

# **VOTING AND THE CHURCH:** **WHY CHRISTIANS ENGAGE THE PUBLIC SQUARE**

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Voting and the Church: Why Christians Engage the Public Square  
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# Foreword

Have you been persuaded to sit out this election?

Has your decision been formed from diligent thought and study or something much less?

Maybe your thoughts are being driven by simple convenience? Or perhaps by a disgust with all things political? I understand the latter, for there is much to be disgusted about in our nation's current political landscape. But in the midst of all that is occurring, I'd ask if you have considered this question: Will my decision please God?

I have often heard the following argument among Christians: God does not care about politics, and neither should we.

That mindset does not come from a study of the Bible or a study of God's nature and character. I sadly believe that this falsehood comes from a personal desire to not get involved in politics and then to try to justify the decision biblically. There is no biblical justification for choosing detachment, for we read in God's Word the many accounts of His dealing with nations because of their sin and wickedness. For example, two of the foremost politically active men of God in the Old Testament—Moses and Elijah—were brought back to earth by God to stand beside Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration as faithful witnesses (Matthew 17:1–8).

- Moses, back in his time, stood boldly before Pharaoh, Egypt's ruler, speaking on multiple occasions against the leader's sins and the sins of his kingdom (Exodus 5–12).
- Likewise, Elijah stood brazenly before King Ahab and said, "You have abandoned the commandments of

the Lord and followed the Baals” (1 Kings 18:18).

In this eBook, you will read more examples of those who courageously took political stands against sin. Discussing every political action of God and His prophets toward kings who defied Him would require volumes of writing. The Bible contains oracle after oracle against Assyria, Philistia, Moab, Cush, Egypt, Tyre, and many others. God’s judgment rained down heavily on numerous entities—from Sodom and Gomorrah to King Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. Why? Because God, the Creator, cares about the actions of nations. He has long called His people to act for righteousness.

Our republic gives all citizens the responsibility to act for and defend righteousness—“right living” according to God’s Word.

Imagine you have just crossed the threshold to serve a four-year term as a board member of the republic, and the republic is a small child. Two very different leadership plans have been placed on the table before you, detailing how the child will be treated throughout the next four years.

One plan will lead the child the wrong way—away from righteousness—and the other will guide the child in the right(eousness) direction.

Those who are leading the board’s process are human—not perfect. As a board member, you have the duty, responsibility, and right to provide wise guidance for the child. Similarly, as a citizen, you have the duty, responsibility, and right to defend and promote righteousness, voting your values and conscience at every turn.

Will you vote?

Or will you abstain because the leaders are imperfect? Somewhere along the way, you began to believe that leaders, though human, should govern flawlessly and come from faultless pasts.

I believe abstaining would be an unrighteous act—neglecting duty, right, and responsibility.

Years ago, one of the wisest men I know gave me this counsel: “It’s all about the platform.” The plan that leaders will work to carry out over the next four years after the vote can be found now (before the voting) on each candidate’s platform.

- I urge you to read each platform and then decide if you will vote and how, or decide if you will dismiss the critically pivotal opportunity to have a say in your and your family’s future.
- I encourage you to not get caught up in the election rhetoric pulling Christians toward abstaining from their voting duty, right, and responsibility.

This wonderful eBook lays out some simple principles for your consideration. Please take a few minutes to ponder them, for what is in jeopardy is not merely the decision to stay home on Election Day. I am convinced that what stands at risk involves issues regarding the very essence of life and death, male and female, human slavery, antisemitism, abortion, and much more, as you will read in this book.

May God bless you as you consider the enormous and impacting responsibility of voting.

Dr. Del Tackett  
The Truth Project and The Engagement Project

# Introduction

Christians have heard for roughly a decade now, “If you’re a good Christian, you should be politically neutral.”

This erroneous claim has proven very influential and particularly successful at causing concerned Christians—including those troubled by candidates’ moral characters—to opt out of voting. After all, the church is above politics. Sinful people are running for office, and we should avoid getting our boots muddied. We are “Neither Left Nor Right” (NLNR).

So goes the argument.

There is a ring of truth in it. As people saved by Christ, we do indeed live in a sinful world. We do sometimes struggle to find candidates who stand for what we believe, and there are cases in which Christians stand between the recognized party platforms. Like the NLNR movement says, our ultimate allegiance as Christians is to Jesus, not to any one candidate or party.

