

SHOULD CHRISTIANS AVOID POLITICS?

*Debunking Four Myths that
Keep Christians Sidelined*



A Prayer for Engaging with Politics

Lord, you supply our every need. We praise you and thank you for the provisions you've given to us, including our home, city, and nation. For our current government, we thank you. By it we are provided with many blessings we could not otherwise enjoy.

Let us take notice of the needs of our community. May our work, service, and generosity allow the blessings you have given us to overflow to more people. Equip us with discernment and care to resist evil and bring about peace here on the Earth.

Jesus, be the unrelenting mediator between those whom we agree and disagree with politically, between us and other Christians, between us and those who have never had a relationship with you, and in all of our political dealings with others. Please remind us that our behavior and treatment of others are the boldest evidence of our love for you.

Grant us the privilege of seeing people from your perspective. Give us the humility and patience we need to listen to and understand the concerns of others and to learn from them. Equip us with your compassion that we might consider the needs of others our own. Establish your grace in our hearts so that we may bear your name well as ambassadors for your kingdom.

Let our commitment to Jesus' way of living prevail over the opinions of our varied political stances. Let us be ambassadors of your kingdom during our time on Earth. Let us engage thoughtfully in politics to bring about peace in the world without forming disdain, jealousy, or hostility toward others.

Teach us each day the way of Jesus. May the outworking of the gospel always be evident in our political engagement.

Amen.

Session 1

Introduction: Politics for the Reluctant

Pray

Read Aloud Matthew 16:13–19

Politics During Jesus' Life

Between the Old and New Testament, there was a period of about four hundred years where the Jewish people lived in political oppression. During these four hundred years, called by some the “silent years,” the Israelites were oppressed by the Babylonians, Medo-Persians, Greek, and finally the Romans. During this long period, the Israelites were able to maintain their religious and cultural identity, even though they were oppressed and occupied by other cultures. Jesus was born into the Roman period of occupation. As you can imagine, people were anxious to figure out the best way to engage with pagan activities they disagreed with and how to interact with the occupying government who was generally disliked. There were many different opinions about how to best do that. The following five groups show approaches from the foremost “political” groups at the time:

- 1. Herodians:** A political party that favored the rule of King Herod over the Israelites. This group wanted to submit to the government so they could maintain their political power. All plots to overthrow the government threatened their authority, so they resisted them. The Herodians held loose religious commitments or affiliations and were mainly concerned with seeking power and maintaining it.¹
- 2. Sadducees & Priests:** These official teachers of the law were the government-recognized religious leaders of Israel. Their jobs relied upon Roman approval, so the Sadducees worked to collaborate with the Romans to keep Israel's religious practices legal, and sought to achieve influential positions in the government. Once they had positions in the Roman government, they attempted to maintain the status quo and did not seek a radical overthrow of the Romans.² Often this came across as a selfish desire to keep the wealth and status they had gained as the “spiritual elite.”
- 3. Essenes:** A faction unhappy with the Hellenization (adoption of Greek culture, language, practice, and identity by non-Greeks) in Israel. They were not content to live in the Roman system. As a result, they isolated themselves from the culture—and anyone who

disagreed with them. They believed they were the true Israelites. If a violent uprising were to occur, they would not have participated because they believed God would reclaim Israel in his own time. ³

4. **Zealots:** These people were not so much an organized group as a subculture within Israel. This group, inspired by historical Israelite uprisings (e.g., the Maccabean uprisings), believed that like their predecessors, they should “burn with zeal for the law.” ⁴ They were radically committed to the Old Testament law and fiercely resisted accommodating to pagan culture.. Zealots were ready to use violence to reclaim Israel as its own land through the forceful overthrow of all secular rule. ⁵
5. **Pharisees:** These religious leaders believed that there needed to be radical change in Israel to separate their ideas and religious practices from the pagans. They wanted to see Israel live in strict adherence to the Torah. If the time came, they would have even condoned a violent overthrow of the Romans. ⁶ However, since the Romans were in power and no radical change was in sight, Pharisees worked within the system, largely ignoring culture and adhering to a complicated system of religious practices based on righteous traditions. ⁷

