messy middle, rather than capitulate, to divisive broad brush political talking points.

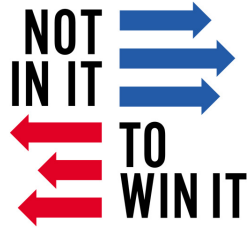
**0:35:18.1 AS:** Now, what he... Gotta move on. What he writes next is one of my favorite things in the whole New Testament. I mean, I would love to think that this informs my living, my life, the way we do our churches. Here's what he says. This is basically his mission and strategy statement he gives us next. Here it is. Ready? He says, "I have become all things to all people." In other words, don't miss this. "I have learned... And this is what I have learned. And some of you are great at this, and some of you, this is difficult for you, because of your personality, your temperament, just the way you were raised. But this is an all skate. He says, "I have learned to build and navigate relationships with people I have virtually nothing in common with." But Paul, why?

**0:36:02.7 AS:** I mean, that's so much trouble. It's so much easier to just go to the corner and surround yourself with people who look like you and live like you. I mean, why go to all that effort? Here it is. He says, "I love this statement. So that by all possible means, whatever it takes, including being misunderstood, including being left out, including in his case, being mistreated. And then he lays out his mission. It's great coming in an informed mission. Here it is, "That I might save some." Now, it's amazing... And I've read this before that anything the Apostle Paul wrote survived the first century. But you know why it survived? It survived because he refused to bend to the prevailing world views of his day. He was convinced as we are, he was convinced that Yahweh had done something new in the world for the world. And it was so new, He wasn't gonna let it be co-opted. It was so new, it didn't fit in any current existing political bucket. It was so new, but it was in the world for the world.

**0:37:08.1 AS:** In spite of everything going on in the world. He was so convinced and he held... He was convinced, this is amazing, that he held the moral and ethical high ground, and he didn't feel compelled to win some thing, because... And you agree with this. He didn't feel compelled to win some thing, because Jesus had already won, which means the world had already won. Paul's like, "I mean, somebody just needs to tell 'em." So he set out to do just this. Here's how he wraps it up. He says, "I do all of these, all the back and forth, blending in, figuring it out, you know, influencing people. I do all these for the sake of the Gospel, that I might share, ultimately, in this blessing. So, I say we just keep doing that, because when a local church or a group of local churches or the church in general, when the church becomes preoccupied with saving America, it has forgotten its mission.

**0:38:05.1 AS:** When a church becomes preoccupied with defending its own rights, rather than advocating for the rights of other people, it's lost its mission. Always... We always look better when we're advocating for other people's rights, rather than our own. I'll wrap it up with this. Tim Keller makes this extraordinary statement. He writes, "When the church is as a witness is no longer seen by the outside world as speaking to questions that transcend or go beyond politics, and when it is no longer united by a common faith that transcends politics, then..." this is what we said a few minutes ago. Then the world sees strong evidence that Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx were right, that religion, all religion, Christianity in particular, that religion is just a cover for people wanting to get their way in the world." Isn't that how our unchurched friends and family members see the church? "Oh, it's just another ideology, it's just another movement. They just want their way in the world, they're just leveraging Jesus in the Bible to get their way in the world." And Tim is exactly right, when the church is divided and when the church is at each other, and when the church allows itself to be subjugated to any other issue and any other thing other than the Gospel, it looks as if we're just leveraging our religion in order to cover for ourselves and get our way in the world.

**0:39:30.3 AS:** So let's resist that temptation. Let's decide we're not gonna do that. Let's continue to decide we're not gonna do that. Every time you place your hand over your heart to say the Pledge of Allegiance, basically you advocate for what we're talking about. One nation, One nation, under God. One nation, but one nation, under God. God first, our king first, because our ultimate allegiance is to the king, the better king. And here's the thing, and you know this



because you've experienced it whether you had words or put words around it or not. Our uncompromising devotion to our better king will ultimately make America a better nation. It will ultimately make the world a better, safer place. Our uncompromising devotion to our better king will ultimately make America a better nation and the world a better, safer place. And we know that, not because we're projecting into the future, but because that's what history actually attests to.

**0:40:42.4 AS:** Next week, we're gonna talk specifically about us and specifically about what's next. So please don't miss part two of Not in It to Win It. I'd love to pray for us. Father, thank you. Thank you for giving us something to aspire to personally, and something to aspire to as a collection of churches. And Father, wherever this lands with us, some of us are like, "Amen, I'm all in," others of us are like, "I have a thousand questions," others of us are, "It's too passive and it's not gonna work and I'm not going there." Wherever this lands with us, give us eyes to see, just to catch a glimpse of what would happen if the church united in the United States of America, rallied around the simple idea that Jesus is the king, the son of the living God, that Jesus is the king, the son of the living God. Let that idea inform our lives, our lifestyles, our posture, our tone, our approach. We can only imagine what would happen in our communities and in our world. So give us eyes to see, give us ears to hear, give us the courage to stand in and to stand and to let go of anything, beginning with me, anything that impedes what you wanna do through us and through your church, in Jesus name.