However, the church can never be held captive in any regard, such as NLNR. (Being “third way” on politics can be just as much an idol as any other political identity, after all!) We must remain free to speak the truth of God and stand with Christ.

Even if it has a dose of truth in it, “Neither Left Nor Right” ideology should concern us. While this model offers positive soundbites, those who promote it often are not “neutral” as they profess. They have their own political agenda. More often than not, their agenda bends Left. That’s where they want the church to go, generally speaking.

They pursue this shift under the banner of “loving our neighbor”—a glorious biblical charge (Matthew 22:39), but one that is twisted to support leftist ideas. Leftist “love” is commonly the club that hangs over the heads of conservative Christians today. As presented by NLNR advocates, if we side with the Left, we’re loving, but if we side with the Right, we’re unloving. This hits Christians where we’re weak, because we rightly want to be a people of love, for our God is love (1 John 4:8).

This is part of why NLNR is such a challenging and dangerous political model. It fails to make a vital biblical connection: We only act in love if we stand on the truth. If we have a motive to love others (which is good) but follow false ideas, we won’t actually love people. We might do what unbelievers want, and we might be affirmed by our culture as loving. But love that is not grounded in the truth is no love at all.

A second major challenge is that Christians are increasingly directed, to a shocking degree, to vote for leftist candidates who champion a godless ideology. Here I mean that the veneer of political “neutrality” is stripped away, and Christians are urged to vote—and give support to—a spectrum of ungodly policies.

To give examples, candidates today

- present abortion as a moral good,<sup>1</sup>
- advocate for “gender transitions” based on the lie that “gender” is a construct,<sup>2</sup>
- remove parental rights and support more government control over children,<sup>3</sup>
- support men participating in women’s sports and men in women’s spaces designed for privacy and protection, and celebrate men who enter those spaces, such as women’s restrooms,<sup>4</sup>
- promote pagan sexuality in public schools and portray “Pride” marches as cultural progress,<sup>5</sup>
- uplift equity over merit,<sup>6</sup>

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- cause racial division,<sup>7</sup>
- oppose the free market,<sup>8</sup>
- advocate for illegal immigration,<sup>9</sup> and
- attack religious liberty as a disguise for prejudice.<sup>10</sup>

Those positions are not “neutral.” They do not comport with the Bible and thereby do not honor God.

This introduction intends to clarify what we face today. Christians are often confronted with two unfounded propositions regarding politics.

1. We are urged to be “neutral” to the point of silence on major political matters, rendering the church—believers in Jesus Christ—timid and harmless.
2. We are challenged with a scriptural command—“love your neighbor”—as the nucleus for embracing a godless, leftist paradigm, thereby offering no challenge to evil.

Neither stance is an option for the true church of Jesus Christ.



# I. We Cannot Opt Out

The Christian is not called to opt out of the chaos described above. As much as we may want to withdraw at times, the church is directed by Scripture to resist godless ideologies, for they will take us captive (Colossians 2:8). Indeed, as a people armed in the Spirit of God, we are called to “destroy strongholds”—philosophies based on the lies of this world (2 Corinthians 10:3–6).

This warrior mindset syncs elegantly with Jesus’s teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Speaking to a group of believers who were opposed by many, Jesus called His people to be “salt and light” in a hostile culture and fallen society (Matthew 5:13–16). Accommodating the culture or taking an “opt-out” approach to a sinful world is the exact opposite of God’s position.

There is no New Testament treatment of voting. We are working in the realm of application, then, as those who face hard questions in the political sphere. While we must not create a new law where Scripture does not, I believe that it is advisable—even strongly so—for Christians to apply the “salt and light” principle by voting. In fact, I would go further: Wherever possible, we should vote for the best possible candidate. I define this candidate as one who is viable electorally and will govern in a manner that supports biblical policies and values.

My reasoning in a few quick and concise strokes:

1. Voting for the highest political office(s) was an unknown privilege in the first century, so it is no surprise that Christ and the New Testament writings did not directly address the matter of voting.

## I. We Cannot Opt Out

2. There is no explicit call to vote, and Christians live in liberty (Galatians 6:1). In the gray areas, we have freedom in Christ, and we should graciously respect the consciences of others, even when they differ from ours. We understand that issues explicitly addressed by God are never gray.
3. Jesus's call to us to be salt and light moves us squarely away from inactivity. His directives drive us to get our boots muddy, so to speak, in our community and nation. We must stand boldly against evil, regardless of the cost.
4. Therefore, my conviction (and that of the James Dobson Family Institute) is that, under normal circumstances, Christians should vote. Voting is not the litmus test of faith, but it is a vital action of goodness we can perform to the glory of God as we seek the welfare of our nation.
5. Christians' taking action by voting is particularly important when a given society is under duress, buckling, besieged, and hanging in the balance, as ours is.

