



Before DURING & After an Election:

How the Christian Should Think and Act

by Pastor Scott Boerckel

How easy it is for us to worry over elections! Every election, the pundits tell us, "This is the most important election in our lifetime."

This raising of the stakes, by all sides of the political spectrum, can create an anxiety that is difficult to overcome. Besides, anyone who loves their country feels a deep connection to the election process, their own participation in that process, and a vital interest in the outcome. How should the Christian think and act before, during, and after an election? Answering this question biblically and with some wisdom from some ancient Christians can remove a lot of our anxiety and replace it with the calm assurance that, as citizens of heaven, we can entrust the entire process to our kind God, Who does all things well. Not everything that I write here should be regarded as absolute or moral commands (though some things are). However, I think that there is some wisdom in the counsel that I am sharing here.

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This OakLeaf focuses on the upcoming election.

What is the role of the Christian in the political process? How does God want His people to act in this election season? In this issue of the OakLeaf, our pastors and elders share their perspectives on a variety of topics related to politics and the Christian. May this edition of the OakLeaf encourage you with spiritual guidance and practical help as we approach the November elections.





BEFORE AN ELECTION

What should the believer do before an election? First, the believer should be much in prayer. In fact, we should pray more than anything else. Pray more than watching your favorite pundit's podcast or program. Pray more than posting your views on social media. Pray more than talking with your like-minded friends and relatives. Pray more than arguing with your unlike-minded friends and relatives. Christian, are you praying? Do you join with others in prayer? May I suggest that you come to our Wednesday evening prayer meetings?

Second, the believer should urge the like-minded to vote. It is always a bit of a source of amazement to me that there are many people who do not vote. One key action that a believer can take is to encourage others to vote.

Third, the believer should not worry or get filled with rage. "Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice." (Ephesians 4:31) But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. (Colossians 3:8) In an election, all sorts of attempts at manipulation will come to us. Political parties that we favor will manipulate us by incendiary words to get us to give them money. Political parties that we oppose will manipulate us by incendiary words intended to discourage us about the whole process.

Fourth, don't waste time trying to convince the unconvinced. "Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the good sense of your words." (Proverbs 23:9) By now, 80-85% of the voting public has already made up their minds about how they will vote. Rather than argue with people on the other side, either in person or on social media, the believer's most effective effort will be made with that small percentage of folks who are ambivalent or undecided in the election. Talking to people who are already decided is simply unprofitable. If one is talking with people who agree, you simply are increasing the anxiety of both of you. If one is talking with people who disagree, you simply are increasing tension and bitterness. It seems prudent, if one is actually wanting to make an electoral difference, to focus on the undecided both to convince and to get them to vote. This is why efforts at electioneering in our church, it seems to me,

are not productive. Our fellowship would have an even higher percentage of already decided than the population at large. Speaking about the election issues and candidates, even on a practical basis, would largely be a waste of time and even unintentionally produce anxiety which we know our God does not want in the believer. (Note: there are other, even more important, reasons for the church not to focus on electioneering and on candidates, but this is a practical consideration that I think should be considered.)

DURING AN ELECTION

What should the believer do during an election? This is a harder question now than it has been in the past. Today, elections (wrongly, in my opinion) are scattered over weeks of time with a focus on the ballot harvesting of early voting, absentee voting, etc. What used to be a day of citizenship, reflection, and even thanksgiving has turned into a weeks long harangue of information inundation. Just try to wait until election day to vote and see how many texts you receive urging you to vote early. If you have ever voted in a primary, your phone number will be accessed by thousands of robotexting and robo-calling operations. This diminishes the election process; it enables greater varieties of election fraud; it generates doubt as to the fairness of electoral outcomes; it makes tabulating the vote a much more delayed process. Both major parties will spend millions of dollars to parlay this mess into electoral victory.

