

JESUS IS KING

Week 6: Principles and Practices for Political Engagement

NCAC Sunday School: October 13, 2024

What have we learned so far in this course?

AS WE ENGAGE IN EARTHLY POLITICS, WE MUST REMEMBER OUR PRIMARY CITIZENSHIP

*“But **our citizenship is in heaven**, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Philippians 3:20, ESV)*

“If we are in Christ, our most fundamental identity and allegiance is to Jesus and his church, far above and beyond any earthly nation...In Christ, our life-orienting allegiance is not to an earthly fatherland but to our heavenly Father – and to his Son, at whose name every knee will bow, beginning with ours.” (David Mathis, “Our Most Important Citizenship”)

*“These all died in faith, not having received the things promised, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and **having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. For people who speak thus** make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.” (Hebrews 11:13-15, ESV)*

“In the great faith ‘hall of fame’ chapter, Hebrews 11...not only were they ‘strangers and exiles’, but they *acknowledged* it. How so? Not simply in their own hearts, but they said it out loud (‘people who *speak thus*’). They were not heaven’s citizens in camouflage, living and looking just like their fellow earthly citizens. Rather, they were different to the core, knew it, owned it, lived it, and said it. So, ask yourself, Am I a stranger here on earth in any real senses, and am I willing and eager to make that known?” (David Mathis, “Our Most Important Citizenship”)

BIBLICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CHRISTIAN ENGAGEMENT IN POLITICS

As we observe the diminishing influence of Christianity in our culture, it’s often tempting to want to reach for political solutions. But we need to remember that what the world needs most is Jesus. So, as we engage in politics, we must make sure we’re living first and foremost as citizens of Christ’s Kingdom.

- 1. Model Christ-likeness.** Above all we must be committed to modeling Christ-likeness, always acting in accordance with Christ’s values while prioritizing the advance of His Gospel and His Kingdom.

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:17, ESV)

So, before we act, speak, engage, or post, we ought to ask ourselves: Is what I’m about to say or do consistent with the character, the values, *and* the purposes of Christ? If Christ were standing beside me, would He applaud my behavior or would He be more likely to correct me?

2. Pursue biblical wisdom. If our opinions are going to be thoroughly biblical, then we need to know the Bible well and make sure we're not forming our opinions from just a limited set of verses.

"...for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God." (Acts 20:27)

So, as we formulate our own opinions on various issues, we ought to ask ourselves: Have I considered the *whole* of God's Word? Have I taken time to examine this issue in light of Scripture, taking into account the full purpose of God as revealed through the Bible?

3. Maintain a sense of humility. Even as we seek to develop firm biblical convictions, we must be open to reason and honestly listen to the voices of those who hold different opinions than we do.

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. (Romans 12:16)

So, as we consider our positions and engage in dialogue, we ought to ask ourselves: Do I recognize my own propensity for error? Have I *genuinely* listened to and understood the other positions? On this issue, is my conviction perhaps just an opinion about which I could be wrong?

4. Cultivate a love for others. If politics is about how to live as neighbors, our political opinions must flow from a love that seeks to understand others and that then pursues what's best for them.

For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Galatians 5:14)

So, in everything we do and say, we ought to ask ourselves: Am I acting out of a genuine love for others? Am I honestly putting the interests of others before my own? Do I treat *everyone* with godly respect and dignity, recognizing *every* person as someone made in God's image?

5. Speak the truth, in love. Our world is losing its sense of "truth." In such an environment we're right to lovingly and compassionately speak truth and stand for truth—but standing for truth also means we should be careful to ensure that everything we say and the information we spread *really is true*.

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Ephesians 4:25)

So, before we spread any information, we ought to ask ourselves: Am I certain this is true, or am I potentially spreading misinformation? Have I done enough research that I can be confident I understand the facts? And *even if* what I'm saying is true, am I speaking with love and grace?

6. Avoid a victim mentality. Though believers sometimes act like helpless victims doomed to defeat, we must remember both Christ's response to insult and the certainty of what's to come.