**We must not withhold good when it is in our power to do good (James 4:17).**

6. We do well to vote for the best possible candidate who will uplift and protect our fundamental liberties as Christians while promoting the welfare of all people. (This candidate is also a viable candidate, we note.)
7. We must always trust God, knowing we are in His hands (John 10:27–28). Whatever happens, we must not live in fear and anxiety but in faith, hope, and love.

## II. Love Your Neighbor, Serving as a Faithful Witness

Too few Christians hear such encouragement. All too often, believers are left to themselves to figure out how to apply their faith in the public square. Lack of discipleship is regrettable, because Christians have a tremendous opportunity, even in hard days, to work for good and stand on truth. Both are part of how we love our neighbor, thus fulfilling the second greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39).

As we have noted, loving our neighbor does not mean we are to do whatever the neighbor wants, nor does it mean we are to do what necessarily makes the neighbor feel loved. Furthermore, the commandment cannot and does not mean approving what God hates. Love of neighbor means seeking to preserve and promote goodness in society, “for the Lord is good” (Psalm 100:5). Therefore, we restrain evil as much as possible and unleash goodness to the fullest extent.

In America, at every electoral level, we have the privilege of voting for the individual with the best chance of doing actual good instead of an inconsequential candidate. As I will unfold below, this is sound for three overarching reasons. First, voting for the outcome of good is biblically sound—it is a reasonable part of being a wise and responsible citizen. Second, voting for good is historically sound—consistent with how Christians have lived in fallen countries. Third, voting for the best is morally sound—freeing the believer to be a force for good in a fallen world.

## II. Love Your Neighbor, Serving as a Faithful Witness

The church is our nation's moral conscience. This is not a new role; followers of God have lived boldly in days past, practicing in public what we could call "faithful witness." Instead of embracing quietism, timidity, and disengagement, faithful men and women have demonstrated bold, even fearless, truth-telling motivated by genuine love for God and man.

Let us consider this heritage from Scripture.

# III. Biblically—Why We Should Not Opt Out

Again, the New Testament does not directly address voting, because the church of the new covenant did not have that blessing at the highest levels. This reality helps us comprehend how unique and wonderful our situation is as Christ-followers: We have a free voice and the privilege of voting. This is not a burden; it is an opportunity.

**The mission of Christians is to be faithful witnesses. Our freedom of voice and vote are true gifts from God.**

God has never wanted His people to be a tame people. He has always summoned His followers into the hustle and bustle of a fallen world to be faithful witnesses for His glory. While there are many biblical examples of such courage, we will zero in on three.

Joseph was catapulted from an Egyptian prison to become a significant administrator in and over that country. By God's plan alone, Joseph garnered massive political influence—so much so that he saved many citizens and foreigners when God declared a famine on the land. Joseph is a beautiful picture of a faithful witness.

Esther, too, made no personal effort to become an influential woman in Persia. Due to her beauty, she entered the king's harem and, by God's providence, won great favor from the king while faithfully walking with the Lord. Esther used her one-of-a-kind influence with King Ahasuerus, which saved the lives of her people, the Jews, from their wicked foe. Thrust by God into the

public square, Esther, a faithful witness, leveraged her position for great good.

Daniel, in exile, took a righteous stand for God’s ways by refusing to eat the king’s food. Daniel also prayed openly to God, boldly defying King Nebuchadnezzar’s religious strictures that targeted Daniel’s Jewish faith. Though he faced the prospect of death for his faithfulness to God, the Lord stood with him. God gave him substantial influence in Babylon as an advisor and prophet to a succession of kings. Daniel, as did Joseph, interpreted divine communication for the kings and stood tall, a faithful witness in a fallen kingdom.

Those three Old Testament followers of God and many others remind us that our heavenly Father is often pleased to send His people toward the fray rather than away from it. Furthermore, God intended these stories to encourage us to be faithful witnesses in action. He wants us, His people, to do all we can to glorify Him by working for good in this sinful realm. Jesus taught precisely that in the New Testament.

Instead of believers retreating from society and retracting from involvement, we see in Matthew 5:13–16 that Jesus sent His followers out into the world as salt and light. That mandate indeed connects our actions to politics. As much as we can, Christians should pull every lever to flood our world with truth, goodness, and beauty.

