



VIEWPOINT

FAITH-INFORMED VOTING

MAKING BIBLICAL CHOICES IN A SECULAR SYSTEM

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Part 1 - Introduction

A local elementary school had these rules and regulations for a recent student council officer election:

1. Candidates must get approval from their teacher for all posters they wish to place around the school building. These posters need to be placed in appropriate locations and removed the day after the election ends.
2. Candidates may not distribute any items (i.e., candy, gym, pencil, et.) in order to solicit votes from their classmates.
3. Candidates may not make unrealistic promises on posters or in their speeches. (Ex: no homework, extra recess, no spinach in the cafeteria lunches, etc.).
4. Candidates may make negative comments about their opponents.

Part 2 - Where We're At

What do we see in our political culture?

1. Polarization and extremes influence choice of candidates
2. Very little bipartisanship; attacks
3. Lost ability for civil discourse
4. Power is more important than fair-minded solutions
5. And more...

How do you feel?

In commenting on the cultural climate in America, Timothy S. Goeglein in *Stumbling Toward Utopia*, writes,

“Spiritually, we are adrift. The common moral values we endorsed—if not always followed—as a nation are gone. In fact, what used to be deemed right is now wrong and vice versa...The result is a dispirited America. Neighbors are pitted against neighbors, and in many cases, families’ members are pitted against other

family members...The result is increasing isolation as we hunker down in various tribes, warring with each other sometimes under the same roof...The task of Christians is to not whine about the moment in which they find themselves, but to understand the problems and respond appropriately.”

With each election cycle, tens of millions of Christians fail to vote on candidates and propositions often decided by mere thousands of votes. Christians can influence society for good if we participate regularly in elections. Power is entrusted to citizens through the ballot box; therefore, we have both the privilege and responsibility to vote and positively influence the laws to reflect the kind of laws and moral standards God wants people to follow.

“Good government cannot save us, but bad government can destroy us.” (Gary Hamrick September 8, 2024)

Part 3 - Five Wrong Views of Christians and Government

1. **Government should compel religion.** This is when a government enforces its religious beliefs. Many Christians held this view in previous centuries. Over time, this view lost favor as more and more Christians realized that it was inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus and with the nature of faith itself. Genuine faith cannot be forced or compelled. The gospel is an invitation (Mt. 11:28; Ac. 17:2; 18:4).
2. **Exclude religion from government.** This view holds that religious belief should be kept at home and quiet, that there should be no influence from religious groups in the political process. This view seeks to silence religion in the public square. The reality is many, if not most, of our laws are founded on Judeo-Christian values (i.e., the 10 commandments and others) such as those against murder, theft, perjury, contract and negligence laws, and procedural issues like the testimony of witnesses.
3. **All government is demonic.** According to this view, all government power is deeply infected by evil, demonic forces. Those who hold this view usually prefer military pacifism and believe that those who work in government serve Satan. This view mistakenly interprets Luke 4:6. The Bible informs us that God has established both evangelism and the power of government to restrain evil (Rom. 13:1-6).
4. **Do evangelism, not politics.** Though this view is expressed often in personal conversations, the writers who tend in this direction qualify their statements by affirming the appropriateness of some political influence by the church, though they argue it will not do any spiritual or eternal good and that politics can distract us from sharing the gospel. But the “whole gospel” includes a transformation of society; Jesus appeared to destroy the works of the devil (1 Jn. 3:8).
5. **Do politics, not evangelism.** This view holds that the church should seek to change laws and culture, and should de-emphasize evangelism. If we just have good laws, we are good. This was a primary emphasis of the Social Gospel movement (late 19th to early 20th centuries), which emphasized external works versus a need to change the hearts of people.

Part 4 - The Right View of Christians and Government

As believers, we can have influence on society through impacting leaders.

Biblical Examples:

1. Dan. 4:27 - Daniel bears witness to moral standards
2. Jer. 29:7 - Jeremiah's letter to the exiles to seek the welfare of the city
3. Gen. 41:44 - Joseph was an advisor to Pharaoh and had great influence
4. Neh 1:11 - Nehemiah was the cupbearer to the king
5. Esther - she had a big influence on the king - Esther 4:14
6. Several prophets in OT often spoke to foreign nations
7. John the Baptist - to Herod in Luke 3:18-20
8. Paul - to Felix in Acts 24:24-25; also, Rom. 13
9. Peter - wrote on government in 1 Peter. 2:13-14
10. Exceptions to obeying government; the three Hebrew children - Neb., Peter & John before Sanhedrin

Participation is Stewardship

In Luke 12 Jesus taught a parable about two servants. Upon returning from a trip, the master called one servant "evil" because he was not a good steward of what his master had entrusted to him, but the other servant is described as "wise and faithful" because he took care of what the master had entrusted to him.

