

For Whom Should a Christian Vote?

Franklin Church of Christ
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Introduction:

I don't expect a show of hands on this one. I just want you to think. For whom are you planning to vote in the upcoming presidential election? Perhaps it is John McCain as he now leads the Republican party. Or maybe you have become enamored with the stardom of Barak Obama. Then again, maybe you are leaning outside the box and are going to vote for Chuck Baldwin who is this year's Constitution Party nominee. He is staunchly pro-life, will outlaw embryonic stem cell research, thinks a constitutional amendment should be passed defining marriage as between a man and a woman. Maybe you are leaning to the Libertarian party and plan to vote for Robert Barr, Jr. He will put an end to the war in Iraq and the military efforts in Afghanistan, thinks states should decide regarding the definition of marriage, will put an end to illegal immigration, opposes socialized medicine, wants to remove entitlement programs and will uphold your right to bear arms. Or maybe you lean to the other extreme and want to vote for the Socialist Party nominee, Brian Moore. He will also remove troops from Iraq and Afghanistan and outlaw all weapons of mass destruction, he will provide a National healthcare plan, perhaps most importantly he will legislate a 30 hour work week with six weeks of paid vacation every year and a full pension and guarantee all American families an income of \$35,000 per adult per year. Or maybe you remember Alan Keyes who once ran for Republican nomination. He is running for President again, but as the nominee for America's Independent Party. He will promote an amendment to protect marriage as between a man and woman, he will outlaw abortion, repeal the 16th and 17th amendments which will take away the government's ability to tax our income. He is in favor of limited government and specifically states his dependence upon God. Or maybe you want to go way out on a limb and vote for veritable unknown 42-year-old Steve Adams of Lexington, KY, running as an independent. He is pro-life. Will push for a marriage amendment and promises in his first 100 days to work on producing a congressional report card to let us know how our Senators and Representatives are voting. He will balance the budget, secure Social Security, bring troops home, secure the border and reduce our dependence on foreign oil. Or maybe you are leaning to one of the other 350 some odd candidates who have announced their intent to run. Wow! According to Project Vote Smart at votesmart.org, more than 350 people have announced their intent to run for President and even more are thinking about it. Interestingly, this doesn't even include Christian and gospel preacher Shane Scott who has publicly announced his bid for the presidency on YouTube at [ShaneforAmerica](http://ShaneforAmerica.com) (Yes, he is just joking...I think).

With all these candidates and almost all of them vying for the vote of Christians, what are we to do? Is there a candidate we should support because we are Christians? Or maybe we should back up and take a look at this whole election thing in a different light.

Discussion:

- I. Can a Christian vote?
 - A. I do not believe a Christian has to vote. There is no command in Scripture for a Christian to be at all interested in politics or government. I find it interesting despite the New Testament's complete silence about voting that some Christians who have never talked to another person about the gospel, almost never visit their sick brethren, rarely invite anyone into their home will become sanctimonious in an election year and talk about the Christian's responsibility to vote. And then even further about the Christian's responsibility to vote for their favorite candidate. Perhaps we are missing some of the Scripture's actual priorities for us.
 - B. **Romans 13:1** and **I Peter 2:13-14** teaches that God establishes the governing authorities; we do not. I recognize some brethren believe this means they shouldn't vote because that would mean they are trying to establish government instead of letting God do so. Others simply think this means voting is pointless because God will establish the government He wants for whatever purpose He wants it to accomplish, therefore our own vote doesn't really count. I respect that position, and as I said, I don't think anyone has to vote.
 - C. However, I think we need to remember God works through us. Consider the salvation of souls. We know for certain that God does the saving. That is God's work. He saves souls. But consider **I Corinthians 3:5**. God did the saving, but He worked through men by giving them the opportunity to teach. Consider also the great Old Testament example of Esther. No doubt, the point of Esther is that God saved the Jews. However, Esther was not to sit tight and simply say

God would take care of it. Rather, Mordecai said, "Who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this" (**Esther 4:14**, ESV). When it was done, God would be praised for this deliverance. If Esther did nothing, God would still accomplish His will. However, the fact that God was the deliverer did not mean God's child must refuse to act or that her action was pointless. Therefore, the claim that God is doing something, does not mean men must stay uninvolved. The fact is, in a democracy, God establishes the government, but He does so through the votes of people. Who knows whether you have not come to the United States for such a time as this that God through your vote might install your candidate as president. Maybe not, but who knows?

