


2020.11.1



A publication of  the adult discipleship ministry of Triangle Community Church.

**Talk** together about the glory of God's kingdom. —Psalm 145:11  
Love the Lord your God and **walk** in all his ways. —Joshua 22:5

## Questions for Reflection and Discussion

- What from this message interested you? ...made sense to you? ...confused you?  
...intrigued you? ...angered you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?
- Read Psalm 75:6-7 and Daniel 2:21a. **Who** will choose our next president? Do you **really** believe that?  
**So—why even vote?** Be honest!

The Bible teaches that: [1] God uses [2] our actions [3] to sovereignly bring about [4] his purposes.  
Relate each of those four elements to voting. ...to prayer. ...to evangelism. ...to using seatbelts.

- How would your attitudes and choices change if you used 1 Corinthians 10:24 as a "voters' guide"?
- Without revealing who you intend to vote for, mark the following scale with a "**W**" for how you'll feel if **your** preferred candidate wins, and an "**L**" for if he loses. What does this tell you **about yourself**?

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- Read Hebrews 11:8-9 & 13. Abraham left the city which was the "New York City" of his day.  
How do you think CNN would have evaluated his move? What adjectives would they have used?  
Now read v. 10 & 14-15. What adjectives might **Abraham** have used to evaluate his own move?  
Finally, read v. 6 & 16. What adjectives would **God** have used to evaluate Abraham's move?  
Before whose eyes—others', your own, or God's—do you live? **Whose** evaluation matters most to you—and **why**?  
How can Abraham's experience help you obey Colossians 3:1-4?

## Application-Challenge

**When it comes to politics, Christians should...**

- Know** that our first allegiance must be to King Jesus.
- Feel** the responsibility of improving others' temporal experience.
- Do** good to all men, through every opportunity America's freedoms give us.



## Sermon Summary

As Christians, we want to honor God with our lives. We are days away from what is one of the most rancorous election cycles in American history, and so we want to know, “How can we think and act **in this moment** in a way that honors God?” Many ask: Should preachers even talk about politics? Many people say that we must not mix faith and politics. **Why** even venture into such dangerous waters? Because I help shepherd this flock, and I know that you all are concerned about this election. You have questions. You all are trying to think Christianly about matters which demand your attention.

Back to my question: Shouldn't faith and politics be kept separate? Colossians 1:18 teaches that that Jesus must have first place in everything. Politics is a “thing”, so we must make sure that Jesus has first place in our thoughts and actions regarding politics. The Bible commands us to do good to all people whenever we have the opportunity (Galatians 6:10). An election is an opportunity, so we must wrestle with how to “do good” in this current situation. What if, in voting certain way—I end up doing good to people on **one** issue but bad to them on a **different** one? Do they cancel each other out? If we can sort issues according to how much harm or help each is likely to accomplish, can we vote in such a way to favor the “big” issue and yet maintain a clear conscience before God as we vote against a “lesser” issue? How do we even sort out issues? And what if I deem an issue to be “big”, but you deem a different issue to be big? What then? Can we both be pleasing to God? Am I responsible for the unforeseen consequences of my voting choice? Must I be omniscient to vote “Christianly”?

I was asking these same questions four years ago. Do I vote for a **person** who says some offensive things—but with whom I agree on what for me is my most important **policy** issue, or do vote for someone I find to be more pleasant as an individual, but who promotes a policy I find repugnant and, try as I might, cannot square with biblical morality? I decided that the best way I could be of help to my congregation is to “think out loud” in front of you. Perhaps the **process** I went through as I wrestled with these questions may be of some help to you.

The starting point that gives me the stability I need to think more biblically about the **specific** issues related to **this** election is that Christians are citizens **both** of heaven **and** of various nations, but our **primary** allegiance belongs to heaven (Philippians 3:19c–20). King Jesus replaces the president as my **ultimate** sovereign. This is the foundational orientation that gives us stability in confusing and troubling times. In fact, my focus needs not only to be **on** heaven, it actually needs to be **away from** this world (Hebrews 11:16). I'm a sojourner here; I have one foot on earth and the other in heaven—but the **direction of my movement** needs to be heavenward! I've decided that the Bible will have the controlling voice in my goals, priorities, and attitudes. I also keep in mind that society is **not** ever-evolving toward the good. **We humans**—including politicians—are not going to solve Earth's problems. We need a savior! Eventually King Jesus will put things right, but it won't be through politics.

