

Preparing for the Election 2024

Back in 2012, I preached a message with this same title.

At that time, we were \$16T in debt; now the debt is about \$36T. At that time, we were not talking about the “woke” agenda. Same-sex marriage was not legal across the US. Very few were talking about gender transition, AI, BLM, or DEI. Donald Trump was a TV personality, and not many people had heard of Kamala Harris. Things have changed drastically in the last dozen years.

Our emphasis as a church is not on politics or current events. The primary message of the NT is the good news about salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Our main message is not political; ours is a religious and moral message.

However, the Bible talks about the government and our responsibilities as citizens. The Bible lays down a moral code that we can apply to our political decisions. Christianity has political consequences/implications. Christians should vote, and they should vote in a certain way—in a way that is consistent with biblical, moral values.

The election is just two days away—this Tuesday, Nov 5. If you’ve been paying attention at all for the last few months, you know that the candidates for president differ from each other in significant ways. I’m not going to tell you whom to vote for, but I would like to talk about the biblical values and Christian principles that should influence how we vote.

I am mostly concerned with moral issues in the election. Other issues are important, but from my perspective as a pastor, I’m concerned mostly about biblical morality and how the candidates will either support or undercut biblical values.

How do we, as Christians, evaluate the options, issues, and candidates as we cast our vote? What moral issues/principles should we focus on when considering which candidates to vote for?

(I am indebted to Kevin Bauder for some of these ideas.)¹

¹ Consult the three-part podcast “Let Me Tell You How to Vote” at <https://centralseminary.edu/the-central-seminary-podcast/>. Also consult Kevin Bauder’s essay of the same name, *In the Nick of Time*, 13 January 2012.

I. Reputation for Integrity—which candidate seems to be the most honest? Who has the better personal character?

A. I admit that politics is dirty business and that politicians are often not high character people. It's hard for me to believe that anyone running for presidential office can retain much personal integrity. Most candidates make promises they cannot keep or have no intention of keeping. Many of them will say virtually anything to get your vote.

Still, we hope that our candidates have some personal virtue and good character.

B. The Bible teaches that when the wicked rule, the people mourn (Pr. 29:2). A wicked person—a person with bad personal character—should be disqualified from leadership. We don't expect anyone to be perfect, but we would prefer to vote for someone with good moral character. How would we discern good character in a candidate?

Does the person keep his word? What is the candidate's track record regarding the vows he has taken and the promises he has made? E.g., marriage—if he does not keep this oath/promise, then he does not keep his promises; he's not trustworthy.

C. For Christians, integrity matters; personal character matters. And we realize that politicians, for the most part, are not reliable, honest people. They often lack basic integrity. We should be very skeptical about the promises politicians make. They've deceive and disappointed us before. We often cannot trust these people, and we would be foolish and gullible to think that politicians will keep their word. They often don't.

I almost laugh out loud when I hear a political advertisement claiming that we can trust a certain candidate. Most of us probably recognize that we should not trust politicians. I, for one, do not trust the government. We should take everything they say with a large grain of salt; we would be fools to trust them.

- D. In the current presidential race, just to be frank, neither side has a good reputation for integrity or personal character. Neither side is particularly reliable, honest, and truthful. You'll have to decide which of the candidates you think is more honest, who has better integrity. Many candidates are deeply compromised when it comes to personal character/integrity.
- E. But we have to vote for somebody, and we should pick the person who seems to have the greater integrity and honesty. We may have to hold our noses when we vote, but we still have to vote, and we should cast our vote for the better person.

II. Sanctity of Life

- A. The most important duty of government is to protect the lives of the innocent. Civil authorities must use their power to defend those who are too weak to defend themselves. No one is more innocent and vulnerable than the unborn, whom the Bible shows to be human persons (Ps. 51:5, 139:14-15). Every human is made in the image of God and is of eternal value, especially the baby in the womb.
- B. The sanctity of human life is a biblical principle that teaches us that all human life, in every stage or condition of life, is valuable. God gave life, and only God has the right to take innocent human life. We should support those who want to protect human life from conception to the grave.
- C. Where do the candidates and the parties stand on this issue?
 - 1. Almost every single Democratic candidate for office is staunchly pro-abortion. They are firmly, radically committed to the unrestricted practice of murdering babies in the womb, right up until the moment of birth, and they would prefer to have the American tax payer pay for it. They claim that abortion is a fundamental right, just like the right to free speech, a free press, and freedom of religion. Abortion rights is their one big issue. They are champions of unrestricted murder at all stages of pregnancy.

