

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
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Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:00 When it comes to politics, should the church engage or not engage? How do you talk about it in a healthy way from the pulpit? And today's guest is gonna help us understand how he engages his congregation in a healthy way without compromising the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:38 Well, welcome back to *Fearless*. As you can see, if you're watching on YouTube, I am here in my kitchen in Fort Myers, Florida. I'm not up in North Carolina recording this. Um, because in a couple weeks I do have a baby coming. We're expecting if you've been following on Instagram or some other episodes. And that is just really hard to believe that that's just a few weeks away because, um, I think I only have bought like two or three outfits. I don't have a crib, I don't have a stroller, and I don't have a car seat. So I got some shopping to do in the next couple weeks. So that's hard to believe that's around the corner. But it's also hard to believe that next week are midterm elections and how we can think that we're already to this point is wild because we all can remember 2020.

And if you go back to 2020 of just that incredible year, um, between the pandemic and the lockdown, the George Floyd and all the Black Lives Matter, the riots that had happened throughout that summer. It was a wild year and we were exhausted. I think it was like kind of a scene from a movie. All of our hairs like sticking up like crazy, like we had touched an electrical outlet or something and we were exhausted and we were depleted. And then we go in to the fall of 2020, which was the craziest presidential election of US history. And um, it's hard to believe that we're already back to an election year, but we're here and since we are in the middle of this, um, this series, The Elephant in the Room and once we're talking about, um, issues that the church isn't talking about.

So of course being here in *Fearless*, we're gonna dive into politics today and what that should look like for a healthy church to talk about these issues. You know, if you've been a follower of *Fearless* for a while, you know that I love politics. I've loved politics since I was in the ninth grade and it's something I've never shied away here on *Fearless* of why we as Christians need to be engaged in the public square. But I always encourage you cuz I know "politics" is an ugly word. Even if you just heard that, you might be almost ready to click this episode off. But I wanna encourage you not to think about it as politics, but as who is governing you and what does that mean governing you. Who's making those decisions of your daily life? Who's making those decisions

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

over your family, over your personal business, over your church, um, whether you where you can worship and when you can worship. And who's making decisions on your parental rights? We see our parental rights being taken away in some counties, in some states here in our country. So don't think about it as an ugly word. I think we as Christians, um, here in America have been given, or just Americans, not just Christians, we've been given the amazing freedom to be a part of this process. And so many people think we have to keep our faith hidden in our like four walls of our home. And that's not what our forefathers intended it. They didn't intend this like silent hidden faith just inside of our home. But we are to live that out. We are to live that out in the public square where to live that out in our businesses, um, and our churches and our communities being loving thy neighbor. And so we as Christians have been given just a huge blessing in this nation to be a part of it. And we have seen what's happened throughout history when churches have sat silent. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, he had said, "If I sit next to a mad man as he drives a car into a group of innocent bystanders, I can't as a Christian simply wait for the catastrophe, then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try to wrestle the steering wheel out of the hands of the driver." And I say that as because I feel like so many of the churches have set silent when it comes to some of these issues that they're not political. When we have a whole generation promoting like gender theory and you can pick and choose your gender and that teachers can't use the biological pronoun. We have a major issue when we have teachers trying to hide things from parents. These are moral issues when our religious freedom is under attack because I believe religious freedom is just the bedrock for this amazing nation. We take that away, so many of those other freedoms will fall. And when you see some of these basic tenets of our faith being attacked, we can't sit back. We have to be engaged and there's healthy ways to do that. I've over the last couple years have seen pastors that have done that in an amazing, gracious way from the pulpit with love and with truth and with grace. And just like my pastor here in um, Fort Myers, Florida, he just teaches scripture by scripture verse by verse. God's word is relevant today and it's amazing how current it is and that those issues you can't avoid when you're teaching scripture. So it's important and I think it's important for Christians not to sit silent, that we have to stand up.