...in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. (Romans 8:37)

So, when tempted to despair, we ought to ask ourselves: Have I lost sight of Christ's promises and His call to be thankful in *all* circumstances? Have I forgotten not only Christ's *future* rule, but His *current* rule? And in this trial, how can I show the world my *steadfast* hope in Christ?

PRACTICAL, POSITIVE WAYS CHRISTIANS CAN ENGAGE IN POLITICS

Even though our primary allegiance must always be to Christ's Kingdom and our ultimate hope must always be in Jesus and not in political solutions, that doesn't mean believers ought to withdraw from earthly politics. On the contrary, since government is a gift from God intended for the good of mankind, we're right to seek to influence government in godly ways out of a love for others and a desire to be "salt and light" in the world. Yet, it's often easy to feel that our singular voice will have no impact. So, how can we engage in politics in a way that will make a difference?

1. **Stay Informed.** While we shouldn't become consumed with the news and need to be careful that we don't get trapped in a "news bubble" where we only hear the opinions of those in our own tribe, we're right to stay informed about world events so we know how to best pray and act.

*An intelligent heart acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge. (Proverbs 18:15)*

2. **Vote.** Just as we want others to do what they can to make life better for us, we ought to do what we can to make life better for others. Our one vote may seem insignificant, but voting is an easy and important way for us to love our neighbors and to seek the welfare of our community.

*When the righteous increase, the people rejoice,
but when the wicked rule, the people groan. (Proverbs 29:2)*

3. **Think and act locally.** Our vote and our involvement will always make the most difference on a local level. Many of the issues that directly affect our lives are shaped by local politics. So, get involved locally. Know your local leaders so you can pray for them and encourage them.

*But 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)*

4. **Run for office.** Daniel and Joseph serve as examples of God's people in government positions who positively shaped a nation's policies. Although they were put into these positions outside their will, our political system allows us all a unique opportunity to actually run for office ourselves.

Then this Daniel became distinguished above all the other high officials and satraps, because an excellent spirit was in him. And the king planned to set him over the whole kingdom. (Daniel 6:3)

5. **Dive deep into one particular cause.** None of us can tackle every issue. But perhaps God could use you to make a meaningful impact and a significant difference in one particular area of politics. (Think William Wilberforce, a leader in the movement to abolish the slave trade in England.)

*Learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression;
bring justice to the fatherless, lead the widow's cause. (Isaiah 1:17)*

- 6. Become a responsible advocate.** Although we must watch our tongues as we speak, it's right for Christians to advocate for justice, especially for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute.

Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Proverbs 31:8-9)

- 7. Volunteer in the community.** Not only does volunteering in our communities help them become places that promote human flourishing, but when we serve in the name of Christ we are putting Jesus' love on display in such a way that others see—and are hopefully drawn to—His glory.

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10)

- 8. Commit to your local church.** One key way we can testify to the beauty of the reign of Christ is by committing to a local church, which stands as an alternative community made up of people who know that true love, hope, identity, security, purpose, and belonging are all found *in Christ*.

And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

- 9. Share the Gospel.** If we really want what's best for others, then we'll go out and share the Gospel. And if we really care that Christ is known and honored in our nation, then we will prioritize doing all we can to see that more people come to embrace and delight in Jesus as Lord and Savior.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

- 10. Pray.** When it comes to influencing the direction of our community, state, or nation, we should never underestimate the power of prayer. In fact, the Bible specifically calls us to pray for *all* our leaders that they may govern in a way that is good for the people.

First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. (1 Timothy 2:1-2)

"When political anxieties rise in you, filter the drama through God's eternal purposes...Remember who's on the right side of history: Jesus, God's anointed King, along with all who take refuge in him by faith. Remember that past rulers and kingdoms live now only in history books, while the true and living King expands his kingdom with unstoppable force across the continents and millennia...Instead of worrying, we can worship God for the truth and security found in his Word. These days of distress might present our greatest opportunity to exalt the King of kings in a world desperate for hope." (Kevin Harroran)