On this issue, the Democrats are against God, the Bible, the church, the family and even against the welfare of the country. They are against common sense and against basic moral standards. They are promoting the culture of death.

If the Democrats gain control over the government, and if they can push through their legislation, the entire country would be open to abortion without restriction everywhere.

2. Sadly, some of the candidates we would expect to be pro-life are willing to compromise on this issue; they are not consistently and strongly pro-life. They are better on that issue than the other side, but they are not particularly good.
3. If one candidate is aggressively pro-abortion, and the other is even mildly pro-life, we vote for the person who is more pro-life. We must support the candidate with the better position.
4. No Christian should vote for any candidate who supports abortion, no matter what other policies the candidate supports. Abortion is murder; it is a clear-cut moral issue. We should vote for the candidates who are better on this issue, even if the candidate is not particularly strong on it. The choice between good and evil is obvious and stark.

III. Marriage, Family, and Gender

- A. The very first institution that God established was the human family. It was rightly composed of one man, his wife, and their children. This is the biblical pattern that Jesus recognized and the one that Christians should emulate.

- B. We are all aware of changes in our society in the realm of home and family. Today, the “normal” home and family seems to be increasingly rare. Many couples are living together without being married. People are having children without being married. Single parent families are very common these days. Homosexuality and transgenderism now have a huge influence in the culture. What used to be considered marginal, counter-cultural, and unusual behavior is now becoming more common and acceptable. The most depraved people and their wicked behaviors are coming out of the closet and are parading their depravity for all to see.
- C. We as Christians are called upon to be salt and light in this culture. We must stand against the ungodly patterns we see in society. We must uphold and defend what is good, beautiful and true. We must stand up for basic biblical morality. We must maintain high moral standards, not cave in or capitulate to the ungodly spirit of the age.
- D. Christians should not support candidates who are promoting the LGBT agenda or lifestyle. The family is the foundation of the country. As the traditional family structure becomes weaker, the whole country suffers. We should support only those candidates who promote strong, traditional Christian family values.
- E. The Bible is very clear on all of these issues. We know what the Bible says about proper relationships and families. We know that it is a fact of nature that there are only two sexes. We know that it’s impossible to transition from one sex to another. We know that it’s sinful for anyone to pretend to be the opposite sex. Anyone who denies biblical truth on these issues is not worthy of our vote. The candidates we support must be against the LGBT agenda.

We have to tell the truth on these issues; we must live in reality. A man cannot become a woman no matter how he dresses or what surgeries he has or what drugs he takes. A man is a man, and no government should force us to pretend otherwise.

- F. We must stand strongly against the homosexual agenda and same-sex marriage. We must stand against polygamy, adultery, transgenderism, and all sorts of disordered relationships. I would want a candidate to be against such things, not support them. I want a candidate who is against the trans agenda, against grooming little children for the LGBT lifestyle, and against pornography in public.
- G. We should not tolerate biological males competing against females in sports. We should not accept it as normal when men invade private spaces intended for women and girls. We should not tolerate it when people claim that they can transition from one sex to the other.
- H. Sadly, one of the national political party supports, upholds, and defends the very opposite of what Christianity teaches on these issues. I would call this the Romans 1 political platform, because that chapter in the Bible condemns many of the policies this party promotes. I.e., this party is officially and proudly antagonistic against biblical morality. They are on the record for hostility toward God's order on these issues. We should not vote for any candidate who supports what God condemns.