Yet we also are citizens of earth, and I do believe that politics is one way that we love our neighbor. Consider the plight of Africans enslaved in America 150 years ago. It made a **profound** difference that Abraham Lincoln's policy of equality won out over Jefferson Davis' policy of enslaving blacks. Although politics cannot determine anyone's eternal destiny, what happens in this life **does** matter. People live 80 years here on earth, then we live eternally, either in heaven or hell. Eighty years of bad laws and difficulties—followed by heaven—is better than eighty years of good laws and prosperity—followed by hell. But thankfully, as Americans in the 21st century, we're not faced with that bleak choice. The American experiment of self-governance is a break-through that gave ordinary people like us the privilege and responsibility to help shape the government we have to live under. I think that I have a moral obligation to vote. During slavery, there **were** Christians who kept silent, who didn't speak out against it—and we judge them guilty for that. We are commanded to take every opportunity to do good to people (Galatians 6:10).

But if I don't like either candidate, do I just “hold my nose” and vote for one of them? I realized that I'm not voting on which candidate's personality I enjoy more; it's policies, not personalities, which have the power to harm or help people. But since **all platforms** are a “mixed bag” of good and bad policies, I had to **prioritize policies** according to their relative importance **biblically**. I can live with policies of lesser importance **and** difficult personalities.

For me, the weightiest issue of all is protecting innocent unborn life. Although any sin separates us from God, the Bible says some sins are more heinous. When someone stole, he had to pay back five times but when someone killed a man, he had to pay with his own life. Abortion is an attack on the image of God, and already we've sacrificed 65 million of our own children. Three thousand a day; that's a “9-11” every day! **Some issues** loom so large that they form a “continental divide” of sorts.

(continued)

## Sermon Summary (continued)

**Important Note:** *If you have abortion in your past, we don't condemn you. The Bible says that for those who've trusted in Christ, there is **no** condemnation. Abortion is **not** the unpardonable sin. What I am making a case for is saving future children. If you have abortion in your past, we have certified biblical counselors—female counselors—ready to help you with your pain. Statistically, one fourth of all women have been hurt by the abortion industry. I hope that you hear our heart. We welcome you, we value you, and we're ready to help. Please write to: [BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com](mailto:BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com) for free, confidential help.*

Because abortion is so important, I can vote even for lost non-believers who fight abortion. I ask, "What **policies** will this candidate likely pursue?" I've been asking: "Is there a clear distinction between the two **party** platforms? Which one promises to protect unborn life?" Platforms always are a mixed bag, so I simply aim to restrain the **worst** evils of this world and to promote **as much** human flourishing as I can. For me personally, it's a question of percentages, not of perfection. Politics is only of **limited** effectiveness. I think it's OK to be a "single-issue voter". For me personally there **are** some issues that rise head and shoulders above the others. **Some policies**—such as slavery and abortion—have the ability to **destroy life**, while other issues—such as property rights and tax policy—only have the ability to **diminish** a person's **experience**.

I think lots of people actually are single-issue voters (be it immigration, climate change, health-care, racism, poverty, prison reform, or gender/sexual freedom). How shall each of us decide what is **our** "continental divide" issue? My non-negotiable standard is loving my neighbor as I love myself. I don't want **self**-interest to be my most important criterion. That's why, **for me**, the economy and taxation are not very important. Giving the unborn an opportunity to have **any sort of life** is more important to me than trying to improve my own standard of living. Christians disagree on which issues are most important. Thankfully, we don't answer to each other on this choice—we each answer to God (Romans 14:4–9). He's given us his book, and we each become informed about what **he** values, what **he'll** hold us accountable for.