You know, recently a well-known pastor came out with a book about as Christians can't pick political sides and that that could be a danger for the church. And it's not about picking sides. You know, my hope is not in the Democratic party. And my hope is also not in the Republican party. Um, my hope of course is in God's truth, God's word, his son Jesus Christ. And so my hope does not rest on a particular political party. It's about God's truth. And we have been blessed to live as a free nation and it's about protecting the heritage for my children, for their children, um, my future family and generations to come and yours. So what are we as Christians to do? And I do wanna say I've seen pastors speak out on moral issues that we are currently facing and they've done a great job. But I've also seen pastors who have sat silent over the last few years when we are facing this moral decay in this nation. And then I've also seen pastors who do speak out on these issues, but I believe have done it in a wrong way, that they have crossed the

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

line and that they haven't kept their eyes focused on the cross. And I wanna introduce to you a pastor who I think is providing a great model for how we as Christians can be involved in the political process while keeping our eyes totally focused on the cross. And that's Pastor Gary Hamrick, who's the senior pastor of Cornerstone Chapel in Leesburg, Virginia, where he is now served as the lead pastor for over 30 years. I have personally have never met Pastor Gary, but I am so thankful, um, just from watching afar the example that he has set. Many of you might not even realize it, but you've probably noticed his church has probably been ground zero for a lot of issues that we have faced in our country in the last couple years. They're in Loudoun County in Virginia, many of his congregations where those mama bears who went and fought at the school boards and stories like Tanner Cross, if you might remember. He was a teacher that went to a school board and spoke out about, um, just pronouns and that was put on administrative leave. We'll get to that, but Pastor Gary, thank you so much for being here. Thank you for your church being a light in this world. Welcome to *Fearless*.

Gary Hamrick:

00:08:04 Thank you, Cissie. It's good to be with you and thanks for all that you're doing to get the truth out there. So thank you.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:08:09 Well, and I first, before we get started, I wanna say Cornerstone has partnered with Samaritan's Purse, um, [Yes.] Many times over the years, especially when it comes to Operation Christmas Child, which is hard to believe that is right around the corner. Um, [Yeah.] So we're just so thankful for Cornerstone and your partnership.

Gary Hamrick:

00:08:25 Yeah, thank you. Last year, I think we packed somewhere around 5,000 boxes and, uh, I think we're on track to do more than that this year. So we left partnering with Samaritan's Purse, and not just Operation Christmas child, but also for the disaster relief. So we're, we're partnering with Samaritan's Purse to go down to your neck of the woods, and help with some of the disaster relief down there after Hurricane Ian.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:08:49 Well, thank you. And we are, we're so grateful. I know many people that do go to your church. Many of our volunteers who I've met over the years go, and so I've been, um, watching Cornerstone from afar, so thank you. [Thanks.] But as we talk about politics and how the church engages, I've mentioned that over the years, many have sat silent. Many who have spoken out over the last couple years might have clung to that too much while taking their eyes focused off the cross. But you have clearly realized that many of these issues, they can be political, they can be moral, they can be biblical, and discipleship matters in all at one time. So whether it's protecting the unborn parental rights, our family, human trafficking, marriage, religious freedom, the biblical and moral

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

political implications, they overlap many times. [Sure.] So why do you think so many pastors and churches fail to recognize this reality and they steer clear of all the political issues that have a huge spiritual significance?

Gary Hamrick:

00:09:50 You know, I've, I've wondered that myself a lot because I personally don't understand why pastors aren't sensing the burden of the responsibility to proclaim the truth in all aspects. In fact, I think it was Martin Luther who said, "If you preach the Gospel in all aspects, with the exception of addressing the issue of your time, you are not preaching the Gospel at all." So it's not just, you know, going from Genesis to Revelation through the Bible. It's taking time in the process of teaching the Gospel to talk about the issues that we're facing today and how the Bible is an answer to all these issues. [Mm.] And so, when we remain silent, I think we're complicit. I think when pastors particularly remain silent in the pulpit about these cultural and social issues that are shaping our nation, then we're complicit in, and I'll just use the word, in the evil, because you know what?

Right now, when we see all this redefinition, redefinition of marriage, redefinition of, uh, biological sex, redefinition of life, uh, it just is heartbreaking. And when pastors don't address it, um, we're the ones who are gonna be held responsible. In Ezekiel 33, it talks about how the watchmen are set on the wall. And if the watchmen see the sword coming and say nothing, do not blow the trumpet to warn the people, then the watchmen will be personally responsible. So I take that to heart, and I, I just can't remain silent. And to be honest, if I had to make a guess as to why, to directly answer your question, pastors seem to remain silent right now in these days. It's either what I call fiction or fear. They either are believing the fiction that, um, that the First Amendment is really silencing churches. [Mm-hmm. <affirmative>], um, and the First Amendment, you know, really was intended to keep government out of the church, not the church out of government.