First, the believer should pray. Pray that the election will be free and fair. Pray that everyone who is legally eligible to vote will be able to do so and that anyone who is not eligible to vote will not be able to do so. Pray that God's will might be done, on earth as it is in heaven (Matthew 6:10).

Second, if you have the ability, volunteering to serve as an election judge or a poll watcher is a great way to show real patriotism toward our democracy and the liberties that we enjoy in determining our leaders. As an election judge, one's perspective must be more neutral, while as a poll watcher, one can be engaged in a more partisan endeavor. There are always opportunities to join "get out the vote" activities that both major parties employ. This too can be a way to be involved in the democratic process.

Third, be sure to vote. Voting is a most sacred trust, given to us by God in our nation at the cost of much blood,

sweat, and tears. To fail to vote is to fail one's nation. To fail to vote is to absent oneself from a patriotic duty. To fail to vote means that you will have no true way to say that you have done all that you can for your country. Often, there is hardship in voting. There may be no major candidate whom you feel that you can vote for. You may live in a state where your position is so much in the minority or majority that it feels meaningless to cast a ballot. Still, be sure to vote. It may be that you will need to write in someone for a particular office or vote for the candidate of a minor party. Yet, even here, you are making your voice heard. Your voice may be small but use it! Voting is the primary way we Americans make our voices heard.

Finally, do not be anxious (Philippians 4:6-7). There is not much point in worrying over every detail of election returns on election night. Anxiety, anger, blaming, and making unsubstantiated claims are not the Christian way. We must remember that although we are citizens of this nation, we have a higher citizenship, which means that all anxiety is wasted energy. Augustine, in his magnum opus, "The City of God," reminds us, "... the one true God rules and governs according to His will. And, though His reasons may be hidden, they have never been unjust." (City of God, Book V, Chap. 21) If you see that your desired result occurs, do not think that at last all will be well. If you see that your desired result does not happen, all is not lost. God has His reasons, and those reasons have never been unjust, even if at the moment we do not understand them.

AFTER AN ELECTION


After an election, we should pray for those who have won, that God will grant them wisdom to lead and serve our nation well. We should pray for those who lost, that God may reveal Himself to them in this defeat and perhaps even save some by His grace. We should pray for our nation and our community, as it appears that no matter the outcome of this election, it will be close enough in many races for lots of accusations of cheating, for bitter rancor at the "other side," and for people to attempt unscrupulous means to manipulate the results, even after all the voting has occurred. It is precisely to avoid this rancor and to preserve trust in our electoral process, that Richard Nixon declined having a recount of the state of Illinois, despite some clear evidence of electoral tampering. (For an interesting narrative of what happened in that election, see:

<https://www.southcoasttoday.com/story/news/nation-world/2000/11/12/nixon-refused-60-recount-saying/50466946007/>)

Second, do not be embittered by any defeats. There was once a time when I was heavily invested in election outcomes and found the bitterness of loss almost too great to bear. A dear friend of mine, who happened to be on the other side of many political positions that I had, asked to meet with me weekly to pray for our nation. Those prayer times were so precious and helped to eliminate the bitterness from my heart.

Third, do not be boastful or prideful in victory. Events have a way of changing completely the trajectory of politics. What a politician runs on is hardly ever his or her legacy because the events change the course. So, to be overly proud of victory can set you up for extreme disappointment.

Finally, do not look for hope in the present city. Look for hope in the city of God. That is the theme of Augustine's book. That is the word from the Bible: "*Therefore let us go to him outside the camp and bear the reproach he endured.*" ¹⁴ **For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.** ¹⁵ *Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.* ¹⁶ *Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.*" Hebrews 13:13-16

If you are worried that this election will prove to be the demise or recovery of our nation, you would do well to take the perspective of John Calvin, who bids us to recognize that if hardship is pressed upon us, it is in the design of God for us: "Doubtless our condition in this world will include many hardships, but God's will is that Christ's kingdom should be encompassed with many enemies, his design being to keep us in a state of constant warfare. Therefore, it becomes us to exercise patience and meekness and, assured of God's aid, boldly to consider the rage of the whole world as nothing." John Calvin, *365 Days with Calvin: A Unique Collection of 365 Readings from the Writings of John Calvin*, ed. Joel Beeke (Grand Rapids, MI: Reformation Heritage, 2008), March 19 entry. 



