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How should a Christian View Politics?

Ephesians 2:19: “. . .you are no longer strangers and foreigners but fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household.”

Special Guest: Len Griehs

Life in these United States is dominated by a number of things. Money dominates us. If we have it, things are great; if we don't, we suffer. Our jobs dominate us. We spend one-third or more of our day working, and for many, that time is spent in a job we don't even like. Leisure dominates us. We are consumed by entertainment. Status dominates us. We must look good in the eyes of others. Recently, it seems more than ever before, politics dominates us. The parties, the process and the policies are always headline news and seem of late to be shaping our futures at an alarming speed. So, what are we to make of all this? How should a Christian be involved - or - should a Christian be involved in any of this? Stay with us as we delve into a subject that we normally avoid - Politics and the Christian - is it a match?



Questions for Consideration:

1. What was Jesus' example of involvement with the “political” system of his time?
2. What principles are we to be driven by to define *our* stand regarding the politics of our time?

1. What was Jesus' example of involvement with the “political” system of his time?

Luke 23:1-2 Luke 20:20-26: Jesus is faced with a difficult situation and gives us some real guidelines. Rather than go into a long tirade about taxes, he shifts the focus back to what is really important. But he is in a dilemma. If he said “yes” to burdensome taxes, he would lose the support of the people. If he said “no,” he would be charged with sedition. An example of this happening is in the book of Acts.

Paul's teacher, Gamaliel defended the Apostles during a prior tax revolt: Acts 5:36-37:

- Josephus the historian comments on same event
- Judah of Gamala had instigated an uprising in Galilee
- The cause was a census for taxation initiated by Quirinius, governor of Syria (probably the same one mentioned in Luke 2:2 that brought Joseph and Mary)
- Josephus Wars of the Jews, 2:118: “Judah incited his countrymen to revolt, upbraiding them as cowards for consenting to pay tribute to the Romans and tolerating mortal masters, after having God for their Lord.”

Jesus is seemingly in a “no win” situation, but he chooses to answer their question. His very simple answer is to give back to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's. He understood they were trying to trap him. If you are citizens of the country, give the country what it is due. This sets up the principle we will discuss later of how to be “in the world” but not “of the world.”

2. What principles are we to be driven by to define our stand regarding the politics of *our* time?

Deuteronomy 2:3: This was given after the Exodus generation. Now it was a group of people ready to go forward in the new land. It shaped their vision differently - their vision for the future was one of doing God's work. This is similar to today...our call is to exercise our character to stand apart from what is going on around us.



Allegiance to God doesn't mean that you don't respect the government.

Jesus focused on the individual and waited for God in God's due time. He acted when the time was right, but within his mission God gave him to do. Jesus was not deterred by the politics of the day. That's the challenge for us - sometimes patience is very difficult. Psalms 37:7: "Rest in the lord and wait patiently for him."



What is the purpose of government?

- Protect the good;
- Servants to humanity;
- Mediators of the structure of society - organization instead of chaos;
- Administer justice, making sure individual liberty is preserved;
- Deter evil by punishment.

What if you had no regulations as regards building a structure? If it falls down, so what if it kills fifty people? We want government to mediate such a thing. Fire departments, water departments, education, department of public health - what a difference between now and 1,000 A.D., when the people were dependent upon a church or local bishop to do these things. You were at the mercy of an individual such as a King.



Instead of berating our leaders, we should give them the benefit that they are well-intentioned and trying to do the best job they can. Basically, we are well cared for.

What is the responsibility of the citizens? 1 Peter 2:13-17: This scripture helps us to deal with what our position should be.

- Mandatory: Obey laws Pay taxes Jury duty Serve as a true witness Register for the draft as required
- Voluntary: Vote



Matthew 17:24-27: "Temple tax" was likely a local tax rather than a tax by the government. Jesus acknowledged that the tax should be paid. This takes us back again to people calling for tax revolts today - for us we should perform due diligence to make sure we are paying what is due. Jesus tells us that a tax revolution is not the way he is asking his followers to go. He is saying to give what is due and move on to more important things. This is part of your citizen responsibility, "*lest we offend them.*" We have a long-term vision and these are temporary things we have to deal with, and they change with the winds of time. Jesus wasn't deterred from his broader vision.

Voting:

Voting brings a measure of responsibility for the upholding of our affiliated party and a partial responsibility for its right or wrong use of power;

Local elections: expression of one's preferences that the best people might be chosen to supervise the school work, for example;

National focus vs. local focus.