[Absolutely.] That whole separation of church and state nonsense is, you know, I'm sure your, your listeners, they understand that was an 1802 letter that Thomas Jefferson wrote. It was not in the constitution bill rights or anything, but too many pastors have believed that false narrative, they believe the fiction, there's a wall of separation, church and state, which means Christians should be marginalized, Christians should be silent. And, um, and so I think pastors are silent for that reason. Either that or the fiction of the 1954 Johnson Amendment, they're afraid to lose their tax exempt status, which then means there's a fear issue. So the fear issue is, "I can lose my tax exempt status," which you've now made your tax exempt status more of an idol than the truth. And you're afraid of losing people because you think, if I get bold about some of these issues, I'm gonna alienate people. They're gonna run, I'm gonna lose numbers, and I'm gonna lose money. And unfortunately, too many pastors are focused on all of that, and it's become idolatry. And so they're muzzled, they're silent. And, uh, people are not

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

getting equipped in the truth because pastors aren't proclaiming the truth from the pulpit. Some are, don't get me wrong, I'm not the only one in the country. [Absolutely] I don't wanna come across like that at all. But I've just seen too many churches and pastors now just going woke and being silent.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:13:05 Yeah. I think you, you mentioned the tax exemption. My dad always says, "We're not doing this work for our tax exemption. [Exactly.] So take it away." That means we will. But I do believe that the Lord will honor, and I think we will come to a time that we will lose our tax exemption. I think that's coming, that's the inevitable. But I wanna encourage people, we're not in this, we're not speaking the gospel or like at Samaritan's Purse doing the work of the hands and feet of Jesus to get our tax exemption.

Gary Hamrick:

00:13:31 That's exactly right.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:13:32 How do you tackle these issues from the pulpit while keeping your eyes on the cross, preaching God's word, teaching God's word to your congregation? How do you tackle these issues? How are they intertwined into your messages?

Gary Hamrick:

00:13:47 So, um, I had a, a, a guy who's a CEO of pharmaceutical company, and he and his wife and his four daughters attend our church. And he sent me an email a few months ago and he said, Pastor Gary, I, I'm just thankful I get to come to church to, to learn that I'm not going crazy. And I think I seriously, and I, and I actually, uh, quoted him in one of our church services and people applauded because there's this sense today, like people don't know up from down right from wrong because the world is so chaotic and confusing and the language and the redefinition of stuff. And so, when I get up in the pulpit and I just preach through a text there's plenty of places where the Bible will just be applicable to everyday life. [Mm-hmm. <affirmative>]. And so, you know, you can't get through Genesis without talking about marriages between a man and a woman, and God designed male and female, there's only two biological sexes. There's not like 70 to choose from. So, you know, when I'm just teaching through the Bible, you're gonna touch on all of these different controversial topics that the, you know, it shouldn't be controversial. And just in presenting the truth, we're gonna end up dealing with what does the Bible have to say about every cultural issue, uh, that we're presently dealing with? And by the way, Cissie, you know, some people have, have accused me of just you, you've gotten so "right." You've gotten so politically right. And my answer is no. I've just been proclaiming the Gospel the same way for the last 30 years as the culture has veered left. [Mm-hmm. <affirmative>], it makes us look like we've gone so right [extreme], but I've just, Yeah. And then they wanna marginalize, As I say, you're

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

extreme, but I've just been staying put in the same place for the last 30 years, preaching out of the same Bible. But when the culture drifts more and more left and the culture gets more and more evil than the words of truth sound more offensive and they sound more extreme, they aren't. It's just the same Bible we've been preaching out of for the, you know, for however long.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:15:50 When you're talking about that culture. Well, that culture has definitely crept up on y'all's doorsteps at Cornerstone. Y'all are right up for those that don't know you're right outside Washington DC <laugh>. [Yeah.] But as I mentioned earlier, your church was very much engaged in some of these issues that we've seen on national television, whether that was from the school board and Critical Race Theory, Tanner Cross, which we're gonna get to in a minute. How do you encourage your congregation to engage in a healthy way versus an unhealthy way? How do you encourage that from the pulpit?

