

Christians & Civic Duty

Resources

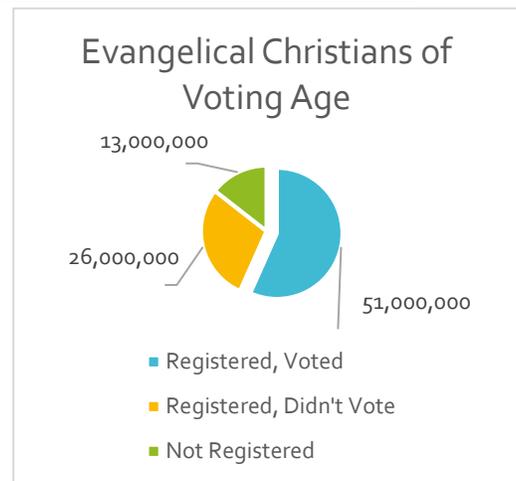
- Moore, Russell. **Onward: Engaging the culture without losing the gospel.** Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2015.
- Mammen, Neil. **Jesus is involved in politics!: Why aren't you? Why isn't your church?** San Jose, CA: Rational Free Press, 2012.

Should Christian be involved in politics?

Estimates put the number of "self-identified evangelicals" at roughly 90 million in America but only half of them are actually registered to vote. Of those that are registered to vote, only half of them show up on Election Day.

Evangelical Christian voter participation in 2012.¹

- There were 90 million born-again Christians of voting age. About 77 million of them were registered to vote. And 51 million of them voted in that election.
- That means there were **39 million** eligible Christian voters who did not vote or were not registered to vote in 2012. The 39 million break down this way: 13 million were not registered and 26 million were registered but did not go to the polls.



Definitions

- **Civics:** the study of the rights and duties of citizenship²
 - **Right:** a moral or legal power over something³ (entitlement*)
 - **Duty:** a moral or legal obligation⁴ (responsibility)
 - A person's **right** correspond to a **duty** imposed on another
 - Every duty or obligation supposes that someone who has power to bind the consciences of men has imposed the obligation... Therefore, the true rights and duties of man come from God; and they cannot be correctly understood if considered apart from their dependence upon God³
- **Politics:** activities that relate to influencing the actions and policies or a government or getting and keeping power in a government⁵

¹ <http://www.afa.net/the-stand/election/2016/02/election-2016-the-christian-vote/>

² <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/civics>

³ <https://www3.nd.edu/~maritain/jmc/etext/mpo4.htm>

⁴ <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/duties>

⁵ <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politics>

What does the Bible say about our citizenship as Christians?

- We are citizens of **Heaven**, and not of this world
 - **Philippians 3:20** – *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ*
 - **Ephesians 2:19** – *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God*
- We know that our time here is **temporary**, and Heaven is eternal
 - **Hebrews 13:14** – *For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come*
 - **1 Peter 1:4** – *to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you*
- Although temporary, our time here is not without a **purpose**
 - **Matthew 6:33** – *But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*
 - Kingdom first does not mean kingdom only. Since the kingdom is a kingdom of justice and righteousness, seeking the kingdom means that we come to know what to care about in the first place.⁶
 - **Matthew 25:14-23** – Parable of the Talents
 - The natural world around us isn't just a temporary "environment," but part of our future inheritance in Christ. Our lives now are shaping us and preparing us for a future rule, and that includes the honing of a conscience and a sense of wisdom and prudence and justice.⁷

Seeking first the kingdom does not dampen our concern for justice and righteousness in the social and political arenas, but heightens it.

What does the Bible say about government and its authority?

- No government exists that has not been **established** by God
 - **Romans 13:1** – *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God*
 - **John 19:11** – *Jesus answered [Pilate], "You would have no authority over me at all unless it had been given you from above."*
- We should **submit to**, and honor, those who govern us
 - **Romans 13:2** – *Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.*
 - **Romans 13:6-6** – *For because of this you also pay taxes, for the authorities are ministers of God, attending to this very thing. 7 Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.*

⁶ Moore, Russell. *Onward: Engaging the culture without losing the gospel.* p,53

⁷ Moore, Russell. *Onward: Engaging the culture without losing the gospel.* p,53

- The sword of Caesar is given by God to commend **good** and punish **evil**
 - **Romans 13:3-5** – *For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad. Would you have no fear of the one who is in authority? Then do what is good, and you will receive his approval, 4 for he is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. 5 Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience.*
 - The Bible addresses the limits of this role, recounting those who use the sword in unjust ways and are held accountable to judgment (i.e., Revelation 13).⁸
- Even while telling Christians to submit to civil authority, the scripture limits the **power** and **reach** of civil government.⁹

What are our political obligations as Christians?