- As salt, we preserve our nation from rotting, and we purify society from sin.
- As light, we expose evil cloaked in darkness, open blind eyes to see the truth of God’s goodness, and shine His beautiful glory throughout the world.

The “salt and light” principle meshes elegantly with the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” covered above. We, believers in Jesus Christ, love others by doing what is right in His eyes,

even when people oppose and attack us for doing so. Our purpose is to glorify God and draw others to Him by living as Christ and His followers lived—in truth and love. This call extends even to death, as was the case for John the Baptist. He was beheaded for confronting the governor, Herod, about his sexual sin, stating boldly and publicly to the official, “It is not lawful for you to have her” (Matthew 14:1–12).

John shows us an example of holy confrontation—the church speaking against the world’s sinfulness. But this is not the only model of engagement we find in the New Testament. The apostle Paul, for example, lived within his context. A Roman citizen, Paul did not disavow his earthly ties to Rome but used them for spiritual good. For instance, as he preached the gospel of Christ, he landed in hot water. In Jerusalem, Roman soldiers drew him up for punishment as a supposed rabble-rouser. Just as they were about to flog Paul, he called attention to his Roman citizenship. Acts 22:25–28 records this chaotic scene:

When they had stretched him out for the whips, Paul said to the centurion who was standing by, “Is it lawful for you to flog a man who is a Roman citizen and uncondemned?” When the centurion heard this, he went to the tribune and said to him, “What are you about to do? For this man is a Roman citizen.” So the tribune came and said to him, “Tell me, are you a Roman citizen?” And he said, “Yes.” The tribune answered, “I bought this citizenship for a large sum.” Paul said, “But I am a citizen by birth.”

Even though Paul preached against the world at times, we see also that he valued his Roman background. Being a member of Christ’s kingdom did not mean that he renounced his earthly citizenship. To the contrary, Paul claimed the privileges and prerogatives of his citizenship. Like Peter, he did not urge Christians to take over the government, but rather to submit to rulers as much as possible, for God is the author of government (Romans 13; 1 Peter 2).

### III. Biblically—Why We Should Not Opt Out

Paul's actions enabled him to keep preaching the gospel, albeit in a more confined position. Later, when falsely accused, Paul exercised his rights as a citizen by appealing to Caesar for a standard trial, which was granted to him (Acts 25:11). These strange events in Paul's life give us great insight into our role as citizens. As Paul used his societal rights, so should we. Paul did not think he should shake off his earthly affiliation. Neither should we.

Paul was a Christian but not disconnected from or disinterested in society; he engaged the culture. He lived in culture. He entered the public square and contended for the faith. His heavenly citizenship did not keep him from exercising his earthly citizenship. Neither should it keep us from being “salt and light” in every way we can in our own country.



## IV. Morally—Why We Should Vote

The Bible is clear. We should not quiet our public witness. As Christians, we should apply the “salt and light” principle and the “love your neighbor” commandment. Among other applications, this means that we think morally and act morally as citizens, including voting. In what follows, we address several moral matters, each of which informs our political involvement generally and our voting decisions specifically.

- **We vote because God loves life.**

Our tiniest, most helpless neighbors are preborn babies. The preborn cannot speak for themselves. They need advocates in action as their voices.

Psalm 139 teaches us that God weaves together every child in his or her mother’s womb—a truth Satan hates, opposes, and takes action against through abortion. We cannot stand quietly still as preborn babies are aborted. Killing babies is the chief moral evil of our age. To overcome this scourge, we must vote for the most pro-life candidates and measures offered. We do so not merely because we are against abortion but because God is the author and giver of life. Because God loves life, we do also.

- **We vote because God’s Word supports secure nations.**

The book of Nehemiah helps us understand how vital security is to a people. Without walls, borders, and defenses, the entire populace is in danger (Nehemiah 2:17–20). Security does not preclude immigration. The people of God under

the old covenant graciously welcomed strangers, but they did so responsibly, in a manner that did not burden the state (Leviticus 19:34).

Christians can use their vote to support national security and stability. We know that God is the One who sets up nations and borders (Acts 17:26). He is the One who appoints kings and oversees countries (Daniel 2:19–23). He has given us the common-grace gift of ordered liberty via sound government. Therefore, we must do all we can to preserve and strengthen our nation.