5 Biblical Voting Guidelines in a Fallen World

by Pastor Justin Waples

America is a democracy. However, a democracy is not the perfect form of government.

Yes, it is much better than a dictatorship or a radical religious government, but it is not perfect. So, what is the Christian's obligation in the political process of a democracy?

First and foremost, we are first citizens of heaven. Philippians 3:20 says, "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." Secondly, we are citizens of earth. Consider Paul invoking his rights as a Roman citizen in Acts 22:25–29. Our Biblical mandate is for us to pray for our leaders (Jeremiah 29:7; 1 Timothy 2:1–4) and to obey our leaders (Rom 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

"It is inconceivable that God would ordain government and then ask His people to stay out of it."

For the believer, voting is an act of faith. It is a statement of who he or she is in Jesus Christ, an expression of what we believe and trust in. Voting is not about party affiliation or family history; instead, it is about principles and beliefs.

God cares about politics. Adrian Rogers has said, "It is inconceivable that God would ordain government and then ask His people to stay out of it."

However, we live in a fallen world. Sin has tainted everything. We never make choices between the perfect and the imperfect. Every choice we make, be it a house, car, spouse, or pastor, is a choice among the imperfect. Furthermore, a president or any other civil office is the election of human government, not spiritual leadership. Christians can vote for candidates who are not Christians, for the issue is not the leadership in the local church but civil leadership. Consider the following:

Five Biblical Voting Guidelines in a Fallen World:

1. **Examine the party platforms and compare the candidate's views.**
2. **Be kind in your dialogue with people who have opposing views.**
3. **Don't use name-calling.**
4. **Don't despise our heritage.**
5. **Pray for revival.**

The final and most important thing we can do this election season is to pray for revival.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."



Pastor Justin Waples is East White Oak's Outreach and Discipleship pastor. He is married to Abigail and they are blessed with five children. Justin is passionate about equipping the saints for ministry and helping each member reach out to their neighbors and community.



Praying for our Leaders

by Pastor Traig Whittaker

Paul urges believers to pray “for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.” (1 Timothy 2:2)

Here’s a little context for Paul’s letter to Timothy. Paul gave this encouragement while Nero reigned in Rome. He was known for violent persecution of Christians. Trying to find a Christian in a “high position” would have been nearly impossible. I’m not sure that there were any in the first century. Even so, Paul was telling them to pray for these pagan leaders.

Let’s pray for the leaders that we suffer under and those with which we do not agree and those whose lifestyle is an abomination. What should we pray? Paul is kind enough to answer that question for us. At least one goal of our prayer ought to be that we be governed in such a way as to promote the peaceful, quiet, godly, and dignified living of Christians.

At least one goal of our prayer ought to be that we be governed in such a way as to promote the peaceful, quiet, godly, and dignified living of Christians.

Peaceful and quiet—the absence of assault or attack from an outside source. Godly and dignified—able to live according to God’s rule and command including worship. We are gonna pray that they would leave us alone.

Whatever the outcome of the November election **let’s commit ourselves to praying for those chosen to govern us.**

There is also a second goal for our praying. We should pray that those in “high positions” might be saved. Paul says pray for “all people to be saved” (v. 4). If this prayer is effective, it will certainly go a long way toward securing what we pray for in our first prayer goal. This prayer is also likely to soften our hearts for leaders who lead out of their lostness. Instead of getting mad and railing against them we must pity them. It’s much harder to hate someone when you are praying for them.

Whatever the outcome of the November election let’s commit ourselves to praying for those chosen to govern us.