- Christians are to support the civil government **unless** the authorities require a believer to support or to do evil in direct **contradiction** to their ultimate allegiance to their Heavenly Father.¹⁰
 - **Luke 20:21-25** – *So they asked him, "Teacher, we know that you speak and teach rightly, and show no partiality, but truly teach the way of God. 22 Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" 23 But he perceived their craftiness, and said to them, 24 "Show me a denarius. Whose likeness and inscription does it have?" They said, "Caesar's." 25 He said to them, "Then render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."*
- We should **pray** for our leaders
 - **1 Timothy 2:1-4** – *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. 3 This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, 4 who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.*
 - When the minister of government does his job well, it facilitates the minister of the gospel
- Christians are citizens of two realms--the **earthly** and the **spiritual** and the have rights and responsibilities in both spheres.¹¹
- In a **democratic republic**, the authority over statecraft rests with the **people** themselves. In the voting booth, we delegate others to swing the sword of public justice **on our behalf**.¹²

⁸ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/march-web-only/should-christians-vote-for-lesser-of-two-evils.html?start=1>

⁹ Mammen, Neil. Jesus is involved in politics!: Why aren't you? Why isn't your church? San Jose, CA: Rational Free Press, 2012.

¹⁰ <http://www.drrichardland.com/press/entry/citizen-christian-their-rights-and-responsibilities>

¹¹ <http://www.drrichardland.com/press/entry/citizen-christian-their-rights-and-responsibilities>

¹² <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/march-web-only/should-christians-vote-for-lesser-of-two-evils.html?start=1>

What are the implications of this election?

The effects of who is elected our next President have the potential to impact us for generations.

- The next President will appoint 1-4 Supreme Court justices
 - Ages: **83, 80, 78**, 68, 66, 62, 61, 56
 - Vote: **liberal, moderate, liberal**, conservative, conservative, liberal, conservative, liberal
 - Conservative Justice Scalia died in February and has not been replaced
- The next President will appoint dozens of federal court judges
 - These judges include those in the court of appeals and district court
 - Since the 1980's, the President has averaged 45 federal court appointments annually

So, is that really a big deal?

Yes! It greatly impacts how they interpret the Constitution and other laws.

Differences in interpretation:

- Conservative justices and judges tend to interpret them as **fixed** documents whose meaning never changes from the time that they were written until now
- Liberal justices and judges tend to interpret them as **living** documents that evolve as the culture changes

“Judicial activism” or “legislating from the bench” – ruling based on **personal or political** considerations rather than on existing laws

- Freedom of Religion (1st Amendment)
- Freedom of Speech (1st Amendment)
- Right to Bear Arms (2nd Amendment)
- Powers not delegated by the Constitution (reserved to the States or the people)

*American churches have funded some of the greatest missionary outreaches in all of history. If we wait too long the Church in America will become persecuted.
Remember, persecuted churches don't fund missions.*

There are numerous positions up for election this year, and they are all important. On the NC ballot are elections for all 3 branches of the state government, and both the federal legislative and executive branches.

Congress never reflects the values of the nation; ... it only reflects the values of those who voted in the last election. ~ David Barton, WallBuilders

Common arguments against civic involvement

God's Word says that things will get worse in the end times, so why try to fight it?

[or]

God's Word says that no government exists except those that God has established, so we shouldn't try to change things.

Yes, God is in control. But does that mean we just sit back and wait?

The argument goes something like this:

- Jesus explained to the disciples that things would get worse as the end times draw near and listed signs of the things that would happen before His return
 - **Matthew 24** – *...those claiming to be the Messiah, deception, wars and rumor of wars, nation against nation, famines, earthquakes, persecution, false prophets, lawlessness...*
- Paul explained that God has established every governing authority that exists, and to rebel against that authority is to rebel against God
 - **Romans 13:1-2** – *Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment*
- Therefore, if we believe that God is in control
 - We should focus on sharing the Gospel and making disciples, and
 - We shouldn't try to change what's going on in the world (fight the hand of God)

However, what would happen if we actually applied that logic? What would the world look like if Christians completely checked out?