- **We vote because God made every person male or female.**

The LGBTQ lobby seeks to remake American culture and society in its image. We must oppose these efforts with convictional, actionable love. We should support candidates and policies that honor God’s design for marriage and family and promote the goodness of our biological sex. Doing so means we are on “the right side of history,” for that is where God stands.

The Lord of Creation alone defined manhood and womanhood, marriage, and the family (Genesis 2:17–25; Matthew 19:3–6; Ephesians 5:22–33). Because God’s Word is unambiguous on these matters, so our political engagement should reflect this clarity.

- **We vote because every person has God-given dignity.**

Woke ideology has poisoned the well, indoctrinating the rising generation to believe that having “white” skin means being a “white supremacist.” Practically, that thought encourages people to judge and despise one another based only on pigmentation.

Where we can, Christians should vote against wokeness, opposing it without hesitation. We know from the Bible that every person is an image-bearer of God, and every

person is a sinner. God shows no partiality (Acts 10:34). Whatever differences we have in terms of skin color, ethnicity, background, and cultural heritage, believers in Jesus Christ have the most significantly crucial commonality: We are members of the family of God (Ephesians 2:11–22)—“one body through the cross” (v. 16 NKJV). Christ has redefined us in totality; He is our very “life” (Colossians 3:4). As believers, nothing comes above Christ for us.

• **We vote because God honors the conscience.**

No form of freedom is more imperiled today than religious liberty—a precious, priceless good.

Religious freedom was developed in America due, in part, to the Scripture’s teaching on the conscience (Romans 2:14–16). Christians desire that every person be able to live—within moral bounds—according to his or her conscience and not be compelled under duress to profess allegiance to any system or worldview. This conviction fuels our commitment to free speech and should lead us to support candidates and policies that honor religious liberty and the rights of the conscience.

• **We vote because God gave us economic agency.**

The Bible is no handbook for Marxism. The Word of God teaches the importance of

- hard work (Proverbs 6:6–8),
- personal property (Exodus 20:15),
- wise investment (Matthew 25:14–30), and
- fair market exchange (1 Timothy 5:18).

Economic agency—associated with the Industrial Revolution, which spurred the free market—has been a massive force in world history for longer lives, higher quality of life, and greater freedom generally.

Against creeping socialism, Christians should support candidates and policies that promote economic flourishing, personal responsibility, and wise stewardship.

- **We vote because God has imposed limited government.**  
Caesar is not our Savior; Jesus is. Caesar is not our Lord; Jesus is. Jesus, as Lord of heaven and earth, placed clear limits on the authority of government when he told His disciples to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). We do well to apply this truth in all sorts of ways, opposing a quasi-deified vision of the state and its leaders.
- **We vote because terrorists menace free nations, including Israel.**  
Our neighbors include people around the world—the broader entailment of the command to “love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39). Over the years, Christians have urged America to support free nations in meaningful ways. One prominent example is Israel, a Middle Eastern democracy that is opposed and attacked by Islamic agents of terror, whether Hamas or other groups. Christians should support candidates and policies that defend nations under attack by terrorists, recognizing that the triumph of terrorism affects the entire world.
- **We vote because God loves good and hates evil.**  
By God’s power, Christians should be a force for righteousness and against evil. Such powerful activity honors the very character of our Creator and Ruler (Psalm 5:4–5; 97:10). While we cannot vanquish darkness in one fell swoop, we can lend our voices and votes to efforts that promote goodness and stand against darkness. Those efforts require biblical attention, discernment, and wisdom.

## V. Historically—Why We Should Not Opt Out

Christians have a strong history of public engagement. In what follows, we will consider four key figures who entered the public square as faithful witnesses. Our study involves the matter of voting but is not limited to it, for the “salt and light” principle and “love your neighbor” commandment may be obeyed in our world in many different forms.

### **William Wilberforce (1759–1833)**

Though he grappled with serving as a politician in his younger years, Wilberforce became the leading member of the English Parliament. As a Christian politician, he took up many causes, but the foremost was abolishing slavery. He worked for roughly twenty years to outlaw the slave trade and succeeded in 1807. From there, he worked until 1833 to outlaw slavery, achieving victory not long before he died.