Discussion

1. *How did political groups in Jesus’ day respond to political turmoil, and how were their behaviors similar to tendencies you personally face regarding politics?*
2. *According to the passage, which political groups did people try to associate Jesus with? (See the section about “Politics in Jesus’ Life” for help.)*
3. *We try to associate Jesus with political movements too. Who did Peter say that Jesus was and what did he mean?*
4. *What does it mean for our lives that Jesus is above all the political factions? What does it mean that he rules over every other ruler and authority?*
5. *During Jesus’ time, political divisions kept people from seeing Jesus for who he really was. Do you think there are political affiliations that we hold that keep us from seeing Jesus as he is (as presented to us in Scripture)?*

6. *What things in your life are keeping you from seeing from Jesus' perspective?*
7. *Jesus tells the disciples that "the gates of hell" would not prevail over his church. Jesus is saying that no matter how hellish things get, society won't be able to withstand the blessing and the flourishing that comes when God's people do what they're called to do. What are ways that we focus on this message of hope from Jesus when things seem like they are falling apart?*
8. *After his message of hope, what does Jesus say in Matthew 16:19?*
9. *Dr. Jeff explains what Matthew 16:19 means. Jesus is telling the church to be those wise people. We should bring common sense into situations. We are the conscience of society. We bring truth to society. By the way we live, we can turn things around. What are some ways you can engage with the hurting people around you to help turn things around?*

Additional Scripture Passages

John 13:34–35

Galatians 5

Resources

Book—*The Drama of Scripture* by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen

Book—*The True Story of the Whole World* by Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen

[Article—Your Identity in God's Story](#)

[Article—The Faith Once for All: The Apostles' Creed](#)

[Article—The Word Made Clear: A Short Guide to Understanding Scripture](#)

[Article—God's Word: Its Nature & Influence](#)

Session 2

Myth #1: God Doesn't Care About Politics

Pray

Read Aloud Genesis 1:26–27 and James 3:9

What does it mean to be made in the image of God?

Throughout history, many individuals have championed the idea that all people are God's image and are therefore deserving of respect. After all, if everyone is a divine image-bearer, it would seem to follow that they have equal value and dignity. Their worth comes not from their actions, wealth, sex, or ethnicity, but from this God-given status. This belief has led to tremendous acts of justice, including fostering respect and protection for the elderly, the disabled, those wrongly oppressed, the ill, and more. It has spurred on movements fighting for the equality of women, the defense of the unborn, and the liberation of slaves. To cite one example, Scott Klusendorf, a leader in the pro-life movement, says: "Although [the unborn] differ immensely in their respective degrees of development, they are nonetheless equal because they share a common human nature made in the image of God." ⁸

We see this idea in the first chapter of Scripture as the author says men and women are made "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:26-27). This idea is sometimes referred to as the *imago Dei*, which is just the Latin translation of the phrase. Among all the beautiful creations God designed, humans are the pinnacle of his work, uniquely made in his likeness and serving as his image. Humans are thus elevated in their relationship to God compared to the rest of creation and called to greater responsibility and purpose.

God has decided to create physical images of himself to serve as his ambassadors. Once given the breath of life, humans were made to manifest, reflect, represent, and communicate God's presence to all creation. They have been given the task of helping steward and cultivate his world, extend his reign, and make known his presence. To be in the presence of his divine images is to be in the presence of God through his physical representatives.

Discussion

1. *Every person is an image-bearer of God. Regardless of ethnicity, age, sex, mental capacity, economic status, or any other attribute, insofar as one is a human, he or she is an image of God. Every person has worth and dignity by virtue of the God-given gift of being his image. What does this mean for our attitudes and behavior toward those we disagree with politically?*

2. *As image-bearers, we have the responsibility to communicate God’s presence and reign over creation; to be his representatives and ambassadors who showcase God and his character. How can we exemplify God’s justice, love, compassion, and holiness in how we engage politically with our communities?*

3. *Being an image of God carries with it the call to steward his creation, to expand his rule, and to fill the earth with his presence. This can be done in the arts, politics, environmental care, veterinary services, being a parent, or any other life-giving vocation. How do you see politics positively stewarding the resources we have as a nation?*

4. *What are some practical ways that you can steward your political responsibilities to bring life and redemption to the world around you?*

5. *Paul reminds us, whatever we do as divine image-bearers, “do it all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). This is the chief end of humans, to image God as his royal representatives, as his sons and daughters, while we steward his creation. What do you think it looks like to engage politically for the glory of God?*