II. What is God's position?

- A. Having established that you are allowed to vote if you so choose, I want to move on to consider this idea that there is some candidate out there that is God's candidate. I am amazed at the number of people who claim to be Christians who vote all over the political spectrum, but they all act as if all Christians must vote exactly like them. Really? Do we really know God's position on all the issues that play a part in the President's role?
- B. Consider the following issues and give me book, chapter and verse on God's position.
 - 1. State's rights versus federalism?
 - 2. Education?
 - 3. Socialized medicine?
 - 4. Immigration?
 - 5. Healthcare?
 - 6. NAFTA?
 - 7. Taxes?
 - 8. The Patriot Act?
 - 9. Social Security?
 - 10. Personal Privacy vs. Government surveillance to protect national security?
 - 11. The right to own a gun?
 - 12. Capitalism versus Socialism?
 - 13. Democracy versus Imperialism?
 - 14. Confederacy versus Union?
 - 15. Foreign policy?
 - 16. Energy policy?
 - 17. The environment?
 - 18. The line item veto?
 - 19. Defense spending?
 - 20. The trade embargo of Cuba?
- C. Brothers and sisters, if our choice for the next president is so important to God that we as Christians should vote for a particular person because God wants us to, why hasn't He filled us in on His position on all these presidential issues?

III. But my issues matter to God?

- A. No doubt, most Christians will point out they vote based on values and moral issues about which God has expressed opinions. Interestingly, they can't seem to agree on which issues are the ones upon which God really and truly wants us to base our vote. If we take the two major parties, Republican Christians (and for all you Democrats out there, Christians really can be Republicans) say we need to vote based on the candidates' positions on abortion and homosexuality. No doubt, God considers harming the unborn child the same as harming anyone else. See the Old Testament law in **Exodus 21:22-25**. Obviously, God is opposed to the practice of homosexuality. **Romans 1:26-29** clearly states homosexual practice is against nature and against God's law. On the other hand, Democrat Christians (and for all you Republicans out there, Christians really can be Democrats) say we should focus on what the candidates view is on caring for the poor. No doubt, taking care of the poor is very important to God. Jesus said Christians should sell their goods and give to the poor in **Luke 12:33**. When Paul received the right hand of fellowship from James, Cephas and John to go work among the

Gentiles, their one statement was, “Remember the poor” (**Galatians 2:10**). You will recognize that when God established His own nation, He actually levied a 10% tax on all the Israelites in order to support not only the Levites, but the widows, fatherless and sojourners (**Deuteronomy 14:29**). Have you ever read God’s policy through Nehemiah when many in that kingdom had gotten overstretched with bad debt? In **Nehemiah 5:9-13**, Nehemiah, the governor of Judah, commanded the Jews to forgive the debts and give back the mortgaged property and stop charging interest when folks borrowed. The people responded that they would require nothing of the folks who had borrowed. God is absolutely concerned about the care for the poor and has even favored government and legal involvement in making sure the poor were cared for. So, which of those issues is God really more concerned about? Which should win out?