Gary Hamrick:

00:16:25 Well, one of the things that I've said to our congregation is, we gotta be careful. We're not just getting a reputation for being against everything. We're against this, we're against that. [Mm.] So, you know, there's a balance between refutation. We want to refute the lies and the evil of our world and proclamation. We wanna proclaim the gospel. We wanna proclaim the truth. So, you know, we don't have to go around, you know, screaming at the darkness all the time. But there are some practical things that we can do. So like getting our congregation engaged, you know, I've encouraged people run for office, you know, first certainly vote, register to vote and vote your values, run for office, like get involved. When it came to like the school board, you know, the school board passed this policy in Loudon County 80-40, this transgender policy that allows children to basically choose whatever gender they wanna be. And the parents can't even interfere with that.

So when that nonsense came out, you know, I stood up in front of our congregation and there have been people asking me, "Can we open up our church for petitions to recall school board members?" And at first I'm like, "You know, I don't wanna get that reputation that we're just out to, to be against everybody." But when they passed that policy, I stood up in our congregation, I said, "We're gonna open up the recall petitions." And so, you know, by the thousands people started signing to recall their school board members, because we can't, we can't stay silent. We have to do something. So I would just encourage our people, listen, here's what the scripture says. We're never going to substitute the truth of God's word for just a bunch of social issues, but we have to address the social issues through the lens of God's word. And everybody has to get off the sidelines, get engaged, vote your values, run for office. And, uh, so we're, we're trying to make a difference inch by inch. Well,

Cissie Graham Lynch:

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

00:18:23 You, you've made a huge difference there in Virginia and it's been an encouragement and, um, other people didn't know it or not. A lot of that has been rooted in, in Cornerstone and I'm so grateful. [Thank you.] Um, one thing I do think it's interesting on your church's website in a section of the church's beliefs, you include a statement that your church believes that God disapproves of altering one's gender. Right. Which is amazing that we have to put that on. [I know, I know], and I'm actually thankful you did, cuz I've encouraged, like our private schools, Christian schools to start doing that in a time where churches are either silent or afraid to say anything about gender. How did you, under your leadership and your team come to the conclusion that you thought it was necessary to put that on your website?

Gary Hamrick:

00:19:08 Well, unfortunately, our lawyer suggested it [mm-hmm. <affirmative>], um, because we had to protect ourselves. Why are we not going to perform same sex marriages? Why are we not going to have alternative bathrooms? So we have to codify it in our statement of faith so that people know this is what we stand for. This is a doctrine that we believe in. And so, when we support it Biblically, which isn't hard to do when you just look at the Bible to support, you know, a marriage between a man and woman and God designed male and female. We had to actually put in our statement of faith to, uh, protect us. So it's really kind of a liability issue, but you're right. Like, it's sad we have to even say that now, but, um, it just goes to the point of the chaos and confusion in our culture these days.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:19:55 And I think that should be an encouragement. I mean, here at Samara's Purse and the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association [Yeah.] we're constantly going over that statement of faith dotting the i's crossing the t's, always finessing it. As of, um, protection that people will always know where we stand. I've also encouraged just like private Christian schools Yeah. You've gotta continue to have parents sign that statement of faith, A very detailed statement of faith. [You're right.] My, my kids go to our Christian school and we've already seen some changes, not really from the administration, but it's actually from the parents within. [Yeah.] Because it's not so much now it's the Christian parents who can't agree on what truth is. [Yeah.] And that's part of the, the major thing we're seeing is a lot of people have become Biblically illiterate that that's a root to a lot of it. So thankful for a pastor who's also teaching God's word. That's a big issue in the church itself, is that people have become biblically illiterate.

Gary Hamrick:

00:20:47 Yeah. And it's very sad. But again, it goes back to that's in large part due to the fact that a lot of pastors are not teaching the truth. And so that's why the people are becoming illiterate in, in the pews. [Yeah.] If the pulpit is silent, the pews will become ignorant.

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick**

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:21:02 Mm mm Say it again.