IV. Rule of Law

- A. The Bible clearly teaches that civil authorities exist to protect law-abiding citizens and to punish criminals. Government exists to promote what is good and penalize what is evil.
- B. We don't believe in tyrants, dictators, or autocrats—people who think that they are above the law. We believe that everyone is equal before the law and that the law applies equally to all citizens.
- C. Christians should support candidates who apply the law equally and fairly to all, irrespective of color, gender, education, or wealth. We don't give preferential treatment to some and worse treatment to others. Those candidates who ignore the law when it suits them are not worthy of our votes. We should support candidates who promise to be tough on crime, not those who are lenient on criminals.

- D. We should vote for those candidates that seem most likely to respect the law and pass good laws for the nation. And the laws that they propose should be in keeping with Christian morality. There is a higher law, and the laws of the land should reflect the higher moral order. We should vote for those candidates who respect God's higher law and who will apply human law fairly and equally.
- V. Respect for Property
- A. God Himself insists that we respect private property rights (Ex. 20:15). Citizens must have the right to acquire and own the necessities of life—e.g., food, clothing, shelter. Government exists, in part, to protect us and our property from threats. We have a right to keep the possessions we accumulate.
- B. Although the Bible condemns greed and materialism, wealth itself is not immoral. It's not unfair that some are able to accumulate much, while other accumulate little. In America, if you work hard and make good choices, you can usually attain a middle-class lifestyle or better. And government should not get in the way of that. Government should facilitate the creation of wealth—the wealthier people are, the more the government gets in taxes.
- C. Government behaves immorally when it confiscates our assets through high taxes on income, estates, and wealth. Government has the right to tax, but it must use its authority properly and within reasonable limits. The government often exceeds its legitimate authority when it attempts to control personal wealth. Government should not punish prosperity; it should enable and promote prosperity for all.
- D. Christians should support candidates who refuse to make the government an agent of confiscation and redistribution. Government confiscation of assets through unreasonably high taxes amounts to theft.

- E. So if there is a party or a candidate who ignores the destruction of property and who promises higher taxes, who promises to confiscate our property, Christians must not vote for that person or party. If a party or candidate claims to be socialist or even communist, we should never vote for such a person or party.
- F. The government is responsible to protect us from those who would confiscate or destroy our property. If the candidate will not protect property rights, then he should not get our vote. If the candidate wants to take our property, redistribute wealth, or tax us unreasonably, he should not get our vote.

VI. Personal Responsibility

- A. God holds able-bodied people responsible for their own welfare. He expects mature people of every station to earn their living. If one does not want to work, then he should not expect to eat (2 Th 3:10). We should not expect the government to provide for us when we can provide for ourselves.
- B. In the case of those who are overcome by circumstances beyond their control—poverty, abuse, illness, disasters—God has ordained institutions such as family, church, and government as agencies of support. We admit that some people cannot provide for themselves. The government can provide help for people who genuinely need it—e.g., a social safety net to support those who have no other help.
- C. But the government is not primarily responsible to give people stuff or to pay their debts. Government programs often do not hold people accountable for their bad behavior or poor decisions. Government programs sometimes encourage bad behavior.
- D. Our government has slowly transitioned over the years to a welfare state or a “nanny” state. In fact, government today enables, rewards, and encourages immoral, reckless behavior.

- E. Christians should support those candidates who do not want to increase and expand government's role in providing for people who should be providing for themselves. We should be looking for a smaller, leaner government that doesn't reward bad behavior. If people are capable of supporting themselves, the government should not be providing for them—except in cases of emergency or catastrophe.
 - F. Frankly, I doubt that many candidates will do anything to reduce the size or spending of government. Very few candidates want to reign in government spending or power. But again, we should vote for those candidates who seem most likely to reduce the size of government, reduce government spending, and to emphasize personal responsibility.
- VII. The responsible management of nature
- A. God gave humans dominion over creation, which includes the mandate is to subdue the earth. "Subdue" means to bring order to something. It's proper for us to develop and use creation to bring it to order. God made creation for us.
 - B. We should not exploit or ruin creation, but we should use creation for our benefit. We ought to be productive in our use of resources. We want to develop resources properly and reasonably. We ought to protect the beauty and majesty of creation while using the resources for our benefit.
 - C. Humans are not destroying the entire planet. I am very skeptical of the claims of climate alarmists. Humans are responsible for an awful lot of pollution, which is very sad. In some places, where humans are not following biblical principles of good management, humans have made a huge mess. As a lover of nature, I hate pollution; I am in favor of conservation of resources; I appreciate clean-up efforts. I like clean land, water, and air. We ought to protect and retain the beauty of the earth.

