

The Church Doctor® Report

Multiplying Hope through Healthy Churches



Purpose: To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

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SPECIAL ELECTION EDITION

Not Comfortable With Either Candidate? Focus on the Platform, Not the Person

Disclaimer: As you read this, I begin with a few important facts:

1. I am indebted to Dr. Jim Garlow at Skyline Church in San Diego.
2. I do not intend to tell you how to vote.
3. I do want you to overcome a crippling issue that plagues our nation (and most churches).
4. I admit that, along with most people I have met during this election cycle, I too was "in a fog." I couldn't "see the forest for the trees." In my gut, my background in scriptural truth leans my vote, but I couldn't clarify why. This is a common conundrum in churches we have consulted. I was emotionally too close. Thank you, Jim Garlow, for what you've done for me. Ironically, it is the same thing our Church Doctors have done for hundreds of churches!

This is not about how to vote, but how to decide. Ideology and worldviews, presuppositions and values are often "hidden" by the focus on personalities. This has become intensified in this

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MULTIPLYING MINISTRY

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- ▶ Forward it to staff and leaders in your church, denomination, network, or fellowship.

election. The stakes may be higher, from the Christian perspective, than at any other time in history.

Behind decisions, directions, and actions is a set of values, beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and worldviews. The focus — whether in a church, nation, or an election — is usually on the visible decisions, directions, and actions. Often, you have to dig for the driving force.

Peeling the Onion: A Search for Causative Issues

Church consultant Lyle Schaller taught me an important lesson. “When interviewing people at a church,” he said, “you must peel the onion.” Lyle explained that the surface issues people discuss are almost never the real issues. I learned the art of digging for the issues behind the issues. We train our church consultants accordingly.

This is how your physician approaches your health. “Where does it hurt?” the doctor asks. If your physician made a diagnosis, moving toward a course of action (a prescription) on that level of information, your doctor would be liable for malpractice.

Your physician, through further investigation, wants to go beyond the symptoms to the causative issues. If you have constant headaches, the prescription would be dramatically different if you had allergies or a brain tumor.

Unfortunately, much of the election focus of the media is on the personalities of the candidates: their lives, mannerisms, language — and most of the content of the debates reflects symptoms, not the issues behind the issues.

Symptom-Solving In Your Church

Why do churches call in a consultant? Why can't they grasp the challenges and opportunities? It's because they are naturally subjective. Why? Because it is their church. This is why surgeons won't operate on family members. The most difficult church for me to consult is the one I attend. Emotions come with blinders. That is just the way it is.

Fortunately, for churches, there is a source that gives clarity to values, beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and worldviews. God has provided His word in the Scriptures. Unfortunately, many church leaders would self-describe as “definitely not experts in the Bible.” God provides leaders of church leaders, called pastors. While their number one priority is to equip people for ministry (Ephesians 4), they spend most of their time managing the institution. The result is often emotional chaos. This keeps our “Church Doctors” busy. We not only peel the onion with them, we direct them to the only platform we Christians have, the Scriptures. This process clarifies the symptoms, gets to the causative issues, and results in prescriptions that clarify the forest and the trees.

About the Election

The candidates are flawed people. Yet the focus in the system is on these people. This is a huge mistake. Whether you like the person or not, as a respectable voter, you must peel the onion.

Our forefathers and our form of government may have understood this better than most who visit the voting booth in November. The presidential debates are mostly about symptoms, and

the media evaluations are primarily about personalities. The candidates attack each other and their personal lives. The press loves it, and voters get weary — perhaps considering defeat by choosing not to vote. What a tragedy! As a Christian, you must vote, and there are critical reasons why.

The system of our government is much better than you think. But the candidates themselves, as well as the media, block the process of peeling the onion. However, you can and must do it.

Long before the Republicans and Democrats and voters in the primaries chose candidates for the election, each party developed a platform. This is the political version of the church's Bible. It reflects the culture of the parties without the flaws of the future candidates and the sensationalism of the media. It reflects what really matters. It reflects the heart of the onion, after you peel back all the layers. It reflects the values, beliefs, attitudes, priorities, and worldviews of each party.

This election cycle is, perhaps, the most critical decision in recent history for the future of this country. The platforms of each party are so far apart — on the level of culture — than most people could ever imagine. Perhaps you, like me, felt in your gut a leaning toward a candidate, but all the symptoms confused you and you couldn't put your finger on it.

Analyze the two platforms and put aside the candidates, their personalities, flaws, and humanness. The U.S. is at a critical junction in the road of history. We have already started down that road. Do you want it to continue?

Thank you, Jim Garlow, for peeling the onion. As a voter, I strongly urge you to read Jim's article "If You're On the Fence About Your Vote, This Pastor Clarifies How the Very Future of America Is At Stake."

Discuss this article with those Christians you know who may be more accomplished students of Scripture than you. Pray for divine wisdom. Consider what has made this country work, in spite of all its human flaws. Consider the level of immoral activities, violence, and hopelessness of our society. Peel the onion and ask yourself about all the political and religious influences behind this civilization. Don't vote the person. Vote the platform. If you want to be part of the solution, go to the issues behind the issues and VOTE.

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Pray for God's Will for the Nation