Gary Hamrick:

00:21:05 If... That's my quote, I that's nobody else.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:21:07 I know, I know. So say it again! <laugh>

Gary Hamrick:

00:21:09 If the pulpits are silent, then the pews will become ignorant.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:21:13 Wow. Well, we definitely have seen that happen on many of these cultural issues, but, um, I do wanna talk about Tanner Cross. [Yeah.] Of course, he's a story that I have followed. Um, but Tanner was a teacher, um, a PE teacher, Correct? [Correct.] A PE teacher who spoke on his own, you know, as a private citizen at a school board that he did not, um, he was not going to use the preferred pronouns of a child over the biological pronouns. [Right.] And he was put on administrative leave from the school board. And so, you spoke out about this. I... he goes to your church. [Yeah] I do believe [he does]. Um, why did you make that decision to speak out on that?

Gary Hamrick:

00:21:54 Well, first I watched the school board hearing on television and saw him make that statement. And, and I just thought, Wow, this guy, because he mentioned in, in the reason why he refused to acknowledge whatever gender the child wanted is because it would be lying to them and it would be lying to God. It would not be honoring to God. And so I heard all that and I was just like, Wow, this guy sounds like he's a believer and sounds like, you know, he's standing for truth. Then I found out he went to my church, so I didn't even know that. And then, so when I found out he went to my church, I contacted him through a mutual friend, had him and his wife Angela, into my office, pray for them, talk to them about all that he's been through with that. And then I had him up in front of the congregation and, uh, you know, and everybody just, you know, applauded them and I prayed for them, but I got involved because here's a guy speaking up for truth. And he was put on administrative leave.

Like, again, it's trying to silence Christians, it's trying to marginalize us. We're the extreme people. And, uh, and so, you know, I said, "Look, we, we wanna rally behind this family. We wanna pray for them." Because man, that went national and the heat that he got was incredible. And unfortunately too, when I stood up to defend him and pray for him, that went national news too. And it was just like ridiculous. And people, you know, put out a, a statement that I should recant my comments and that went

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

national. And I'm just like, "I'm not recanting anything, like God designed male and female, and here's a brother who's just acknowledging God's beautiful design of children." We can all be compassionate for anybody who struggles with like gender identity issues and we can want to get him help and counseling, but when we start to celebrate it as normal, [absolutely] we're doing them a horrible disservice. And the school board ended up passing that policy that Tanner spoke out against. But the good news there is that Alliance Defending Freedom, um, came to Tanner across his rescue and legally fought to get his job back and he was reinstated. Uh, so it's just been a flurry of just nonsense happening in Loudon County. And, um, Eric Metaxas told me, he said, "You know, the, you didn't go looking for the battle, The battle came to you." I said, "Yeah, that's what's happened."

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:24:13 Well, that's exactly what I was gonna follow up with. Um, you weren't expecting these battles, um, right at your doorstep, and that's just a testament is that whether it's cancel culture or these issues [Yeah]. They're gonna find us in our part of the world wherever we are. [Yeah]. In our little corner. If we think we're just gonna play it safe, it's gonna find you, whether it's in your private business, um, with your children, with your marriage. So [yeah], it's gonna find us. That's why we have to be prepared on God's Word, um, to be able to stand strong. You did mention that they came against you. And I really, because I think that's a fear of many pastors. They fear the, the name calling, they fear, you know, sadly, the church has, it's become a business. You got lights, you gotta pay, you got people in your payroll. You, you got their families, you got their livelihoods. So I think when we've been doing this series called "The Elephant in the Room", why pastors aren't speaking on certain issues is they don't wanna offend somebody in their congregation or they don't wanna be called out by national press like you were. [Yeah]. Was there a moment, I probably know your answer, but was there a moment there that you doubted that you maybe is like, Hmm, this is not worth the fight. In that moment, was there ever a moment of fear for your congregation?

Gary Hamrick:

00:25:28 Honestly, no. And I... I don't say that it's any kind of hero of truth. [Sure.] It's ju... it's just, just wanting to be faithful to, to the truth and, um, in a very relative world. And so, it just, there's something that rose up within me. Just kind of this righteous indignation, not, you know, and it's not even really against any individual or any, you know, like the Loudon school board, you know, it's not even really against them. You know what it is. Cissie, it's, I'm just angry at the demonic influences in our world that is trying to rob every heart and soul of the truth, and especially the next generation. [Mm-hmm. <affirmative>]. And so, kind of when that rises up within you, you, you're thinking about the next generation, think about these kids are being lied to and deceived. No, I didn't really think about any kind of fallout or consequences.

