

Focus on the Family 'hiding behind compromise'

Prominent Dobson supporter chastises ministry's new leadership

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SEATTLE – As evangelical Christian defenders of traditional marriage evaluate their November election losses, disagreements that have developed in the broader movement over how to engage society have been accentuated.

The divide is exemplified in the change in rhetoric coming from the new CEO of the highly influential [Focus on the Family](#) ministry, whose political action wing, CitizenLink, fought a losing battle against same-sex marriage in Maryland, Maine, Minnesota, and Washington state.

Jim Daly, who succeeded Focus on the Family founder James Dobson as president in 2005 and took over as host of the radio show in 2010, struck a conciliatory tone in the aftermath of the Nov. 6 election in an interview with the Los Angeles Times. The interview reflected Daly's emphasis on a more bipartisan appeal, stressing the good works of Christians, rather than their condemnation of sinful behavior, and maintaining civil discourse with opponents.

Daly said conservative Christians have lost the fight against same-sex marriage in part because they're on the losing side of the cultural paradigm and have not reached out to people with whom they have disagreements to find common ground, according to the Times.

In an interview with WND, Rev. Ken Hutcherson, a longtime Dobson ally who was at the forefront of opposition to the same-sex marriage initiative in Washington state, summed up his response to Daly's Times interview with an allusion to Jesus' sheep and wolves metaphor in the Gospel of John, chapter 10.

"Those who are supposed to be shepherds of the flock end up being just hirelings. And when the wolf comes and things get tough, they run and hide behind compromise," Hutcherson said. He said Daly's evaluation is "absolutely wrong."

"I think what we've lost is we've moved away from the base of our conservative constituents and values voters and tried to win the moderates," he told WND. "We've tried to show them a more loving and more inclusive way by backing off a little bit and not seeming so harsh in our views."

Hutcherson believes all four of the marriage battles were lost "because the value-voting Christians didn't show up."

Dobson and Daly declined to be interviewed for this story.

Winning moderates



Hutcherson – senior pastor of [Antioch Bible Church](#) in the Seattle suburb of Kirkland, Wash., and a former NFL linebacker – noted supporters of same-sex marriage in his state raised \$7 million compared to \$2.4 million for opponents, yet won by just four percentage points. "What does that tell us?" Hutcherson asked.

"If the church would have been unified and stuck together the way we started off being unified, until these national organizations came out here, we would have won this fight," he said.

He thinks the result would have been the same in other states as well. “But we are bending over too far trying to win the moderate instead of securing our base and giving them something to come out and vote for,” he said.

Hutcherson said that if Daly were sent to talk to Israel about its conflict with Hamas, he would be “telling Israel that you just need to act more friendly toward Hamas and prove yourself a friend to get things turned around.”

“It won’t work for Hamas,” he said. “It won’t work for those that are living in sin.”

Hutcherson isn’t new to the political battle over marriage, both on a state and national level. He organized a “Mayday for Marriage” rally in Seattle in 2004 that drew 20,000 participants and spearheaded a similar event in Washington, D.C., later that year that attracted 140,000.

Winsome Jesus

In the Los Angeles Times interview, Daly said the evangelical right is “fighting an uphill battle of demographics” on homosexual rights. In his recently published book, “ReFocus: Living a Life that Reflects God’s Heart,” Daly said Christian conservatives should have confidence they will ultimately prevail, but in the meantime must “engage the culture with winsomeness and with great patience and confidence.”

Responding to Daly, Hutcherson noted many regard Jesus as “the most winsome of all characters in the world” but pointed out that he, nevertheless, was rejected and killed. “He never ever, ever gave people the opportunity to be comfortable in their sin and never ever took his winsomeness and tried to make them friends without repentance,” Hutcherson said.

The pastor noted political consultant Frank Schubert, who had led successful efforts to defend traditional marriage in other states, including California in 2008, was paid more than \$1.9 million to run the campaign in Washington.

“What did we get for it? A more loving, easy, don’t make people mad, don’t make them feel like they are not understood” approach, Hutcherson said. “That doesn’t work when you’re dealing with those that are living in sin,” he insisted, “because you’re trying to have darkness see light without the Holy Spirit.” Hutcherson said the emphasis should be on “righteousness and sharing Jesus with these people.”

“Give them Jesus, man. Give them Jesus. That’s what we’re called to do. And what is giving them Jesus? Showing them the difference between darkness and light.” What Daly is trying to do, Hutcherson argued, is “to win the enemy to win elections. “It’s not going to work.”

Dobson pushed out?

Daly told the Times he believes evangelicals need to win over friends, not make more enemies, and that the results of the election underlined the need to reach out to people with whom they have disagreements and seek common ground.

That includes President Obama. “Maybe we’ve been looking in the wrong direction and we’ve got to be more ecumenical,” Daly said, adding that for years, evangelical conservatives were content to persuade the Republican Party to adopt their principles on social issues. “I guess that’s all good, except when you don’t win elections,” he said.

Daly told the Times it would be “foolhardy not to recognize that the culture is moving more” in the direction of support for same-sex marriage. He also signaled a willingness to work with abortion-rights groups to find common ground on adoption.

Hutcherson commented that Daly’s approach is a sharp departure from Dobson’s and thinks the founder was moved aside at Focus on the Family, because ...

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