Wilberforce accomplished these incredible ends through decades of unwavering commitment and political efforts. Over and over, his proposed bills against slavery were shot down, yet he stood firm in his convictions and actions. He used all the rudiments of the political process to win great victories, whether canvassing votes, speaking about cultural matters, lobbying the prime minister, or cooperating with the “Clapham Sect.” Wilberforce did not give up on the cause of slaves, and because he refused to opt out, one of history’s worst evils was overcome.<sup>11</sup>

**Phyllis Wheatley (1753–84)**

A prolific poet, Wheatley wrote verse courageously on an array of issues and victories, including those concerning religion and morality. Her talent drew the attention of notable influencers, including George Washington, who acclaimed Wheatley's ability, and King George III. When the king granted colonists a measure of freedom, she praised him. When George Whitefield lit the world ablaze with his evangelistic zeal, she honored him.

Most poignantly, Wheatley wrote of her [condition](#) as a slave, entwining her couplet poetry with deep theological truth:

Twas mercy brought me from my Pagan land,  
Taught my benighted soul to understand  
That there's a God, that there's a Saviour too:  
Once I redemption neither sought nor knew.  
Some view our sable race with scornful eye,  
"Their colour is a diabolic die."  
Remember, Christians, Negros, black as Cain,  
May be refin'd, and join th' angelic train.

"Black as Cain," Wheatley was unjustly treated as property and gave eloquent voice to her trials. But she found her hope in God. She wrote of her freedom in Him and became an important early voice for the abolition of slavery in America.

Wheatley reminds us of the importance and power of speaking truth. We should not succumb to despair even when we feel outnumbered and outgunned. We must use our gifts to honor God and proclaim His truth, as did the young slave woman long before abolition triumphed in this country. Even though Wheatley did not live to see that success, her contributions to the public square mattered. Over time, her voice through poetry has helped many see the humanity of all people, regardless of skin color.<sup>12</sup>

### **Charles Spurgeon (1834–92)**

England’s most famous pastor is known for [stating](#) this maxim: “Of two evils, choose neither.” Neither Left Nor Right types have often applied the principle to enfranchise people to opt out of politics and voting. But that is not what Spurgeon was discussing. He used the quote (which he attributed to John Ploughman) to emphasize the comparison of an erroneous mind and an unloving heart, and he urged Christians not to fall prey to either. He did not use the quote in regard to politics, though that is the context in which his statement is often portrayed!

Spurgeon’s strongly voiced beliefs shape for us a helpful model of a pastor engaged in the public square. He addressed numerous social and political matters and openly associated with the liberal wing of English politics—the party of many dissenters. Spurgeon urged Christians to [vote](#) and not abstain. “Every God-fearing man should give his vote with as much devotion as he prays,” he wrote. He also encouraged pastors to [guide](#) their people on political matters. “Ministers do well to give their votes and to express their opinions for the guidance of the people,” he proclaimed. Not every pastor would agree, of course—but Spurgeon’s example is worth considering, particularly when compared to an “opt-out” approach.

Against uninformed stereotypes, Spurgeon provides a strong picture of a pastor who sought to shepherd his people on political matters. He took clear stands on controversial issues, disciplined his people to understand the implications of the Christian worldview, and did not wait out matters. Spurgeon gives us a relatively balanced vision of the pastor in a fallen society. He did not put his hope in politics, but neither did he opt out of public engagement.<sup>13</sup>

**Chuck Colson (1931–2012)**

Famously called President Richard Nixon’s “hatchet man,” Chuck Colson was a political genius. He helped engineer Nixon’s landslide presidential victories, but in doing so, he was far from God. When Colson was implicated in the Watergate affair and sent to prison, he lost everything. In the year prior, he became a born-again Christian. He served his time in prison trying to evangelize his fellow inmates, rightly seeing that society had primarily forgotten them. Colson later founded [Prison Fellowship](#), now “the nation’s largest Christian nonprofit equipping the Church to serve the currently and formerly incarcerated . . . and their families.”

Colson did not stop there; he became one of the leading evangelical statesmen of his day. A central burden of Colson’s ministry was championing the inherent dignity of every human being. Colson applied this conviction to his work, boldly defying evil in the public square. Though Colson knew the ills of the political world, he worked alongside major leaders (like Dr. James Dobson) to catalyze Christian political involvement. His redemption story and subsequent activism are instructive to modern Christians.<sup>14</sup>

These four unique individuals give us a helpful vantage point, reminding us that Christians can, in different ways, be “salt and light.” In their own place in history, they were committed Christians who applied their faith to politics, and they encourage us to do the same.



## VI. Objections to a Politically Active Church

Thus far, we have considered the positive case for Christian engagement in the public square. We've seen numerous ideas and examples that inspire us to take action for God, a program that, in a free society, includes the ability to vote. But does everyone agree on these matters?