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

And to be honest, just encourage any pastors who might be listening to this, You know, I, I know that like you just said, lights to, you know, the, the, the electric bill has to be paid and people are on your payroll and what's gonna happen? We have not lost people. We've gained people [mm-hmm. <affirmative>], our... our offerings have doubled in the last two years, believe it or not. I mean, people are hungry for somebody to tell them the truth. And so I just want to encourage, for every one person who leaves our church, three more come. And that's no exaggeration. It, we have seen more growth than we've ever seen, more offerings than we've ever seen. And that's just all glory to God. When, when his truth is honored, God will take care of you. And so no matter what the consequences, and we, we've been living in really comfortable times in a really comfortable country. We don't have the same kind of oppression like a lot of Christians have and other places around the world. It might be coming, I don't know. You know, we have to prepare for the ultimate worst, but the ultimate worst is they, they cut off our head and we go to Heaven. I mean, you know, so in the meantime, all we're doing is standing up and telling the truth and having some people call us haters and bigots and like, that's no big deal. Nobody's cut off my head yet. So, you know, I'm thankful.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:27:34 Well, I wish I lived closer because I would love to be in your congregation, part of your church, when you, when you speak, it's reminding me of things I've been taught my whole life. I am thankful for the example that I've had from a father who has taught me and shown by example of just through leadership that. What was the worst that's gonna happen? Yeah. I mean, these, these just scary times and I don't judge anybody that in that moment of being persecuted [Right.] That they haven't done what was right because none of us know. I pray and I pray when it comes to my family, and it comes to me that when that moment comes of the true test, I mean, I can sit here on a podcast and talk about fearless things and yeah. There's not too much that seems when it comes to our culture, at least that I'm fearful of. But, I pray one day that if my family and I are ever tested, our faith has tested that we would be able to stand strong [Amen] and center our Faith, because we never know what we would do in that moment. And I wanna encourage those. Maybe they haven't taken a stand in their community and they're listening now. It's never too late. God is full of grace. And, He will give us that faith to stand strong even if we haven't done it in the past. As we begin to close, a couple more questions. When you're talking about maybe the future, we don't know what the future holds and it could be very difficult times. How do you prepare your congregation for that, for the days ahead that we might face as a nation?

Gary Hamrick:

00:28:58 Well, I got some people who are like preppers, Like they're really into what's gonna happen when they lose everything. And, and I'm, I'm not really an advocate for all of that because I say to people like, "You're, you're, you're prepping with all the dry food and you know, canned goods and you got your guns and you got your wells and stuff. You know, you're not gonna shoot people off your front porch if you're a believer. You're gonna like, welcome them in." So my, my thing is, your, your supply's only gonna

Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Audio Media Services
Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

last a day probably if you're gonna be, you know, charitable. Short of that, short of like being preppers, I just tell people, "Look, um, stay close to the Lord, you know, dig in, press into him. Lean not on your own understanding. You know, in all your ways acknowledge him. He'll direct your paths. He's gonna take care of you. He's our provider. He is sovereign. We just have to really lean into the Lord and trust him because we don't know what, what, what will come in the days, in the days ahead." Um, I say to people, things that are happening now, 10 years ago, we would not have imagined [mm-hmm. <affirmative>]. And so, I don't know what the next 10 years hold. And so, if I start saying things like, "Hey, could, could we actually be persecuted in this country? Could our lives be demanded of us because of our Christian faith? Could we be imprisoned at least because of our Christian faith?" And people would say, "No way." Well, yeah, but you didn't think things that are happening now would've happened [Absolutely]. Just 10 or 15 years ago. So prepare for the worst, be prayed up and trust the Lord. Yeah. Live out your faith in a real genuine way.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:30:28 Last question. When it comes to politics and this country and our faith, what's, what's at stake and what is your hope for our faith in this amazing nation that we've been blessed to flourish in and live in? What's your hope and what's at stake?