Pastor Traig Whittaker has served at East White Oak since 2000. His ministry responsibilities include oversight of the church’s Christian Education programs and administrative duties. Traig is married to Laura and they have four adult children.



Becoming a Good Citizen Christian

by Jeff Fritzen

In today's environment of divisive politics, with social chaos as special interests seem to bully their way to acceptance through canceling or shaming, withdrawing from the madness may seem like the safest route to pursue.

After all, political solutions aren't permanent. They are subject to an electoral process designed to present regular opportunities for change. The tactics employed by those pressing hard for shifts in our culture often feel heavy handed and unseemly, things we would never engage in ourselves. Best to stay out of the fray, right?

Except, that is not possible. Oh, not everyone is cut out for public office, nor should we all take to the streets for a cause. But to disengage from the process isn't protection, it's surrender.

It's clear in scripture that government is part of God's plan. In Romans, Titus, and 1 Peter, we are informed there is no authority except from God and we are instructed to get along with those who guide our civic institutions. Our conundrum comes when we know government is not fulfilling God's desires. It's at these times we must be a good citizen Christian.

Much the same is true in the current affairs that dominate our news and media – social, television, online personalities and such. Shouting the loudest is meant to both advocate a position and silence dissent. It's at these times we must be a good citizen Christian.

Just what may that look like for you? There's no one size fits all, but here are a couple of things most any of you could consider.

There are countless opportunities to participate: from running for school board, library board, or township

trustee, to serving in a voluntary capacity with a service club or in a child's classroom or school. People fill these positions. Those people inform and influence others with their opinions and point of view. They may not change the world situation, but their participation helps shape policy or guide process. Why not make sure a Christian worldview is represented? The right person to take the initiative may very well be you.

While coffee shop chatter still exists, it has expanded beyond anything one could imagine in the online blogosphere. Unfortunately, much of the banter is ill-informed and much of it never reaches an authoritative ear. Have you taken the time to learn about issues affecting your life? Have you developed an informed position, considering both your beliefs and those in opposition to yours? Why not take those thoughts and ideas and look for ways to express them? We've all read cringe-worthy letters to the editor or social media posts or heard someone give a less than erudite appeal at a public meeting. Be the person who delivers a Christian perspective in a winsome, thoughtful manner. There are innumerable public forums, meetings of local governmental bodies and commissions where input is invited. How will they hear a Christian witness if no one speaks?

Prayer is assumed in all of this. If we're concerned about what we see around us, we should be praying. But remember, knowing trouble lurked, Nehemiah's people famously prayed, then posted a guard. Pray, then participate, and represent to be that good citizen Christian we desperately need.



Jeff and his wife Judy were married at East White Oak in 1978. Jeff works as Executive Vice-President of BOPI, and served as a Normal Town Councilman for 32 years. Here at East White Oak, Jeff has been an elder, ABF leader, pastoral search team member, and mission trip leader.



A Prayer FOR ELECTION DAY

Jessica Smith Culber & Douglas McKelvey

If we are pleased with the results of today's election, let us yet in humility remember that every earthly authority must one day give way to your eternal rule—
so let us in grace love all our neighbors well.

Or, if we are disappointed, let us resist all fear, anger, accusation, and bitterness, but instead renew our trust in you—
and let us in grace love all our neighbors well.

Whatever the outcome of this election, let our citizenship and our hope be rooted first in your heavenly kingdom, that we might live in exile here as winsome ambassadors of our soon-returning King—
always in grace loving all our neighbors well.

From Every Moment Holy, Volume 3.