Proverbs 29:2: Overall, we know God is in charge and supervising all the affairs of our day to bring about His will and His plan. The political ebb and flow and tension we see around us shows us that this is a very difficult time. Regardless, we shouldn't worry because in the long run, God has a plan.

Should we vote for President of the United States? By faith we believe that God supervises of all the affairs of today. Therefore if we voted for a candidate at the last Presidential election, and if the one we thought the most suitable for election was not elected, we are not to believe it was a matter of chance.

No thoughtless consent for the government.

The Scriptures don't teach that it is our job to tirade against the world. We are to obey except when our conscience is violated, and should be experiencing some discomfort for righteousness' sake.

- Submission, not compromise
- This doesn't remove the possibility that Christian principles may cause conflict with the state. Christians (especially in other countries) have been thrown in jail for their convictions.

Matthew 10:16-18 **Rendering to God:** Psalms 116:12-14

**Revolutionary movement is not God's way of dealing with injustice.
Our job is to remain a transforming influence for good.**

Our lives should be a positive influence for good: Matthew 5:13-15: Salt is valued for its preservative nature, and Jesus' influence had a preserving influence on society. After Jesus, the persistence of Christianity has had a positive influence in the world through the efforts of focused individuals. For example, freedom of worship, hospitals, and other things to alleviate human suffering were because of Christian influences.

We could become involved full time in trying to eradicate unjust laws. But we do need to focus on helping with the integrity and dignity of individuals. A revolutionary movement isn't God's way of dealing with injustice.

Peter 2:11-13: We are waiting patiently for the Lord's promised Kingdom as the only hope for ultimate deliverance to correct all injustice. We are to believe that all things are working according to the counsel of God's will--not that God touches every thought or act of every individual. God is able to regulate the winds of strife or contention that the results will come about not contrary to the Divine arrangement. We still have to remain a transforming influence for good.



Psalms 76:10: God is overruling events to make sure that nothing deters His purpose. As upset as we might be about circumstances, we know that God is in control.

Our focus should be on individuals and not all of humanity.

Jesus was always concerned about individuals. In time with persecutions coming from within Christianity, *believers* became less important than the *belief*. Leviticus 19:18: "*love your neighbor*" is followed immediately by declaration "*I am the Lord your God.*" Genesis 1:27: Man was created in the image of God.

The Torah is summarized in Matthew 22:37-39: Here Jesus is saying that the most important thing is to love your neighbor, and that is an individual thing. We can love humanity, but God is asking us to work on an individual level. There are global problems we have not solved. No matter how hard we try, we will not be able to resolve all of the world's problems, but we can on an individual basis - just like Jesus did - help individuals we come across.

Luke 6:6-11: Jesus focused on concern for individuals. Like Judaism, Christianity became obsessed with intellectualism. Jesus taught that the value of an individual human life supersedes the heartless application of law.

Matthew 7:3-5: "Principle" becomes more important than rescuing ox on the Sabbath. We need to reflect the principles of God in the world today by helping individuals with a tender heart. We don't want to get caught up in our own life and forget to reach out to our neighbors. Matthew 5:14-16

We should have a genuine concern for the welfare of others. 1 Thessalonians 3:12: We want to be an example as we can, applied from our hearts.

"Ambassadors for Christ" 2 Corinthians 5:20: An ambassador represents their home country, and for us, that is heaven.

Guidelines for Ambassadors:

- Personal integrity: We need to maintain honesty and set the standard for others, especially during conflict;
- Alertness to problems and dignity of individuals: Do we have the willingness to try to improve the situation, not becoming irrational, having a sense of action;
- Objectivity: Can we take an unbiased view to see things from God's standpoint? Jesus took an unprejudiced view of people.
- Independence: Can we stand apart from the issues of the day and not be unduly influenced by the politics of our day;
- Development of others: On an individual basis, can we correct injustices wherever possible, not ignoring what is going on around us; helping others overcome their weaknesses
- Interest in major problems of day: We are the first generation capable of eradicating the entire earth and its inhabitants.

Ephesians 2:19-22: We are citizens in a foreign country, yet we are influenced by the conditions in the world. We have a great deal of sympathy for mankind. Those working in a political atmosphere have a herculean task and we probably would not do any better. We know that God will light the world in His own time and His own manner.

*So how should a Christian view politics?
For Jonathan and Rick (and Vicki and Len!) and Christian Questions...
Think about it...!*