For me personally, my "continental divide" issue—abortion—is clear cut. But each of us must examine the platforms, decide which one proposes policies which square with positions that we each personally believe will bring the most good, and then we each vote accordingly. This makes the choice of **my** vote clear to me, but you'll have to decide what's right for yourself. And although heavenly issues are our primary concern, the Bible supports using earthly privileges to promote human flourishing (Paul asserted his Roman citizenship rights).

Although I believe Christians should vote, the most powerful asset we have is prayer (1 Timothy 2:1–6). We pray and vote so that we can live tranquil, quiet, dignified, godly lives. And tranquility helps us achieve the most important thing: gospel witness and salvation of the lost. Christians, out of neighbor-love, seek to use **everything at our disposal** to bring about civic stability and freedom to live godly lives, so that people can be saved. Prayer is the most powerful tool we have, but since by the grace of God the vote **also** is available to us, we examine the **platforms** and see which one proposes **policies** which square with God's positions on issues that we each believe will bring the most good. Then, we vote as our conscience dictates.

### Application-Challenge

Christians should **know** that our allegiance must be to Christ. As Christ's ambassadors, we do not have the right to allow our personal preferences to determine the positions we take. We get our marching orders from King Jesus.

Christians should **feel** the responsibility of improving others' temporal experience through the privilege of the vote. Civil tranquility—temporary though it is—is the best context for accomplishing our ultimate calling: preserving life and spreading the gospel.

Christians should **do** good to all men, every opportunity we have. By the grace of God, Americans have the freedom to vote. For me personally, this freedom to help shape the direction of our country rises to the level of an obligation to vote. For me personally, it's a question of who will control my life: King Dan or King Jesus? I find that I keep on wanting to get up on the throne. It's a real challenge for me. I'm guessing that it might be for you as well.

## Digging Deeper in Your Daily Quiet Time

**"Five Question Bible Study"** (see page below) *is a simple way to study any passage. We can use it to learn about God's "common grace" (which includes government) toward us...*

**Monday**— In the *natural* realm, God gives grace to all. Study Matthew 5:44-45; Acts 14:16-17; Psalm 145:9, 15-16

**Tuesday**— In the *intellectual* realm, God gives grace to all. Study John 1:9; Acts 17:22-23 *cf.* Romans 1:21

**Wednesday**— In the *moral* realm, God gives grace to all. Study Romans 2:14-15 *cf.* 1:32; Luke 6:33

**Thursday**— In the *governmental* realm, God gives grace to all. Study Genesis 9:6; Romans 13:1-10; 1 Timothy 2:1-2

**Friday**— *Why* is God gracious to all? Study Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:4; Psalm 25:8

**Saturday**—*In preparation for worshipping your risen Lord with your church family,*  
study **Philippians 3:19c-20 & Colossians 3:1-4.**

Bible Text: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



What idea particularly strikes me from this text? [Note in which verse(s) it is found.]



What question does this text raise in my mind—and how would *this text* answer it?



What about Jesus Christ—his character and/or his redemption—relates to this text?



What action must I take as a result of this text? Be concrete and specific.



With whom will I share what I learned from this text? [and what was their response?]

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...intrigued you? ...angered you? ...encouraged you? ...and **why**?

- Read Psalm 75:6-7 and Daniel 2:21a. **Who** will choose our next president? Do you **really** believe that?

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5 Relate each of those four elements to voting. ...to prayer. ...to evangelism. ...to using seatbelts.

**6** How would your attitudes and choices change if you used 1 Corinthians 10:24 as a "voters' guide"?

**7** Without revealing who you intend to vote for, mark the following scale with a "W" for how you'll feel if ***your*** preferred candidate wins, and an "L" for if he loses. What does this tell you ***about yourself?***

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- Read Hebrews 11:8-9 & 13. Abraham left the city which was the "New York City" of his day.

