

WAS JESUS A DEMOCRAT OR A REPUBLICAN?

Politics has always been a “hot potato” in churches. Some churches don’t mind handling hot things, though, Jerry Falwell’s church is an example. Falwell’s church is a lightning rod for right wing fundamentalism, whatever that is. I’ve often wondered why he and his congregation are not challenged for being a political pack rather than a church. There are horror stories of local churches who have lost their tax exempt status, but these may just be urban legends, more threat than truth.

Other churches never venture into the political arena for fear of being targets of some political party or the community at large. They become little islands of neutrality in the sea of political debate.

I’ve always tried to take a middle of the road approach as long as I don’t get run over while in the street. It’s usually safe standing up against moral issues like abortion, lottery or liquor by the drink. But even then, you can count on making some Baptists mad because it’s their “God-given right” to do this or do that, regardless of what the Bible says. As far as recommending individual candidates, I’ve shied away from that while representing the church as pastor. On the other hand, as a private citizen (but when is a pastor a private citizen?) I’ve been known to openly campaign for candidates. For example, during my thirteen years as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Mustang, I often knocked on doors for a man in our church who was both our chairman of deacons and member of the House of Representatives. I didn’t see a conflict as long as it wasn’t something done from the pulpit.

I do think it’s not just every Christian’s right to vote, I believe it is our obligation and Christian duty to vote. This is not to say we can “legislate morality” or be assured that putting Christians in office is the answer to all society’s problems. But voting and taking part in our communities is in keeping with the Bible’s call to be “salt and light” in this world we find ourselves living in.

Mankind’s problems cannot be cured by a politician, or even a preacher. Only Jesus can change a society and world by changing human hearts, and that only happens one heart at a time. In the meantime let’s keep on sharing our faith and marking our “X’s” and remember we are Christians first and democrats and republicans second.