



So, What Seems to be the Problem?

By J. Jeff Toler, Shenandoah Christian Alliance

- *We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to our own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.* (Psalm 34:4)

It's not necessarily a compliment, or for that matter praise-worthy to be called sheep; unless of course, we are called His sheep. If Jesus is our shepherd, we are the sheep of His pasture. In this world, there are 7.8 billion sheep. Of that number, very broadly speaking, there are [perhaps 2.1 billion](#) who may be called *His* sheep.

This means that of all of the people (sheep) on earth, believing Christians are outnumbered four to one. Conflict? Of course. Little has changed since Christ began His ministry. At issue here **is the problem we must confront today:**

Freedom and liberty, historically enjoyed for centuries in America, are increasingly threatened, but few seem outraged. Consider these statistics from a recent **Barna study:** ⁽¹⁾

- Three-quarters of US clergy members believe religious freedom is becoming less valued. Two out of

five US adults say religious freedom is worse than 10 years ago (43%).

- Nearly half of US faith leaders predict that other freedoms, in addition to religious liberty, will be at risk in the coming decade (44%).
- More than two-thirds of Christian pastors (69%) would like Judeo-Christian values to be given preference in the US. The same proportion of non-Christian clergy wants no single set of values to be given preference.
- Most clergy members feel at least somewhat prepared to teach their congregants how to engage constructively on sensitive/social issues (93%). However, only **seven percent** would say their congregants are very well equipped to do so right now.
- Potential limitations on religious freedom are a concern for faith leaders (54%), but concerns about young people dropping out of church (72%) and the decline of the traditional family (65%) are even more widespread.

As pastors and faith leaders, we should be alarmed about these trends. America's churches have traditionally been considered places of solid, virtuous people, who generally exemplified

courage with civic-minded habits that ensured free and open elections, community involvement, and decency. As best we could, we served our nation when asked. Christians tended to be associated with "God, Country, and the American Way." But these things are no longer so fashionable.

- "It is a mistake to suppose that all men... want to be free. On the contrary, if freedom entails responsibility, many of them want none of it. They would happily exchange their liberty for a modest (if illusory) security." — Theodore Dalrymple, **Life at the Bottom: The Worldview That Makes the Underclass**

Following the slow, silent demise of the "silent majority," Christians have become wary of mixing politics and religion. Divisive issues are considered only that: divisive. Churches have withdrawn from the public square, and instead allowed justice to be replaced with social justice. Worse, we are told we now live in a "post-Christian" era. Shouldn't that make the stakes that much higher because it is one world view (biblical) opposed by another, darker, malignant world view? Right now, at this moment, the thief is entering the sheep fold.

Sheep are directionless, they get lost easily...

We have been examining the cultural marker that most exemplifies this current generational era as fear. Of all the human behavioral motivators, [fear is by far the most powerful.](#) ⁽²⁾ But this is precisely the irony: as Christians, we are *not* to live in a spirit of fear.

Reacting to fear for most people often boils down to “fight or flight.” For most of us, we take flight by simple avoidance. To be taken care of is instinct. But liberty is a virtue, and we are at the point of losing our liberty. As shepherds, **we more than anyone need to be the salt and light** as Jesus called us to be. That includes condemning the situation for what it is: **evil.**

What His sheep need now from our pastors is the courage and conviction they already possess to **provide clear instruction** to their flocks on how to resist the enemies of humanity. As you must know, any belief system that attempts to replace liberty with subjugation, truth with deceit, leadership with tyranny is clearly the enemy of humankind... the enemy of Christ. Incredibly, that is exactly how stark the situation has become in America today.

At SCA, we intend to provide the equipment **needed to fight...** and not take flight. It is our purpose and our prayer to be the helping companion for you and your ministry—if you would

welcome us.

We all need to know more, and do more...

Amen

(1) Faith Leadership in a Divided Culture, The Religious Freedom Debates—and Why They Matter to All of Us

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