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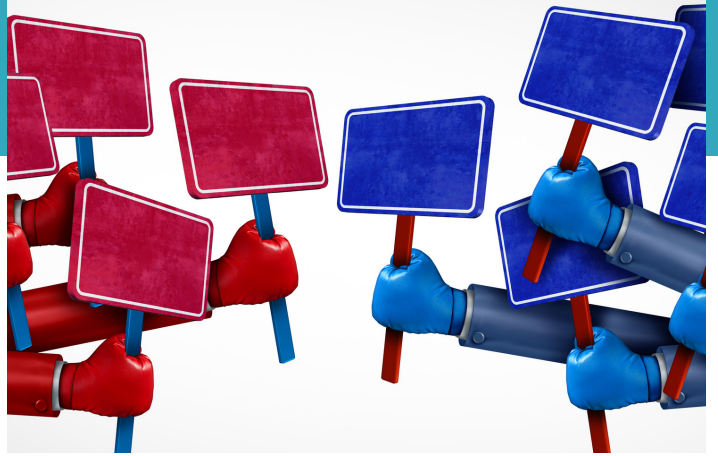
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A Christian Response to America's Political Divide

by Todd Haynes

By now most of us here in central Illinois are ready for the November 2024 election to be over, or at least for an end to all of the negative campaign ads and requests for donations.

I understand and agree with those sentiments. So what are we, as followers of Christ, to do in light of the deepening political (and I would say moral) divide and polarization in our country?

Some Christians choose to abstain from politics based on scripture that tells us “our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20), which is absolutely true as well as comforting. Others may be discouraged from voting by the dominance of one major political party in Illinois, which does not align with our traditional Christian beliefs on most of the important moral issues (e.g., sanctity of life from conception to natural death; marriage; sexuality/gender, etc.), and conclude that their vote is meaningless (at least in national and statewide races). On the other end of the spectrum are those who think the USA was founded as a Christian nation (i.e., a theocracy), which is not true, and are trying to use politics to achieve the same (e.g., the misguided Christian nationalist movement).

While I do believe that my ultimate, eternal citizenship is in heaven, I also recognize that for as long as I live in this perishable mortal body, I am also concurrently a citizen of the USA and resident of McLean County and the State of Illinois. As such, in addition to trying to fulfill our greatest calling on earth (i.e., the Great Commission), I think it is important that we try to make our world, country, state and local community a better

place, and one means of doing so is by exercising our civic right, privilege and responsibility to vote.

So, how then should we determine for whom we will vote? First of all we need to pray that God will raise up godly candidates and for His wisdom, discernment and guidance before we enter the voting booth and in examining the candidates to see how they stood and now stand on issues important to us. We all know there are no perfect candidates (“all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” Romans 6:23), and assuming neither major party candidate is at least of noble and good character, which has been well demonstrated in the last three Presidential elections, one should then assess through the lens of scripture the respective party platforms, programs and agendas. Again, no political party is perfect, but it is abundantly clear which party more closely aligns with traditional, foundational Christian beliefs and values.

Therefore, as we enter into the final months of the 2024 campaign season, let me encourage you not to fear (2 Timothy 1:7) or to grow weary in doing well (Galatians 6:9; Romans 2:7); rather engage in the process prayerfully and vote as the Lord leads you.

**The opinions expressed herein are the personal opinions of the author and, therefore, are not to be considered as an official policy or position statement of East White Oak Bible Church or the Elders.*



Todd and his wife, Laurie, have been married 39 years and have been attending/members since 1997. They have two married children, an incredible grandson, and another grandchild on the way! Todd is retired from State Farm Bank and serves on the elder board.



The Only True Rescue for America

by Matt Hughes

One of the most powerful economic minds of our generation is Thomas Sowell, who's now in his 90's and still writing with eloquence and enthusiasm. Sowell said *"It takes considerable knowledge just to realize the extent of your own ignorance."*

Even as believers in Christ, we tend to fall back on our own ignorance when we expect or rely on human political leaders or institutions of government to offer any real hope for mankind.

While some of us might rightly argue the size of government is morbidly obese, we deceive ourselves if we believe that smaller, less intrusive government offers the means to heal what's profoundly wrong with humankind. We must recognize the transforming power of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only true rescue option for America and the world.

