

Voting According To The Bible (Part 1)

Jer 29:4-7. It's an election year, and we need to talk about it. As uncomfortable as it is, we need to talk about voting, we need to talk about the issues, and we need to apply the Bible to it all. Because that's what Christians do; followers of Christ. They apply the Bible to their life; their *whole* life. So we need to talk about it.

What's more, this is a pretty important election. Whether it's the *most* important as some people say, I don't know. The election of Abraham Lincoln was pretty important. As was that of Franklin Roosevelt in WWII. Leading to the presidency of Harry Truman and the atomic bomb.

But I do believe this one ranks right up there. Because it represents the most divergent choice we've ever faced in our country. And it will either *preserve* our form of government, or fundamentally change it. Preserve our way of life, or drastically alter it. I believe the stakes are that high.

So over the next few weeks, I'm going to lay out some principles. Principles to help you vote according to the Bible. Because when you get right down to it, it's not what *we* think that's important, but what God thinks. It's not how *we* see the world, but how God sees it.

➤ But first, I want to address **4 Objections** to all this. Objections to even *talking* about it. Despite what I've just said, some people think that pastors and churches shouldn't even mention politics. Shouldn't go there. As if this is Harry Potter and the subject is Voldemort. It's that weird.

So I'm going to address those objections up front. Because if I don't, I'm afraid they might serve as barriers to keep some of you from hearing me.

Here's the first:

"The church should stick to Kingdom matters."

There's the Kingdom of God they say, and the kingdom of man. The Kingdom of Heaven and the kingdom of earth. And "the church should stick to the former, to the exclusion of the latter. After all, we're strangers and aliens here (Heb 11:13), so it doesn't concern us. We're just a passin' through. And shouldn't distract ourselves from the *real* work, the work of ministry." That's what they say. And it *sounds* good. Except for two problems.

First, the two Kingdoms overlap and influence one another. The Kingdom of God in the hearts and minds of those who believe, influences the kingdom of man by bringing *righteousness* to bear in our culture; and the kingdom of man influences the Kingdom of God by making it easier or harder for that to happen. *Promoting* biblical principles, or restricting them.

For instance, if our government leaders make decisions or laws that restrict our freedom to worship, like *some* mayors and governors have done recently, that makes it more difficult to advance the Kingdom of God and fulfill the work of ministry. More difficult for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. (Mt 6:10)

So we can't just focus on the heavenly to the exclusion of the earthly. It's not only impossible, because they inextricably overlap and influence one another; but it would defeat the purpose of the bringing the Kingdom of God to bear on the kingdom of man.

➤ The second problem with this objection, is that just because we're strangers and aliens on this earth, doesn't mean we should ignore it. Or turn a blind eye and deaf ear to the nation in which we live. In fact, God told the Israelites of old, as our example (1 Cor 10:11), to do just the *opposite*. To actually seek the *welfare* of the places we live. Jer 29:4.

[4] "Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon [it was right around 586BC when the Babylonians overthrew Israel, and took a bunch of them back to their country; modern day Iraq; here's what he said to them]:

[5] *Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. [6] Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. [In other words, look after yourselves and make the most of the situation.]*

[7] *But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile [seek its wellbeing, its good], and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*

Seek the welfare of the place in which you live. Seek to better it. Seek to help it. Seek to advance it. And by all means pray for it. *For in its welfare you will find your welfare* (v7). As our nation goes, so we go.

➤ So even if it were possible, the church should *not* just stick to kingdom matters (**X Out**). Because earthly matters *affect* kingdom matters, and affect *us*. That's the first objection to talking about voting and politics.

The second that you sometimes hear, is that . . .

"It's against the law."

"You shouldn't even be *talking* about voting in church, because it's against the law."

False. It's not at all against the law to talk and preach about voting. Or politics, or elections, or any other issue related to government.

The Johnson Amendment, added to the IRS code in 1954, says that pastors and churches, in their official capacities, *cannot support or oppose a candidate by name*. Or a specific piece of legislation, by spending a substantial amount of money on it.

