

KINGDOM CITIZENS

A Weekly Guide to Walking in Radical Devotion

Week 3

How Should Kingdom Citizens Vote?

The title itself is enough to stop you in your tracks. Is a pastor really going to tell the congregation how to vote? The answer is yes. We should all know how to vote as followers of Jesus, which is different from telling you who or what to vote for.

Kingdom Citizens should first and foremost use their right to vote to glorify Jesus and give witness to His Kingdom in whatever way we can.

This does not mean letting a political party co-opt faith in Jesus and vandalize it with unbiblical ideals that are not Christ-honoring. This has happened during the last several elections by the Republican party, but progressives are not exempt from doing the same. When we vote to glorify Jesus and to give witness to His Kingdom, it will not be possible to vote straight through as a single-party voter.

That means we must educate ourselves on the people and the policies on the ballot, in both local and national elections. We must vote with biblical wisdom and knowledge in order to understand what is at stake and understand how the policies and candidates will impact our neighbors.

What glorifies Jesus when it comes to voting? This is the right question to be asking, and it is possible that different Christ-followers will come up with different answers. This is where we need healthy debate, and the Church should be able to tackle this kind of conversation. God teaches us how to love one another, consider one another before

ourselves and listen to one another in love and truth.

One thing we can say with certainty is that Jesus is for LIFE, in all of its forms.

What will give life? Jesus cares about unborn children, but He also cares about their mothers and the situation that created a crisis pregnancy. It means Jesus cares about our neighbors—all races, genders and those who are undocumented among us. Jesus cares for Black lives without a doubt, and Jesus loves people who work as police officers. He loves both women and men, and He wants all people to flourish.

In Jesus' Kingdom we reject the world's binary choices of support this/hate that and this side is good/this side is evil. We reject a binary lens because we understand that we can love and pray for people on both sides of very complex issues. It means we can be friends and neighbors with all people. It means we will speak up for truth and do that with grace. It means we will seek to understand the complexities of living in the world and refuse to be bound to picking sides. It means we are free from the bondage of hate and the need to wage war against those we disagree with. We are free to love ALL people! Even those we deem unlovable, by God's grace, we will love.

Jesus is for life from the womb to the tomb, and everywhere in between, ***which means we should vote for freedom for every person.***

Human rights are in fact something God endowed us with. The reality is we bear His image. This gives us intrinsic value, regardless of how broken that image might be. Every person deserves those basic rights—from people who have disabilities, to LGBTQ

people, to every race, to every gender. Hatred, racism and the like have no place in glorifying Jesus despite that ranting and raving of some extremists.

Human rights are different from a covenantal relationship with God. As those who have been re-born by faith in Jesus Christ, were made alive by the Spirit of God and are now in an inseparable relationship with the Father, we are called to a different standard in our relationships with God and each other. The Apostle Paul explains the higher calling we have in Christ and warns against imposing our way of life on the unbelieving world around us.

The way of life Jesus called us to is one of laying down our rights in order to love and sacrificially serve one another. We are not called to place the demands of holy living for God's people on the world at large. We don't deny human rights to people whose morality we disagree with. We know that it is only by the grace of God that we are brought into a covenantal relationship with Jesus.

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.

1 Cor 5:9-10

And again:

What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."

1 Cor 5:12-13

The fruit of a covenantal relationship with Jesus is a life that looks like Jesus. This can only happen through the Spirit of God, so trying to legislate morality is a nonstarter. We should

know the difference between basic human rights and the covenantal relationship we have with Jesus. We are free to pray and give witness of the Gospel and new life in Christ while empathizing and fighting for the human rights of all people.

We vote as those who are ***praying for and seeking to love our enemies***. We are the people of peacemaking, not of violence. We glorify Jesus and give witness to His Kingdom when we vote ***for the sake of others***. Here is where the Kingdom of God differs from our national rights. It is important that each of us is empowered to vote for things that secure us, things we believe in and our rights under the constitution, but in the Kingdom of God ***we also consider the welfare of others***. The others might live next door to us or they might live across the border. It matters to Jesus that His people vote in such a way that others will flourish. We do this to give witness to the Gospel and the Kingdom of God.

But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

1 Cor 9:12

And again:

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.

1 Cor 9:19

Government is a God-ordained institution created to help humanity flourish. It is broken through sin, so there is always over-reach, oppression and abuse of power. But we the people of Jesus must continue to exercise our votes to give witness to the King and for the sake of other people.

Some may deeply believe the best way to help our neighbors is by empowering them

economically through things like job creation and tax incentives. Others may believe the best way to love the other is by providing them with universal healthcare. These are not simple issues, but they are important issues we need to engage with. We must ask ourselves: does our political position work for all or most people or only a privileged few? Jesus' commands for sacrificial love will not allow us to escape this question.

We glorify Jesus and give witness to His Kingdom when we prayerfully engage politically and are willing to engage in *actual* dialogue, not simply Facebook rants and monologues. Jesus does not recommend social media as a news source either. I am pretty sure about that.

We glorify Jesus when we continue to hold His Kingdom and His reign as ultimate—when we understand that neither America nor any other nation will vote the Kingdom of God into being. We must temper our hopes and expectations while giving voice to those who have no voice.

We glorify Jesus and give witness to His Kingdom when we have enough self-awareness to realize that the way we voted in the past may need to change, enough humility to change it and enough grace to work with others across political lines to display the love of Christ to the world.

In the end, we hope for a better America after every election. However, let us not fall for the lie that our ultimate security, hope or freedom will come from an election or ballot measure. Change will come. Progress, I pray, will come. More people will flourish, but our ultimate security, hope and freedom will come only by and through Jesus for His Glory and our joy. Let's not misplace our hope. We vote as people with a passport to America, but who are ultimately citizens of an eternal Kingdom. Jesus' Kingdom will bring a final freedom without end. So, we vote with a longing to see

the world get a little bit better, but we also vote knowing the One who will bring our final and forever freedom.

Reflection

Reflect on the verses shared from 1 Corinthians (reading through the *entire* letter over the week only takes about 45 minutes). As a follower of Jesus Christ, what invitations do you hear as you listen to Paul's letter to "*those sanctified in Jesus Christ, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*"?

Division within the family of God is rampant and incredibly hurtful these days. Remembering the invitation in 1 Corinthians 13: "*If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.*" What part might you be able to play in bringing reconciliation this week?

Whether it's repentance for yourself, brave conversations with those you love or a little bit of both, invite others to pray fervently with you, as Jesus prayed for us the night He was betrayed:

I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me through their message. I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. And may they be in us so that the world will believe you sent me.

John 17:20-21

Our LOVING UNITY is an important part of sharing Jesus with the world—and the only way to achieve this unity is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Receive this blessing as you bravely step into
broken and hurting places in the coming
weeks:

For Love in a Time of Conflict by John
O'Donohue

When the gentleness between you hardens
And you fall out of your belonging with each
other,
May the depths you have reached hold you
still.

When no true word can be said, or heard,
And you mirror each other in the script of hurt,
When even the silence has become raw and
torn,
May you hear again an echo of your first
music.

When the weave of affection starts to unravel
And anger begins to sear the ground between
you,
Before this weather of grief invites
The black seed of bitterness to find root,
May your souls come to kiss.

Now is the time for one of you to be gracious,
To allow a kindness beyond thought and hurt,
Reach out with sure hands
To take the chalice of your love,
And carry it carefully through this echoless
waste
Until this winter pilgrimage leads you
Toward the gateway to spring.