We should be deeply thankful we live in a federal constitutional republic, immensely grateful for the blood that was spilled to found it and still being spilled to preserve it, and thoroughly appreciative that we don't live under tyranny of Rome like the apostle Paul, or worse, anarchy. The government is "God's servant for your good" (Romans 13:4). But Christ's earthly kingdom will not be established by legislation, and efforts to spiritually impact society via political means is a road littered with failed "Christian" politicians.

This is not to say that we, as voters, should not strive to promote and advocate for laws protecting the life of the unborn, laws restraining evil and punishing evil-doers, and other laws which strive to promote Biblical

morality in civil society. But most laws are not so black and white and we usually have to accept bills of diminished capacity and effectiveness to get them passed.

And when we vote for a candidate, we are almost never in 100% agreement of all that candidate's policy positions. Is there a moral culpability we bear and implicitly condone when we vote for someone whose positions or lifestyle don't all align with the word of God? Or is it just a matter of selecting a candidate whose positions align with the majority of our own core beliefs, recognizing that no candidate is perfect? Or perhaps your goal when voting is to select the candidate who will do the least irreversible damage to the country's founding ideals.

Regardless of our approach to voting, in every election and political battle we must remember that the Gospel, not law, is what changes sinful hearts. Our citizenship is not of this world (Philippians 3:20-21) and that should free us from being consumed by the outcome of an election or being personally consumed by a particular legislative initiative. So, get out there and vote. But when it comes to the Great Commission and politics, remember which one offers the prescription Christ said the world really needs.



Matt has been attending East White Oak since 1991 when he transferred to ISU. He met his wonderful wife, Amy, at the church and they were married in 1996. They have three children—Jacob, Levi, & Maggie. He has served in a number of roles during his time at East White Oak and has a heart to assist international ministry partners in accomplishing the mission of Christ.



Our Response to Political Turmoil

by Dirk May

Our culture is full of noise and fury over a variety of social and political issues. It causes a range of responses to well up in our hearts. This may include anger, dismay, panic, fear, and anxiety.

The question is how do we rise above these emotions and live as Christ would have us live?

God is gracious in giving us His Word to guide us. As Paul told the Athenians, God places us in certain times and locations. Therefore it is not an accident we are believers in this culture. Philippians 4:6 commands us to be anxious for nothing, but in everything to pray. It shows love and respect to pray for others. Some possible prayers may include that our political leaders will find the Pearl of Great Price; our God specializes in changing hearts. Pray for the restraint of wickedness; God's hand is never too short. Pray for the favor of

believers before earthly leaders and the lost so that the grace of Christ might prosper, and more may be saved.

God's Word also provides examples of godly conduct to follow. Daniel served in high places in a pagan government. He was faithful, honorable and spoke truth in the face of death. Pray that our witness will be likewise fruitful and point to the beauty of Christ.

Be of good cheer, children of God. Our hope is not in princes, but in our Lord who reigns forever and controls His creation for His good purposes.



Dirk May serves as an elder and Small Group leader. He enjoys spending his free time laughing with his wife, Sue, and playing with their grandchildren.

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WORSHIP SERVICE 10:30 AM



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LUNCH 12:00 PM

Boxed lunches from Jason's Deli
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Sandwich, chips, pickle, cookie, and water. Vegetarian & Gluten Free lunches are available by request.

FREE ACTIVITIES 12:30 - 3:00 PM

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- Face Painting
- Kona Ice Snow Cones
- Inflatables
- Boating
- Hayrack Rides
- Nine Square in the Air
- Volleyball
- Free Tent Camping on Saturday Night!



CONCERT 1:30 PM

Andrew Osenga
 Under the Main Tent



Andrew is a veteran of the Nashville music industry where he works as a musician, producer, and songwriter. Originally from Normal, IL, Andrew grew up attending East White Oak with his family.

Comlara Park is located minutes from the church to the north. A map and GPS link are available on our website. Handicapped parking is available, with golf cart shuttle service to and from the picnic location.

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