And though many legal experts think the Johnson Amendment would never hold up in court, because it restricts our freedom of speech and freedom of religion to talk about anything we want, you can see why it was implemented. To prevent churches, who receive tax deductible donations, from becoming political action committees, while hiding behind the status of a charitable organization. I get it.

But it's not intended to prevent pastors and churches from addressing issues. I may not be able to say we officially support this candidate or that, but I absolutely can support or oppose the issues and *positions* of various candidates. I can even talk about the agendas of political *parties*. It's *not* against the law. (**X Out**)

Third, some people object because they think . . .

"It violates the separation of church and state."

Legally *or* philosophically, they believe there's a firewall, and never the two shall meet. Which most often arises out of a misunderstanding of that concept, perpetuated by liberal pundits and media outlets.

First of all, that phrase, "separation of church and state," is not used in *any* of our founding documents. Not in the Declaration of Independence, not in our Constitution, and not in the Bill of Rights.

The first time it showed up was in a letter written by Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Church in 1802. A letter affirming the Establishment Clause, from which this concept comes, in the First Amendment to the Constitution. A clause that says, "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." In other words, they can't set *up* a church, and they can't prevent a church from worshipping. That's the Establishment Clause.

And while it's also been interpreted to prevent churches and religious organizations from exercising authority over the government, it was *never* intended to exclude churches from *influencing* government. In fact, Jefferson cited it to express a *need* for such influence.

And if his *letter* wasn't enough to clarify that, he attended a church service *in the House of Representatives* two days later. *Demonstrating* that he wasn't against such religious influence in government.

So despite the fact that many people *misconstrue* the concept of separation, preaching on voting does not violate it. And it certainly doesn't violate the Establishment Clause.

You might think of this way: politics don't belong in Christianity, but Christianity certainly belongs in politics. Because virtue belongs in Congress. And godliness belongs in capitols. And righteousness belongs in culture. **(X Out)**

Preaching about voting does *not* violate the separation of church and state.

4th, and last, some people object by saying . . .

"You should just preach the Bible."

To which I would say, "Amen, and I am." I *am* preaching the Bible. Just like any other sermon series. Because the Bible says it's *profitable for teaching . . . and training in righteousness, that the man of God may be . . . equipped for every good work* (2 Tim 3:16). And voting is one of them. To seek the welfare of our country. So I *am* preaching the Bible.

The Bible includes principles that apply to voting, just like it includes principles for business. Or law. Or parenting. Or anything else. And most political issues are *moral* issues. Issues at the *core* of the Bible. Like abortion, freedom of religion, human sexuality, crime. So preaching on voting, something that directly affects *how* we deal with such issues, *is* preaching the Bible.

And what about the precedent in the Bible itself? Where God's people influenced secular governments throughout history. Like Joseph in Egypt. Daniel in Babylon. Nehemiah in Persia. Mordecai, Esther. John the Baptist in his day. The Apostle Paul. Did they not bring the Word of God to bear on the issues and governments of *their* day? I think so. **(X Out)**

➤ 4 objections, that don't hold water. Objections that are most often levied by those who *disagree* with what's being said, or feel guilty about their lack of *involvement* in the political process, or don't care for it. That's usually the perspective of those who object.

If that's *you*, let me encourage you to listen the next several weeks, and let the Holy Spirit change your thinking on *this*, just like you allow him to change your thinking on other things. Will you do that?

That said, here's the first principle I hope you'll take to heart:

1. Vote

Just that. Vote. Fulfill your civic duty and go to the polls. The well-being of our nation not only *depends* on it, but it goes hand-in-hand with being a *citizen* of this nation.

Our well-being depends on voting, because it affirms our *importance*, increases our respect for the *outcome*, and grows our gratitude for the *privilege*.

People who don't vote tend to feel unimportant and disconnected. And they *don't* tend to accept the results; or respect the *authority* of those elected. They don't. And they certainly aren't thankful for the privilege. None of which is good for our nation.

We already *have* too many people who feel disconnected and disenfranchised. We already *have* too many people who reject facts and objective outcomes. We already *have* too many people who disrespect authority. We already *have* too many with an ungrateful heart and entitled mind.