- B. Further, does voting for a Presidential candidate actually mean God’s will is going to be done about anything? Let’s take one of the most often cited issues among Christians—abortion. I will admit that it is an issue upon which my vote has been based almost consistently. For six years we had a Republican president and a Republican congress, many of whom were elected because they garnered the pro-life votes of many Christians and abortion is still legal. Yet, here they are again claiming they should get the Christian vote because they are pro-life. Additionally, how many people decided not to get an abortion because some of us voted for the pro-life candidate? Not a single one. Does our vote actually translate into God’s will being done? Apparently not.
- C. Further, which of the candidates is really for God’s will being done. Can anyone let me know which of the candidates is the prohibition candidate (cf. **Proverbs 31:4**)? At one time, some Christians would have argued tooth and toenail that a Christian could only vote for a guy if he was really opposed to alcohol. Somewhere along the line we gave that one up. Did we cease to be God-fearing Christians because we quit voting based on that issue? Which of the candidates wants to make sexual immorality illegal (cf. **Hebrews 13:4**)? Which one wants to make divorce unlawful except in cases of sexual immorality (cf. **Matthew 19:3-5**)? Which one wants to enforce baptism for the remission of sins (cf. **Acts 2:38**)? Which one wants to point out that churches are only authorized by God to provide benevolent aid to Christians and then only when their families can’t or won’t help (cf. **Acts 4:32-37; I Timothy 5:16**)? I guess I’m just unsure how we can pick one or two biblical issues, ignore the rest and then act like we are voting for God’s candidate.
- D. Finally, do you remember what Jesus came in the world to do? Jesus came into the world to establish His heavenly kingdom (**Matthew 16:18-19; Mark 9:1**). He did not come to establish policy for earthly kingdoms. He did not direct Christians to change their earthly kingdoms, but to spread the heavenly kingdom one person at a time by teaching. According to **Luke 19:10**, Jesus came to seek and to save those who are lost. That is the job we are to carry on. To all Republicans, how many people have ever been saved by the gospel of Jesus because you voted for Ronald Reagan, George Bush or even John McCain? To all Democrats, how many people have ever been saved by the gospel of Jesus because you voted for Jimmy Carter, Bill Clinton or Barak Obama. For all you independents or third party endorsers, how many people have ever been saved because you voted for Ross Perot, Ron Paul or Chuck Baldwin? If people could be saved by the gospel based on the politicians for whom we vote, then I’m sure God would have told us for whom to vote. But God is not concerned about national policy. He is concerned about His saints getting the gospel out to one more person.

IV. God has not asked us to spread His will through political means.

- A. I think the heart of the matter comes down to this point. So many Christians act like voting a certain way is our Christian duty because God has called us to make our national laws correspond with the Bible. Brothers and Sisters, that just isn’t true. Interestingly enough, God never once told us to do anything about national policies and laws. In fact, the only governmental policy God remotely suggested we do anything about is found in **I Timothy 2:1-2**. The only national policy God encourages us to be really concerned about is whether or not the government allows us to serve God peacefully. And then, the action He encouraged us to take was not political but prayer.

- B. Further, think back to when the New Testament was written. Under what kind of government did the Christians live? The Romans had ended the Republic some time before the birth of Jesus even though they tried to maintain vestiges of it for a time. They were under an emperor. I can't help but notice God did not encourage His children to do anything political to spread His will. In fact, **II Corinthians 10:3-7** stands out to me. This is more than just saying we don't stick a gun to someone's head and force them to be baptized. The point behind this is our kingdom is not a material one; therefore, we don't use political machinations to force someone to obey God at all. Instead, we persuade people with reason from the Word. If that impacts the laws of our nation, then so be it. The fact is, however, God never once asked His people to do anything political about the laws of the land. He simply commanded that we pray for those who rule over us (**I Timothy 2:1-2**). And then He commanded us to submit to them, whoever they ended up being (**Romans 13:1**) unless they ask us to disobey God (**Acts 5:29**). Finally, He commanded us to honor the governing authority (**I Peter 2:17**). Allow me to remind you this was written when the governing authorities were anything but God-fearing.
- C. Consider also Jesus' statement in **John 18:36**. Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. Why on earth do we keep trying to make America Jesus' nation by acting like there is a candidate for whom all Christians have to vote because he/she will help the United States be a Christian nation. God did not do away with His chosen national kingdom merely to get us to try to set up another one. Brothers and sisters, Jesus did not die to make America a Christian nation. He died so Americans could become Christians (along with members of every other nation). Our job, therefore, is not to make America a Christian nation, but to take the gospel to our neighbors so they can be saved. Which do you think God cares about more, what our law codes say or what our people do?
- D. When Paul had the opportunity to speak to policy makers, was his goal to get them to pass God's laws? No. His goal was to teach them the gospel. See him before Felix in **Acts 24**, before Festus in **Acts 25**, before Agrippa in **Acts 26**. He didn't petition them to establish biblically based laws; he tried to teach them the gospel. No doubt, if these men became Christians, their policies and laws might change. But Paul's point was not to change national policy, Paul's goal was to save individual souls.
- E. Finally, do we think abortion, homosexuality, poverty and all the other issues we bicker over politically were any less part of the Roman culture? Homosexuality was such a part of the culture Paul had to write against it specifically in passages like **Romans 1:26-27**. There were poor people all over the Roman Empire and it was even worse then because socio-economic class was often established at birth and could hardly be changed. Abortion and infanticide were practiced among the Romans. Where are the passages that show the Christians what to do about these political atrocities that kept Rome from being a Christian Empire? They just aren't there. Instead we have passages like **I Corinthians 6:9-11**. What was God's answer to these moral ills? Not changing national laws and policies but teaching individuals the gospel so they can be saved and then redeemed from their immorality. By the way, I think a great argument can be made that one of the worst things that ever happened to Christ's church occurred when Rome supposedly became a Christian empire. Why would we be so interested in that again?
- V. Let's get back to saving Americans by spreading the Gospel.
- A. I think it is sad that so many politicians play the religion card. They all want us to know how Christian they are as if that gives them God's endorsement. What is worse, however, is that we Christians often get caught up in it and act like our vote has to line up with some kind of teaching from God because His plans are dependent upon our national policy. That just isn't in the Bible.
- B. I know it is hardly "religiously correct" to say this. I know I am probably upsetting almost everyone who hears this sermon because we so want to prove everyone has to vote like us to serve God properly. But that just isn't in the Word of God. The fact is, I don't think we can make one single claim from the Bible that suggests God really cares how we vote. Our job in serving Him is not about our nation's laws and policies. Our job is to get the gospel out. If you really want to further God's will regarding caring for the poor, get out and help someone who is poor. If you really want to further God's will regarding abortion, teach people the gospel truth about