No, they do not. Those who embrace the paradigm of “faithful witness” will hear a number of challenges. We now consider several common objections to the vision sketched above in the hope that God's people will think with discernment and courage.

- **Objection:** We should not choose the lesser of two evils; we should just sit out elections.

**Response:** That argument is commonly used today by many people from different theological viewpoints. The major problem with that seemingly well-intentioned argument is this: In life, we always choose between the “lesser of evils,” for no candidate is perfect; alas, Jesus is never on the ballot. Instead of getting bogged down in moral confusion, I believe that selecting the best possible candidate serves well as a framework for public action.

Understandably, some believers become troubled by this thought: Regardless of my vote, I'm choosing evil! This is not a small concern. We take it seriously. However, I believe that we need not stay troubled. God does not hold us responsible for making the world perfect. God holds us responsible for

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living as salt and light and loving our neighbor—in short, doing as much good as possible, even under challenging circumstances, as with elections.

- **Objection:** Modern Christians have bought into the compromised two-party system.

**Response:** The possibility that we can put too much significance in party politics is inevitable. No doubt, Christians have done so, and they should take care to avoid giving unquestioned allegiance to any earthly group. Idolatry is no small temptation for us all.

However, if we are not careful, we can fall prey to political naiveté. In reality, we Christians have few political options in modern America. In place of the two-party system, it may well be that we desire a different system; that is understandable. But politics is a game for optimistic realists, not carefree idealists.

Indeed, when we consider the platforms of our two foremost parties, we find that they represent starkly different moral objectives. For this reason, it is fair to say that a voter is executing poor stewardship of their vote if they do not consider the ethical backbone of each platform and the candidates' past voting records.

**Christians must steer clear of utopianism. We cannot make the world right. We do not have perfect choices and never will in this age.**

Though we lack perfect choices, believers in Jesus Christ have a perfect world right now, being part of the “holy nation” of God (1 Peter 2:9)—our present covenant reality with Christ. But we await the full realization of this heavenly citizenship. Until that day, we must play the board as it is set. Our call is not to never act unless we have perfect choices before us;

## VI. Objections to a Politically Active Church

our call is to practice principled realism and do the greatest possible good in imperfect conditions.

- **Objection:** Instead of a narrow pro-life ethic, we should vote for an all-of-life ethic that includes racial equity, equality of outcome, the end of climate change, and the celebration of sexual minorities.

**Response:** In the last decade or so, that argument has gained much traction. The “pro-life” language, coopted as “all of life” verbiage, has created tremendous confusion in the church. The problem is this: “all of life” sounds good, but it backs leftist causes under a Christian banner.

The “all-of-life” rendering of the pro-life position is a classic case of good branding that does not accord with biblical truth or reality. There is nothing Christ-like in supporting woke ideology, socialist economics, environmental alarmism that wrecks economies, or pagan sexuality. These are all godless causes. We should reject them and the candidates who support them.

The Christian ethic is an all-of-life ethic. But the Bible does not mute our desire to end the abortion of preborn children. The Bible elevates this desire, helping us to see that abortion is the chief moral evil of our age. Recognizing this reality does not close off investment in other areas; it is part of seeing the world as a whole, for Satan seeks to advance death in every category he can.

- **Objection:** The candidate who is most compatible with the biblical worldview has a flawed character.

**Response:** We cannot let that stance glance off of us. All too often, candidates who seem quite promising often have more flaws or more profound flaws than we once knew. Character is not inconsequential to Christians; a candidate’s character is a very big deal.

## VI. Objections to a Politically Active Church

We want to support moral and even godly candidates at every opportunity. However, we must remember that we will only have imperfect political options, for, as noted above, we will never find Jesus on the ballot.

Let's never cast character aside. But let's also remember believers in Scripture who worked alongside unbelievers: Joseph, Esther, Daniel, and Spurgeon for starters. Each of these God-followers had to endure much difficulty as they faithfully served God in a pagan context. Remembering their example can free us from a feeling of political paralysis over the imperfect options before us.

- **Objection:** Christians taking political stances will cause unbelievers to reject Christ.

**Response:** As with other statements addressed in this book, this objection has a ring of truth. In preaching and teaching salvation in Christ, local churches should have no desire to do so through party platforms but only through the gospel and totality of the Word of God.