1. Wilberforce/slavery
2. Laws to end child labor, prostitution, etc.
3. Christians have influenced governments positively throughout history. The spread of Christianity and Christian influence on government was primarily responsible for:
 - a. Outlawing infanticide, child abandonment, and abortion in the Roman Empire (in AD 374)
 - b. Outlawing the gladiatorial contests in Rome (in 404)
 - c. Outlawing the branding of criminal's faces (in 315)
 - d. Instituting prison reforms (in 361), stopping human sacrifice among the Irish, the Prussians, the Lithuanians, and the Aztec and Mayan Indians
 - e. Outlawing pedophilia
 - f. Granting property rights and other protections to women
 - g. Banning polygamy
 - h. Prohibiting the burning alive of widows in India with their dead husbands (in 1829)
 - i. Outlawing the binding of young women's feet in China (in 1912)
 - j. Initiating public schools in Germany (in the 16th century)
 - k. Advocating compulsory education of all children in many European countries
 - l. Opposing and often abolishing slavery in the Roman Empire, Ireland, most of Europe, and the US (more than 2/3 of the abolitionists in the US in the mid-1830's were Christian clergymen preaching "politics" from pulpits)
 - m. The formulation of the Magna Carta (1215)

- n. The formulation of The Declaration of Independence (1776) and the Constitution of the United States (1787)

Likewise, God has entrusted us with the wonderful privilege of living in the United States of America, where there are 90 million self-identified evangelicals who are eligible to vote. But of those 90 million, 40 million do not vote, and 15 million are not even registered to vote. We may not always like our choices, but when we choose to exclude ourselves from the voting process, we have no one to blame. **Voting is not just a right—it is a duty, a matter of stewardship.** Christian participation in the democratic process can be a powerful witness to the world of the importance of justice, mercy, and compassion in society.

“Let it not be said that I was silent when they needed me.” (William Wilberforce)

“I would unite with anybody to do right and nobody to do wrong.” (Frederick Douglass)

Part 5 - Our Upcoming Fall Election

To guide us in this upcoming election, it is helpful to have some guiding biblical principles and practical applications for how our faith can inform our voting on candidates and policies.

Biblical Principles

1. We should support candidates who promote biblical values of justice, mercy, integrity and love.

Candidates often try to avoid difficult questions and stick to popular or tested soundbites. “I want to protect children!” I’m sure you do, but what exactly does that mean? Saying you supported the “fairness in elections law” tells me nothing; many laws have ironic or even deceptive titles.

We should investigate a candidate’s views on specific subjects and whether they support or oppose actual bills - and why. There are good resources for this, like the Center for Arizona Policy’s voter guide. Also, don’t be shy to write to a candidate’s website and ask where he/she stands on a particular issue.

2. We should support legislation and initiatives that promote godly values in government and that protect our religious liberties.

We are sometimes given the right to vote directly on legislation through a process called Initiative or Referendum. Arizona has an initiative this coming election that should be of interest to all of us: Proposition 318, which restricts access to locker rooms, rest rooms, and athletic participation to biological sex. (The law applies to schools and athletic associations.)

Genesis 1:27 – “So God created man in His own image; in the image of God, He created him; male and female He created them.” God assigns biological sex in the womb. We should seek to help the individual understand and celebrate the beautiful way God designed him or her.

3. We should use perspective and discernment when making difficult decisions. There will never be a “perfect” candidate, so we must balance (according to conscience) supporting the lesser of two evils at times, and other times when (in conscience) we cannot support any candidate in a race.

We should discuss these kinds of questions and seek God’s wisdom and discernment. (Prov. 3:5-6). We also need perspective. God chose Jehu to be a king of Israel for a season (2 Kings 9-10). Jehu was far from perfect, but he had a passion to eliminate baal worship in Israel, which was God’s will. God will use imperfect and flawed people, which helps us understand what God intends when the Bible says that all leaders are selected by God.