9 How do you think CNN would have evaluated his move? What adjectives would they have used?

**10** Now read v. 10 & 14-15. What adjectives might **Abraham** have used to evaluate his own move?


**11** Finally, read v. 6 & 16. What adjectives would **God** have used to evaluate Abraham's move?

**12** Before whose eyes—others', your own, or God's—do you live? **Whose** evaluation matters most to you—and **why**?

**13** How can Abraham's experience help you obey Colossians 3:1-4?

# Application-Challenge

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TRIANGLE  
COMMUNITY CHURCH



- 1 Don't allow too much time for this question, or you'll spend the entire meeting on emotional reactions rather than on grappling with the concepts. You may say something like: "OK, *ten second reactions! What from this message... ?*"
- 2 The Scriptures are crystal clear: God "works all things after the counsel of his will" (Ephesians 1:11b), and this includes raising up evil rulers to bring about judgment. (God is not responsible for their evil, they are doing what they want to do, but God uses them as a tool to accomplish his purposes. Don't fall into the error exposed in Romans 9:19-24!)
- 3 After grappling with the **truth** in the previous question, don't fail to probe whether folks really **believe** it! Don't argue with answers. You can simply remark, "This is one of those truths that show how different, how holy, how inscrutable our God is!"
- 4 This question **probes the mystery** of divine sovereignty and human responsibility. It will be explored further in the next question—and in next week's sermon.) For now you're simply trying to see how people respond to our mind-blowing God. Do they throw up their hands in futility? Do they believe it, even though our brains are not large enough to understand the infinite? How do they **respond**?
- 5 This question **explores the relationship between** divine sovereignty and human responsibility. Both are true. The Bible doesn't deal in hypotheticals—"The Bible says God knows the number of my days, so what if **I used to** wear my seatbelt, **and then I stopped** wearing it? Does my number change?"
- 6 Read the verse, and truly grapple with the radical reorientation Christ's lordship makes in our lives.
- 7 Have folks mark their own scales, and then share their "W" and "L". This is the easy, factual part.
- 8 Then, ask for a few volunteers and help them explore **why** their heart-response varied so greatly between the "W" & "L". Be like a three year old, always asking the next "Why?" question, digging deeper and deeper. This gets at what their source of hope is in life.
- 9 "crazy", "loser", "fanatic", "fundamentalist"... Don't quickly gloss over these verses. Imagine someone today doing what Abraham did, and how the secular media would portray him.
- 10 "clear-headed", "reasonable choice", "living for eternity", "content with his choice"... Ditto. Really put yourself in Abraham's sandals. How would he see himself and his choice?
- 11 "blessed", "honored", "big winner" because he is "faithful", "loyal", "eternally-minded"...
- 12 This is an important biblical concept! Everyone lives his life "before **someone's** eyes"—there's always someone whose opinion matters most to us. Today we see this concept when people are pressured "to be on the right side of history". "Right side" according to whose point-of-view?! Jesus said to a wealthy man (ie, one who was doing well in **others'** eyes), "You fool!" (which tells **God's** evaluation of him). Then there are some who are "so full of themselves" that they don't care what others, including God, think of them. They live life only according to their own criteria—which the Bible also calls foolish (2 Corinthians 10:12). **Don't forget to explore the "Why?" question at the end!**
- 13 As they say, "Easier said than done!" Abraham lived life "before God's eyes", for God's approval. How can his experience help us do the same?

14 **Important Note:** If you have abortion in your past, we don't condemn you. The Bible says that for those who've trusted in Christ, there is **no** condemnation. Abortion is **not** the unpardonable sin. What I am making a case for is saving future children. If you have abortion in your past, we have certified biblical counselors—female counselors—ready to help you with your pain. Statistically, one fourth of all women have been hurt by the abortion industry. I hope that you hear our heart. We welcome you, we value you, and we're ready to help. Please write to: [BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com](mailto:BiblicalHopeAndHelp@gmail.com) for free, confidential help.

Please don't overlook this important note found in the Sermon Summary. You may have a group member (female or male) who has a guilty conscience over abortion.

Close your group time by reading this note verbatim. Urge folks to be in touch with a biblical counselor. Consider having a female group member read this to the group. This is important; people are hurting.