**The core of our witness, and life itself as believers, is Christ and Him crucified. We are all about the gospel!**

We should always seek to make disciples for Christ, not any earthly organization. But as we do so, we teach those disciples “all” the moral and doctrinal truth of God (Matthew 28:16–20). The Great Commission is not a call to make the most minimalistic, malnourished disciples possible. The Great Commission is a call to form courageous disciples who love all of God's truth and think about all of life in light of Christ. This includes even “political” issues. In this way, people will see that Christianity is not a “get out of eternal jail free” card; it is a way of life, a worldview, and a high calling that leads to eternal life.

**God's truth is not a hindrance to the gospel but a pathway to the good news of Jesus Christ.**

- **Objection:** The church shouldn't get political; our work is spiritual. Pastors are not politicians, and they should leave politics alone.

**Response:** As we just discussed, the central work of the local church is discipleship. However, a key part of this discipleship is training believers to live daily as salt and light in a fallen world. This is what pastors have a responsibility to do.

Pastors are not politicians, it is true. Pastors are shepherds of local congregations, given the glorious task of commissioning the church to be witnesses to Christ in all the world. But this is no minimalistic task. Pastors are appointed by God to equip the church to know God's truth, love God's truth, and speak God's truth in love everywhere they can (Ephesians 4:15). Our faith is not a faith to be hidden under a bushel; it is a faith to be proclaimed. This is because Jesus Christ is alive; He is risen and reigning over all things (Hebrews 1:3). He is not a dime-store redeemer, but the Lord of heaven and earth.

Jesus has claimed all our lives, and He calls us to be faithful witnesses everywhere we go. Pastors should help their people understand this charge, and equip them to see their context rightly, bringing God's truth to bear on all of life, including politics and issues connected to it.

# VII. Summary: We Are Free to Vote

We've covered much ground in this brief book! Now, let's synthesize the material. The purpose is to give believers an overall sense of Christian engagement in a sinful world and to present reasons why we should vote. The following seven truths build upon one another.

**1. Politics is about love of neighbor to the glory of God.**

In political involvement, we seek the good of our earthly neighbor. In the power of God, we do what is best for our neighbor, walking by faith and acting boldly, even in chaotic and confusing times.

**2. Politics is not about achieving utopia—because we cannot.**

Politics is not an exercise in creating a perfect world; politics is about optimistic realism, doing the good that we are able to do in the conditions before us.

**3. Love of neighbor means seeking what is good for all, even when our neighbors do not want what we are offering.**

As we stand against pagan sexuality and godless ideologies here in the West, we should not expect much applause for doing so. Sadly, many of our “neighbors” do not want us to love them by standing for what is best for them (and all people, for that matter) as viewed through a scriptural lens. However, love in biblical terms is not defined by affirmations from our neighbors; love is defined by God.

**4. We will never have a perfect political candidate.**

Since Jesus will never be on our political ballot, we should

recognize that every contest is between the “lesser of evils.” There are no exceptions to this rule. Knowing this frees us from idealistic spiritual paralysis, enabling us to marry faith to good works (James 2:14–26).

**5. We should live as faithful witnesses per the “salt and light” principle.**

Living out our consciences in public as believers greatly glorifies God. This is what being salt and light means, for neither salt nor light is given to us to be hidden away and never used.

**6. We should vote according to what God’s Word teaches.**

All systems of “Christian politics” are not created equal. We must examine every claim in the light of God’s Word (1 John 4:1). We should support policies, parties, and candidates who represent—albeit imperfectly—what Scripture proclaims.

**7. We are free to vote for the best possible candidate.**

The days are evil, but we can act in faith, trusting God to work.

# VIII. Action Steps

For all Christians: Pray, share, and vote!

**Pray:** Ask God in faith to work to preserve our country in His common grace and to enable many more Americans to encounter Christ as the transforming Savior. Further, ask God for wisdom as you face hard questions and navigate issues of conscience.

**Share:** Be a voice of grace and truth, seeking to honor God and His Word in all of life.

**Vote:** With an equipped mind and an informed conscience, do what you can to elect the best possible candidate.

For pastors: Preach, equip, and send!

**Preach:** Share the whole counsel of God, which is your central calling.

**Equip:** Disciple your people to understand the biblical worldview. Help them understand the state of our culture, the key political issues before the church, and how they can apply biblical truth in their everyday life.

**Send:** Encourage your people to go out into the world and public square as lights in the darkness.



# Additional Related Resources

[Countdown To Decision 2024](#)

[Dobson Culture Center](#)

# Endnotes

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