Here are some examples of how God’s Word may inform our view on political issues:

1. **Judges** - Is. 1:26 – “I will restore your judges as at the first, and your counselors as at the beginning. Afterward you shall be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city.” Good judges will bring righteousness to the land by virtue of their decisions.
2. **Borders**. Ac. 17:26 – “And [God] has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings.” Zech. 7:10 – “Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let none of you plan evil in his heart against his brother.” God is in favor of borders AND immigration. We should seek to protect our borders and to provide fair, legal means for immigrants to establish new lives in the United States.
3. **Israel**. Gen. 12:3 – “I will bless those who bless [Israel], and I will curse him who curses [Israel]; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” Supporting Israel does not equal blind agreement with all Israel does, but Scripture is clear that God is Israel’s ally. He will bless those who bless Israel.
4. **Religious Liberty**. Ex. 20:3 – “You shall have no other gods before Me.” We should not be required to bow down or submit to anything or anyone conflicting or competing with our supreme loyalty and allegiance to Him.
5. **Family**. Ps. 127:3 – “Behold, children are a heritage from the LORD, the fruit of the womb is a reward.” Parental rights have been incrementally stripped. Which candidates/policies will best support parents’ rights?
6. **Life**. Ac. 3:15 – God is called “the Author of life.” Proverbs 6:17 – God hates “hands that shed innocent blood.” Consider which candidates/policies more closely align with a pro-life view.

Part 6 - Christians in a Hostile Culture

Principles for maintaining a Christian witness in the face of cultural and governmental hostility:

1. When civil law conflicts with God’s law, obey God rather than men - Acts 5:29; Daniel 1:8
2. Be willing to accept the earthly consequences – Dan. 3:17-18; Acts 4:18-20
3. Know that your faithful obedience will be a testament and bring glory to God who may provide miraculous deliverance or use it as an opportunity to refine you and/or bring

others to Him – Heb. 11: 32-38; James 1:2-4; Rom. 8:28; Dan. 3; Dan. 6; Gen. 50:20; Acts 7

Politics-Related FAQs

1. Where do I find trusted information on candidates / policies?

<https://www.azpolicy.org/>
<https://christianvoterguide.com/states/arizona/>
<https://ivoterguide.com/voter-guide/eleck/1455>

2. Should Christians be involved in politics?

Jesus says, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21, Mark 12:17, and Luke 20:25). Notice the ‘and.’ Our devotion to God does not negate our responsibilities to the government. Christians are obligated to pay taxes to the government according to the law and based on the Word of God. Living in a nation where taxation grants representation, Christians have the constitutional rights and the responsibility as good stewards of this earth to participate in the election process.

3. Do Christians need to obey laws we don’t agree with or we dislike?

Yes, Christians need to obey laws they don’t agree with or dislike, because the Bible commands us to do so. Romans 13:1-2 says every person ought to be subject to the governing authorities, because they have been instituted by God. First Peter 2:13-14 also says to be subjects for the Lord’s sake to every human institution. If the government passes a law to increase our taxes, Christians have an obligation to pay the increased taxes, as commanded in Romans 13:6-7. What if our taxes fund practices such as abortion or gender-reassignment surgery? We have organizations such as the ACLJ and Alliance Defending Freedom pursuing these matters and advocating for Christian rights. Therefore, Christians should pay the taxes, for the sake of the Gospel, as fighting it on our own may impede our goal of drawing an audience on behalf of Christ (1 Cor 9:23). However, there is one exception to this command, which brings us to the next question.

4. When do Christians have an obligation to disobey the law?

God allows disobeying the government, when our obedience to the government leads to disobeying the commandments of God. Our first allegiance is always to God and to his commandment. When that allegiance is challenged by the government, Christians are obligated to disobey. In Acts 5 Jewish authorities told Peter and John not to preach about Christ. Peter replied, “We must obey God rather than men” and preached about Christ regardless. In Daniel 3 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego refused to obey the royal decree that everyone must bow down to the statue. They were thrown into the furnace for

their actions, but God saved them. In Exodus 1 Pharaoh told midwives to kill all Hebrew male children, but the midwives feared God and did not do as he commanded them. God commended their actions and blessed them. Esther disobeyed the law and risked her own life to save her people. And in 1 Samuel 2:30 God says, “those who honor me I will honor.”

5. When should Christians vote or not vote for a “lesser evil”?

Unless Jesus Christ is on the ballot, every political candidate on the ballot is imperfect, sinful, fallen human beings (Rom 3:23). Remember, God frequently used flawed leaders, such as David and Cyrus, to accomplish good, and to expand God’s agenda. Cyrus was a secular king, yet God says in Isaiah 44, “He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose...” Therefore, it is important for Christians to be properly informed and vote for candidates who best represent Christian values and serve God’s purposes. One may choose not to vote as a matter of conscience or choose to vote for a third candidate who has no chance of winning; however, in doing so you miss the opportunity to help defeat a candidate you least like and believe is the worst choice. In this scenario, voting – or not voting – is a matter of outcomes vs. endorsement. Every candidate is flawed, but ask if one candidate (or his/her policies) is a better option for the country: “Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare” (Jeremiah 29:7).