Vote, because the well-being of our country depends on it.

And vote because it goes hand-in-hand with citizenship. Voting is a part of our citizenship. Just like paying taxes is part of our citizenship. And obeying the law is part of our citizenship. And respecting leaders. And honoring the flag. And embracing our culture.

Vote, because it's part of what it means to be a *citizen* of our country.

➤ Unfortunately, 1 in 4 self-identified Christians *don't*. They don't vote. 1 in 4. And that's being conservative. It could be as high as 40%. Just like the rest of the country. Which in the last presidential election was 40M people. 40M self-identified Christians failed to vote in 2016. And 15M of them weren't even *registered* to vote. Christians.

How can that be? How can you exercise your God-given influence if you don't vote? How can *we* exercise it? As a church.

If you didn't vote in the last election, will you vote in this one? And the ones to come?

Because when you get right down to it . . .

• It matters

Vote because it matters. Even if those 40M Christians who didn't vote, were evenly distributed to all 50 states, that's 800,000 more voters, with a biblical mindset, influencing the welfare of our nation. 800k. Numbers like that would completely change the outcome in most states.

And not just the outcome of who wins, but what *policies* they enact. Who they surround themselves with. What regulations they impose. Decisions that either help or hurt our country. Accelerate our economy or slow it. Alleviate poverty or perpetuate it. It matters.

Or how about the appointment of judges? If you don't think *that* matters, you've been living under a rock. Few things matter *more* these days. Will they appoint judges who interpret the constitution as written, or legislate from the bench? Voting matters.

And don't forget the actual *laws* that are passed. And whether elected officials will actually uphold them or not.

Voting matters. From the people elected, to the laws they pass, to the actions they take. Elections influence the moral fabric of our culture, and voting influences elections.

➤ And yet, some people still refrain because they think *their* vote doesn't matter. "What's one vote?" they say. Which most often, is either a lame excuse for selfishness or laziness. Selfishness, because they don't care, or laziness to get informed and go to the polls.

But just in case it's not, just in case it's not laziness or selfishness, and you really think your *one* vote doesn't matter, consider the 19th District race for the Virginia House of Delegates, back in 1971. After a total of 32,820 votes were cast, exactly half went to one candidate and half to the other. It was a dead tie. Decided by an election official who picked one of their names out of a cup. Kid you not.

Same thing happened in Massachusetts, in 2010. And again in Virginia, different district this time, in 2017. Dead ties.

Or how about the 1974 U.S. Senate race in New Hampshire? Statewide. Out of a total of 221,850 votes, it was decided by 2.

And just in case you think that's rare, like I did, take a look at this list of close elections around the world. About half of which are in the U.S. (**Scroll List**)

(https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_close_election_results)

Stunning. Vote, because it matters. Even *your* vote.*****

➤ Unfortunately, others say, "Ya, my vote might *count*, but it still doesn't make any *difference*. They all do the same thing anyway."

Really? Like all the governors and mayors across the country with the riots and looting? Some of them squelching the destruction and others enabling it. You really want to say they're all the same? What about the different policies to re-open schools? Or businesses. Or mandate quarantines.

It's a blatant denial of reality to say that your vote doesn't matter because "they all do the same thing anyway." So whatever you do, cast it.

And second, vote because . . .

- **It's easy**

We put a QR Code on your notes, that takes you to a page of resources on our **website**.

And among them, are *several* websites. From a personal voting assistant, to various voter

guides, to a comparison of party platforms.

And I might mention that the *Personal Voting Assistant* can also be accessed by texting "**iVote**" to **73075**.

Either way, it's super easy and super helpful. I signed up myself. It will help you *register* to vote, *check* your registration, *remind* you to vote, tell you *where* to vote, and even help you *prepare* to vote (**Summary**). And not just in this election.

So *whatever* you do on November 3rd, vote. It's easy, and it matters.

Prayer – Lord, thank you for our country; our nation. Thank you for the opportunity we have to vote and choose our leaders. Give us impulse to do so, and discipline to prepare. And impress these truths on our hearts, that we might vote according to your Word.