Additional Scripture Passages

Psalm 57

Isaiah 42:8

Psalm 19:1

Resources

[Article—Human Value & the Image of God](#)

[Article—Your Identity in God’s Story](#)

[Video—Combating Evil as Image-Bearers of God](#)

[eBook—The Image of God: Our Identity as Representatives of God](#)

[Book—Understanding the Culture](#)

Session 3

Myth #2: It's Not My Problem

Pray

Read Aloud 1 Timothy 2:1–6; 1 Peter 1:13–25; and Matthew 23:23–28

Becoming a Blessing

Our world cries out for justice. Deep down we know things are not as they should be. In our fallen state we may not receive justice for every evil deed committed against us. We may see the wicked prosper and the righteous suffer. We look at the world and see so much suffering and injustice. But when the great injustices of the world makes us despair, let us turn to the cross where Jesus suffered the ultimate injustice to satisfy God's perfect justice. It is a reminder that God hates injustice more than we ever could and that he alone can deliver true righteousness to the world. The cross is a symbol of God's love and mercy, and a promise that ultimately, justice will prevail. ⁹ Jesus invites us to participate in the redemptive work of the cross here and now.

Discussion

1. *In 1 Timothy 2, Christians are urged to pray for ruling authorities, that we would have peaceful and quiet lives. Why do you think we are asked to pray for peace? Do you think that you can have peaceful relationships with others without completely agreeing with them?*
2. *1 Timothy 2 tells us to demonstrate godly and holy behavior. 1 Peter 1 describes holy behavior. What character traits does Peter list?*
3. *In Matthew 23, Jesus says that it is hypocrisy to behave righteously to others while having an impure internal life. To have our outward behavior be truly righteous and just, Jesus says to first focus on our internal lives, so that our outward actions would be purified. Why does Jesus turn the focus of cultivating holy lives to our inward heart conditions?*

4. *How have you seen an inward heart change affect your outward behavior?*

 5. *Dr. Jeff states that living godly lives isn't just about how our government functions now, it's about something eternal—it's about everything. The way that we behave toward those we agree with or disagree with politically has eternal consequences. How have you seen righteous, kind, and honest behavior positively affect someone (politically or not)?*

 6. *Are there one or two things your group wants to commit to praying for in our nation?*
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Additional Scripture Passages

Acts 17:26–27

Romans 13:1–7

Matthew 28:18–20

Colossians 2:6–15

Romans 12:9–20

Resources

[Article—The Parable of the Talents & Faithful Stewardship](#)

[Article—The Hope of the Servant King in Trials & Tribulations](#)

[Article—Does God Care About Politics? Should We Care?](#)

[Video—Combating Evil as Image-Bearers of God](#)

[Video—Now We Live, Society: How Should We Live?](#)

[Video—Flourish, An Invitation to Redemption](#)

Session 4

Myth #3: Choosing Between the Lesser of Two Evils is Itself Evil

Pray

Read Aloud 1 Chronicles 12:23 & 32; Ephesians 5:6–16; and Colossians 2:8

Worldview

A worldview is a pattern of ideas, beliefs, convictions, and habits that help us make sense of God, the world, and our relationship to God and the world. Recognizing these patterns is key to navigating the complex world of ideas—especially when navigating the political culture. Ideas we hold to become beliefs, beliefs that we act upon become convictions, and convictions are the tracks that our lives run on. Dr. Jeff explains that our approach to politics should depend primarily on principles, then policies, and finally personality. Unfortunately, we often invert the triangle and see political campaigns as primarily a personality or policy competition. It's only after those two items are settled that we look for values a candidate holds in common with us and with Scripture.



Comparing worldviews, like Dr. Jeff explains in the video, is an excellent practice for developing a unified set of principles and for understanding different views about the nature of the world and how we should live in it. As Christians, forming a biblical worldview is crucial for interacting with the world in the way Jesus directs us to. Understanding other worldviews—like secularism, Marxism, postmodernism, new spirituality, and Islam—is helpful for sorting through views that differ from biblical principles, helping us not to be taken captive by false philosophies that are not aligned with Scripture and Jesus’ way of life.