sexual responsibility and then help support them as they choose to keep a baby if they have made a mistake. If you really want to further God's will regarding homosexuality, show love and concern for someone who struggles with that sin as you help them overcome by the grace of God. What good will it do if we change national policy by our votes but never convince anyone to love God enough to obey His will on these issues?

- C. To be honest, I think one of the reasons we get so up in arms about voting is because voting is so easy. We go into a booth, push some buttons where no one can see us and try to elect officials to pass laws to force people to obey God. Then we pat ourselves on the back for doing our part in God's fight against immorality. We haven't done anything in God's fight against immorality when we vote. We haven't done anything in God's fight against immorality until we start talking to the immoral about the freedom from sin they can have in Christ Jesus. Let's quit trying to save America by trying to make it pass "Christian" laws and get back to trying to save Americans by spreading the Gospel.

Conclusion:

Brothers and Sisters, I don't know that God cares whether or not any nation is a Republic, a Democracy, a Monarchy or a Dictatorship. However, my own personal view of politics is that a Democratic Republic with the ability to elect representatives and have a government that is of, by and for the people is the greatest form of government that has ever blessed the earth. That, however, is a political and social view, not a spiritual or biblical one. I view the ability to vote for representatives who think like me is one of the greatest privileges we have in our country and I take it seriously. Frankly, I believe we are allowed to favor a candidate for any reason or reasons we think are most important to help protect and preserve our country. With that, I recognize that because of experience and life circumstance, each of us may see different issues as the most pressing ones in our nation. The fact that you don't see the same issues as pressing as I do, doesn't mean you are less of a Christian than I am and vice versa. So then, for whom should Christians vote for president, or any other office for that matter? The candidate they think will most represent their opinions if elected based on whatever issues they deem are most pressing.

Before I end this lesson, I have no doubt someone who is not exactly happy with this sermon is going to come up when I'm through and try to get me to finally admit their candidate is the right one by saying, "I appreciate all you said, but don't you think Christians should take their Bibles with them into the voting booth?" Of course I do, I think Christians should take their Bibles with them everywhere. I think Christians should let God's moral law impact every decision they make. I just have recognized there are more biblical issues at play than the one upon which you or I have hung our electoral hats. Further, when you leave the voting booth, don't think you have done God's will about whatever issue caused you to vote the way you did, because God has never told you how to vote. He has told you how to live, how to teach and how to bring others to salvation through His Son. So, between now and November 4, if you want to really do something for God's kingdom and even for our nation, quit trying to convince others to vote like you and start sharing the gospel message of salvation with them.