- D. However, I'm not persuaded that human activity is radically affecting the climate or ruining the earth. I do not believe that we can control the climate. Extreme environmentalists take the wrong viewpoint on the issue.
- E. We should support those candidates who recognize that we can use the creation properly and responsibly for human needs. God made the earth for us; we should use it responsibly for our benefit. Christians should not endorse extreme environmentalism.

VIII. Recognition of Israel

- A. God has promised to bless those who bless Israel. How a nation treats Israel will in some sense determine how God deals with that nation. There are more Jews in the US than in the entire rest of the world. We should treat Jews with respect and kindness.
- B. It does not mean that we endorse everything that Israel does, but that we support Jewish people and the state of Israel as much as we can.
- C. Israel is the only democratic ally that the US has in the middle east region. Some say it's the only civilized nation in that part of the world.
- D. We should support those candidates the clearly support Israel. We don't support immoral or evil actions, but we support the nation of Israel as much as we can. God blesses those who bless Israel.

Do any candidates in the upcoming election have a solid, robust Christian viewpoint on all of these issues? No, other than perhaps some candidates running for local offices. No one holding all of these positions could be voted into a national office these days. These are not popular positions on the issues; they are not majority positions; maybe 10% of the population would endorse all of these principles.

*So can we **not** vote for any of these candidates if they do not affirm all of these principles?* There may be cases or times that we cannot vote in good conscience for any of the candidates. But practically speaking, we should vote for those candidates who uphold most of or at least some of these principles. There are no perfect candidates, but some are better than others.

We are fortunate that *some* of the candidates running for office claim to uphold *some* of these biblical values.

Which candidate is more likely to uphold what is good? Which is more likely to reduce moral evil? Perhaps through our vote we can prevent a candidate from being elected. E.g., vote for the one because the alternative is so bad. E.g., Hilary Clinton

An interesting incident happened recently at rallies for both campaigns. At a Harris rally, someone shouted out “Jesus is Lord.” Harris replied, “You must be at the wrong rally.” In other words, that assertion about Jesus as Lord was not welcome among Democrats. If you look at their party platform, you would have to conclude that they are the anti-Jesus party. At a rally where JD Vance was speaking, someone shouted out “Jesus is king.” Vance replied “That’s right—Jesus is king.” What happened at these rallies tells us where the parties stand. One party affirms Jesus as king—at least in their rhetoric—while the other party denies it. That in itself should guide our voting.

I’ve heard that around 32 million Christians are likely to sit out the 2024 presidential election because they cannot in good conscience vote for either presidential candidate. I find that number shocking, especially when the election will likely turn on several thousand votes. We don’t have a presidential candidate who holds *all* of our moral values, but we have the option for voting for someone who upholds *most* of our values, while voting against a candidate who rejects most of our values. We can vote for someone who, we hope, will do some good and prevent some evil.

We are responsible to vote; it’s part of our stewardship as citizens. If we don’t vote, it’s like voting for bad government. We cannot abdicate our responsibility. Not voting is a failure of Christian stewardship.

And just to be very specific, we cannot vote for any candidate that supports abortion, the homosexual agenda, trans-gender rights, or ignoring criminal behavior. No Christian should vote for such immorality. Our vote should show our support for what God loves and our opposition to what God hates.

The vote is coming up soon; only two days from now. This is an exceedingly important election, and we live in a “swing” state in which every single vote matters. The election could come down to a handful of votes in each district. I hope that you’ll make every effort to get to the polls on Tuesday, Nov 5 and exercise your right to vote, and vote in light of Christian values.