Discussion

1. *In 1 Chronicles 12:32 the men of Issachar are appointed chiefs because they were “men with understanding of the times.” Why do you think it was important that the leaders had an understanding of the culture?*
2. *What does it mean to “understand the times?” How can we understand our culture and navigate the world according to biblical values (a biblical worldview) today?*
3. *Why is understanding the other ideas in culture important for navigating the world politically? What character traits does it require to listen to others well, even those who disagree with us?*
4. *How can understanding the times in our society help us to make the best use of lives that God has given us (Ephesians 5:6–16)?*
5. *How is comparative worldview assessment helpful to us for navigating our culture?*
6. *How can understanding non-biblical ideas (worldviews) help us to be obedient to what Paul says when he tells the church to not be taken captive by worldly ideas (philosophies)? (See Colossians 2:8.)*
7. *How does forming our base principles help us to make sense of extreme political personalities?*
8. *How does holding biblical ideas about the world help us to vote and to serve our communities in a way that helps to mitigate evil?*

9. *How can voting help alleviate evil in your neighborhood, city, and nation?*

 10. *Besides voting, what are some needs in your local community that you could joyfully provide solutions for or assistance with?*
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Additional Scripture Passages

Ephesians 5:16

1 Chronicles 12:32

Resources

[Article—Introducing Worldview](#)

[Article—The Elephant in the Room: Competing Worldviews and Religions Can't All Be True](#)

[Article—The Worldviews of Destruction in the 20th Century](#)

[Video—What Makes the Christian Worldview the “Right” One?](#)

[Video—What is a Worldview?](#)

[Video—How Should We Begin Studying Worldview?](#)

Session 5

Myth #4: Politics Doesn't Matter to What is Really Important

Pray

Read Aloud John 3:1–6

Sphere Sovereignty

Political freedom is not solely based on the policy (fruits) of the government, it is a result of the principles (roots) of the government. Abraham Kuyper believed that there are certain God-ordained spheres of life that have authority over our lives—this idea is called 'sphere sovereignty.' The three spheres are: Church, government, and family. If any of the spheres assume too much power, it negatively affects the other spheres.



Part of our responsibility is to help keep each sphere from taking too much power away from the other spheres. Governments, families, and churches that stay within their boundaries are most likely to preserve liberty in our nation.

We should remember that political freedom is limited and ultimately finite. As Christians, our hope lies beyond governments. Our savior is not the United States government or any other government; it is Jesus Christ. What he says about freedom and liberty in the pages of the Gospels is what makes us truly free, not political freedom. As long as American law and politics are underpinned by biblical Christian ideas and truth, we may continue to enjoy freedom as we know it. For any nation to experience even a slight taste of the freedom the Bible offers to believers, it must “draw from the root of God’s divine design as outlined in the Bible...as the Declaration of Independence puts it, these truths are ‘self-evident,’ a new experiment in liberty can be planted and another country [which can] move from being ‘not free’ to ‘free.’” ¹⁰

At any cultural moment, a taste of freedom is available for us to pursue as a nation. However, limitless freedom is offered through salvation which comes from Jesus Christ. This freedom can never be taken away; it points us to the eternal kingdom of heaven where peace will have no end. ¹¹

Discussion

1. *What are the three spheres of sovereignty? Why are they important to keep inside the correct boundaries?*
2. *Why is the traditional family important for the health of society? What about church and government?*
3. *What is the difference between political liberty and the freedom we have in Christ?*
4. *What governmental liberties are you thankful for that we have in our country?*
5. *Have you experienced freedom in Christ from your sins? What was that experience like for you?*
6. *For Christians, how do our peace and freedom in Christ affect the way that we see or experience political freedoms?*

Additional Scripture Passages

Exodus 21:33 *see video for reference

Deuteronomy 6

1 John 3

Galatians 5

Resources

[Article—The Christian’s Freedom](#)

[Article—Freedom in the 21st Century](#)

[Article—American Freedoms](#)

[Article—Helping Gen Z Combat Financial Fear in Uncertain Times](#)

[Article—Stewarding & Managing God’s Resources](#)

[Got Questions Article—What is Christian Freedom?](#)

[Got Questions Article—Christian Liberty: What Does the Bible Say?](#)

Session 6

Uniting Facts and Faith in Politics

Pray

Read Aloud Revelation 22:1–5

Christians sometimes forget that we know the end of the story—how this world is really going to end. We forget that each day of our lives should be directly informed by the end of the story, where Jesus and reigns forever. We think we have to fight the battle alone, so we don't submit to Jesus' authority over our lives. When we don't give Jesus the primary authority and say-so over our lives, we are in danger in at least four ways:

- One, our Christian faith will become disconnected from every other part of our lives. Distracted by other things, Christianity gets put in the “Church” box and is only opened for an hour and a half on Sunday morning. It has no real impact on our thoughts or behavior.
- Two, we will begin to listen to *alternative gurus*, people who offer wisdom for living. Anxious to find out how we should really be living, the alternative guru—anything from a political leader to a personality test—starts to have ideas that sound better for our lifestyle than Jesus' ideas do. These other ideas aren't necessarily bad, but they must be filtered through Jesus' ideas if he is really the primary intellectual authority in our lives.
- Three, we won't ask big questions anymore: *What good is in the world that I can cultivate? What is missing in today's culture that I can create? What evil can I help to curb? What is broken that I can help cure?* The Bible helps us answer these big questions and it also inspires us to ask them. Not allowing Jesus to have intellectual authority in our lives will lead to apathy.
- Four, our witness to the world will be silenced or muted. If we are not formed through trials and challenged by Scripture, then we will be formed by something else. The ideas that we are formed by will either mute our witness for Christ or they will amplify it. ¹²

Discussion

1. Revelation 22 describes the future world that Christians will live in, where Jesus will reign forever. What aspect of John's description of Heaven stands out the most to you?
2. When we pray that God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven, what do you think we are praying for? How should this prayer shape the way that we live our own lives?
3. What would it look like to have a posture of love and unity in our churches—despite diverse views of political policies? What would that kind of unity require from you?
4. How has this video series affected your view of Jesus? How will that shift in perspective affect the way you live your life?
5. How has this series altered your view of politics? Will that perspective shift affect the way you will engage with your local community and with politics in general?

Additional Scripture Passages

Matthew 6:9–15

Colossians 4:5–6

I Thessalonians 4:9–12

James 1:22–25

Resources

[Article—Truth, Jesus, and Worry](#)

[Article—The Resurrection of Jesus: Truth & Meaning for This Life & Beyond](#)

[Article—Jesus: The Ideal Philosopher](#)

Want to Learn More? Check Out These Additional Resources...

Related Reading

- [*Challenging Conversations*, Jason Jimenez](#)
- [*Understanding the Faith*, Dr. Jeff Myers](#)
- [*Understanding the Times*, Dr. Jeff Myers and Dr. David A. Nobel](#)
- [*Understanding the Culture*, Dr. Jeff Myers](#)
- [*Free to Believe*, Luke Goodrich](#)
- [*Politics for Christians*, Francis J. Beckwith](#)
- [*Letters to a Young Progressive*, Mike Adams](#)
- [*Stand Strong America*, Jason Jimenez and Alex McFarland](#)
- [*Stand Up, Stand Strong*, Sara Barratt](#)

Online Resources

- [Article: “Does God Care about Politics? Should We?”](#)
- [Podcast: Political Engagement—Not Easy, Not Optional](#)
- [Article: “Limited Government—Not Just for Grumpy Conservatives”](#)
- [Video: Christians’ Role in Changing Culture](#)
- [Video: Christians as Citizens](#)
- [Article: “Christianity and Politics—Separating Church and State”](#)
- [Video Series: *Now We Live*](#)
- [Video Series: *Flourish*](#)

Citations

1. Got Questions <https://www.gotquestions.org/Herodians.html>
2. Goheen, Michael W. and Craig G. Bartholomew, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2024), 133
3. Ibid, 132.
4. Ibid, 133. Cf. 1 Maccabees 2:26-27.
5. Ibid, 133.
6. Ibid, 131.
7. Towns, Elmer L. and Ben Gutierrez, “The History Between the Testaments,” in *The Essence of the New Testament: A Survey* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2012).
8. Scott Klusendorf, “Clarity Not Gadgetry: Pro-Life Apologetics for the Next Generation,” The Gospel Coalition, January 21, 2011, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/clarity-not-gadgetry-pro-life-apologetics-for-the-next-generation/>.
9. <https://www.summit.org/resources/articles/justice-at-the-cross/>
10. <https://www.summit.org/resources/articles/freedom-in-the-21st-century/>
11. <https://www.summit.org/resources/articles/freedom-in-the-21st-century/>
12. <https://www.summit.org/resources/articles/jesus-the-ideal-philosopher/>

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