Gary Hamrick:

00:30:46 Well, my hope is that Christians will come together. You know, Christians have been on the sidelines for too long. Christians have a... I mean, listen, we live in the greatest country and we have the privilege of voting in this great republic. And so, you know, I tell people all the time, you know, if Christians would just get together and agree on the truth. We could change things. So that's a real issue. Unfortunately, a lot of Christians can't even get together on the truth. Either that or they just sit it out. So we can't sit it out. We can't afford to sit it out. What is at stake is the soul of our nation. And the church has gotta get engaged cuz we are the only ones who have the answer to it.

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:31:29 Yep. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it. And um, that is our hope. And Pastor Gary, I'm so thankful for Cornerstone from afar down here in southwest Florida. Thank you for your leadership and the example that you have set and the encouragement you've been to your congregation, your city, your county, which has changed a state. We saw that. And that we can see what happens when godly men and women step up and stand for truth and they fight for truth. It doesn't make it easy, it's not convenient, <laugh>. [That's right.] Um, but y'all have done it. So thank you for setting that example and I wanna encourage all those who are listening right now, pray for your pastor. Um, we are in election time. Next week is Election Day. So I just wanna say thank you, um, and pray for Cornerstone. They are right outside one of the darkest cities in our nation, Washington, DC So thank you. Thank you Pastor Gary for being a part of Fearless today.

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Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick

Gary Hamrick:

00:32:23 Thank you, Cissie. It's been a joy to be with you and blessings to you. It's a privilege to be with you today.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:32:33 I'm so thankful for Pastor Gary and just his, um, leadership and just listening to him today. Like I said, I wish I was lived closer so I could be a part of his congregation. But after all of this has been said is that why should we be concerned with politics? Cuz I know a lot of people get weary of the word and we're in election, but why should we use our voices to speak into this arena? And you might think, "Well, if our religious freedom is taken away, the Gospel does flourish in persecution." A lot of people use that as their excuse. I've heard people say that. And while we do see faith rise in the most desperate situations and even oppressive governments, we miss this when we use that talking point that our freedoms here in America have been able to advance the Gospel in unimaginable ways around the world. It has been a hope to those, I mean even here, the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association and Samaritan's Purse. I've met so many people in different nations and different countries who've been so thankful for America because the Gospel's been able to flourish there and we've been able to take it around the world. So when you think if that is taken away, what does that do to the people around the world who, who looked for us as hope and to spread the word?

But we also need to remember that Jesus' disciples, they faced opposition from government officials when they spoke on their faith. You know, scripture is filled with warnings to God's people to honor those who are in authority, right? But that respect does not mean being silent about the things that are a part of our faith. When being told to remain quiet about important matters of faith, Peter and the apostles made their position very clear. In Acts 5 it says, "And when they had brought them, they set them before the council and the high priests questioned them saying, 'We strictly charged you not to teach in this name. Yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you intend to bring the man's blood upon us.' But Peter and Apostles answered, 'We must obey God rather than man.'" So I wanna encourage you that we are to obey God. We're to obey His truth. And in His Word, He guides us. He guides our steps and we can be filled with the Holy Spirit on some of these issues. It's kind of like Pastor Gary and his church Cornerstone. They didn't expect it to show up at their front doorsteps, but it did. And they were prepared with grace and with truth, but to stand and to fight in their own county. And I wanna encourage you to that. So be preparing, Be the Watchman <laugh>. Be hiding God's word in your heart so that you can know truth you can't expect. Um, to get all of that from your pastor, from your church, from your Bible study, you, you yourself can study God's word. Take a stand this political season. These

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Fearless – Episode 87 – Pastor Gary Hamrick**

midterm elections are so important and to your own community and in your state. So I wanna encourage you, get out there and vote cuz what a precious gift we have been given to be a part of the political process here in this nation.

Once again, thank you for joining me on another episode of *Fearless*. I wanna encourage you, check me out on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter, where you can just kind of keep up with what I'm speaking on, keep up with my current life. I wanna say thank you to all of those who have been following me these last few weeks since the hurricane. All of your encouragement, all your prayers. I am so grateful for each and every single one of you. Thank you and God bless.

CLOSING MUSIC

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