- During WWII, many viewed Hitler as the antichrist and Italian dictator Mussolini as the false prophet described in Revelation. What if Christians hadn't stepped forward to fight against that evil, and instead just sat back and waited?
- In 1973, the Supreme Court ruled that a woman's decision to have an abortion was protected under the Constitution (Roe v. Wade). Since that ruling, there have been more than 58 million abortions in America (more than 3,000 per day). What if Christians had stepped forward to fight against that evil, instead of sitting back and keeping quiet?
- What would early church history look like if Peter and Paul felt that way in the first century?
- What would American look like if Christians hadn't fought for the end of slavery?
- Why fight against _____? Jesus said things would get worse.

If I see a madman driving a car into a group of innocent bystanders, then I can't as a Christian simply wait for the catastrophe and then comfort the wounded and bury the dead. I must try and wrestle the steering wheel out of the hands of the driver. ~

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, German Theologian and Pacifist

Some additional considerations:

- We are called to be **salt & light**.
 - **Matthew 5:13** – *You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men.*
- We are called to be good **stewards** of what God has entrusted to us.
 - **Matthew 25:14-28** – Like the servants in the Parable of the Talents, we will be called to give an account of how we have administered everything we have been given, including our time, money, abilities, information, wisdom, relationships, and **authority**.
- If we truly are not to fight evil because God is in control, where is the **Biblical mandate** for this?

What's a Christian to do?

How do I determine which candidates are closest to Christian values and morals?

Pray, Study, Pray & Vote

Consider your **responsibility**:

- **Romans 1:32** – *...who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*
- “As Christians, we are not responsible for the reality of our two-party system or for the way others exercise their citizenship, but we will give an account for how we delegate our authority. Our primary concern is not the election night victory party, but the Judgment Seat of Christ.”¹³

Study the **issues**:

- What are the primary issues facing our nation and its citizens?
- Why are these particular issues so important?
- What does the Bible say about each issue?
- Does the Bible give clear direction on the issue, or is it a matter of personal conviction?
- Which issues do you believe to be “first-level”?
 -
- Which issues do you believe to be “second-level”?
 -

Study the **candidates**:

- Where does the candidate stand on each issue?
 - What has the candidate **said**?
 - What has the candidate **done**?

Does character matter?

Yes, character should be a key concern, but we know there is no perfect candidate.

¹³ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/march-web-only/should-christians-vote-for-lesser-of-two-evils.html?start=2>

- Unless Jesus of Nazareth is on the ballot, any election forces us to choose the lesser of two evils¹⁴
 - **Romans 6:23** – ...*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God*
- Character is not only what you do in **public**, but especially what you do in **private** when you think no one is watching or will find out.
- There is a difference between voting for a candidate who may do something different in office than they promised while campaigning, and knowingly voting for a candidate who is immoral
 - **Romans 1:32** – ...*who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them*

So which candidate should I vote for?

That's for you to prayerfully decide.

Ultimately, our hope is in the Lord, not in any **man** (or woman)

- **Psalm 146:3** – *Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help.*
- **Psalm 118:9** – *It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in man.*
- **Isaiah 2:22** – *Put no more trust in man, who has only the breath in his nostrils. What is he really worth?*
- **Psalm 60:11** – *Give us aid against the foe, for human help is worthless.*

In general, most Christians will take one of two positions:¹⁵

- I cannot do anything that promotes evil
 - Do not vote for either “evil”
 - Vote for another, or don’t vote at all
- I must do everything in my power to stop evil, even if the alternative is risky
 - “Lesser of two evils”
 - Vote *against*, not *for*

What if I don’t agree with other Christians about the candidate to vote for?

You don’t have to agree. It is a matter of personal conscience and conviction.

- **Romans 14:3-5** – *Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind.*
- **Romans 14:12-13** – *So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother’s way.*

¹⁴ <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2016/march-web-only/should-christians-vote-for-lesser-of-two-evils.html?start=1>

¹⁵ <https://www.afa.net/the-stand/election/2016/08/hillary-trump-and-christian-conscience/>