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Should Christians Be Involved with Politics?

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In

recent years it seems like politics has invaded *every* aspect of our daily lives.

Entertainers endorse candidates loudly from on stage, when you might be at the concert just because you like their music.

Professional athletes emblazon political messages on their uniforms, and stadiums even have political messages painted on the fields.

Our communities are increasingly becoming predominantly Red or Blue as people select like-minded neighbors by their real estate choices.

We've all been shaped—consciously or not—by the algorithms of the social media feeds we follow. Our interests and opinions are reinforced by the minute as Americans become more and more divided by one-sided viewpoints or often outright deceptions.

So when politics is in virtually every aspect of your life, how does a Christian navigate this, and should we as Christians seek to become actively involved to shape the political environment or elect specific candidates?

Although some may be called to very specific areas of life that need to be separate from politics, I believe for most of us the answer is yes. The real question is *how* we should go about this involvement.

The Bible is full of individuals being called to positions of leadership. Certainly Moses. Certainly Joseph who ruled Egypt, and Daniel who ruled much of Babylon. The judges, then King David and many others, governed. But we also see some leading rebellions against leaders, such as David's son Absalom, and later the divisions that grew after Solomon's death leading to a permanent split in the nation of Israel.

Jesus seems to have directly avoided politics while highlighting that we should "give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's." All during Jesus' ministry, the crowds (and even His own disciples) wanted Him to become a political leader and drive the Romans out of Israel. Jesus had a higher kingdom in mind than any of the earthly ones.

If Jesus seems to have avoided politics, why should we become involved?

Today, in the United States, our laws are not set by religious authorities or a dictatorial system such as that in ancient Rome, but by a civil process working through our federal and state Constitutions, elected executives, elected legislatures, and local elected councils. While Caesar and Roman law were the ultimate authorities during Jesus' time, in actuality, most day-to-day decisions and disputes among the Jews were managed by the religious authorities, as long as they didn't conflict with Roman law.

Today our jobs, national security, education, individual freedoms, etc., are determined at least in part by our political choices and the laws politicians make.

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At a minimum, I would argue, Christians should be good citizens and participate by voting. Others may be called to higher positions of authority in politics and government, prayerfully seeking to understand God's direction.

It seems God clearly raises people up for certain times. Through politics—and government service—Christians can be called to participate in significant leadership positions. Christians can also be called to stand against abuses. Witness the leadership role Christians played in abolishing slavery.

While the United States is not a theocracy, I believe it is appropriate for Christians to consider a candidate's faith in their voting decisions. While many will say they are Christians purely for political gain, we should seek to discern those who are authentic believers. How? By their fruit. Do they exhibit signs that the Holy Spirit is working in them? What is their character like? Do they honor God even when it is hard? Cautiously though; just because someone follows God doesn't necessarily mean they will be a good leader. Politicians may be morally solid but lousy administrators, or vice versa.

The problem, however, is when we begin to elevate politics and political service to dominate our lives. Politics can become an idol, and we can easily begin to put our trust and faith in political leaders instead of where it rightfully belongs. Of course, political leaders know this, and many will attempt to put themselves in a position akin to worship or at least attempt to manipulate us by a manufactured image.

God has clearly shown He can work through non-believers in high office. In fact, the Bible tells us that all leaders are put in place by Him for His purposes. Those purposes may be to bless the people or perhaps to usher in judgment on the people, or it may be for an entirely other reason we can't fathom.

Some say believers should stay completely away from politics to avoid being corrupted by the world. I'd say there are plenty of ways to be corrupted in business, entertainment, education, law, or even in the church. And if you stay home, there are plenty of ways to be corrupted there too!

What about accountability? All Christians—and especially those in power—should have an accountability structure to help avoid corruption, idolatry, and pride. Our founding fathers knew that man was at heart evil, so they created a system of checks and balances in government. We should recognize that we can be led astray for a variety of good-sounding reasons. In addition to the structural balances, we should individually seek an additional layer of checks and balances through godly friends who can speak truth to those in power. This can apply in any career choice, not just politics.

We are all called to seek the good where we are. To be the salt and light that God calls us to be. That can be done in all kinds of ways, including through politics and government.

Daniel was an excellent administrator in a foreign nation that conquered Israel. From what we are told in the Bible, he carried out his work faithfully unless it contradicted God's teaching. Christians are in all levels of government working in secular or hostile political environments. After all, the daily functions of government need to get done. As believers, we should strive for excellence in all we do, while being faithful to God above all.

Whether we work in politics, government, or some other field, we can always be a witness to others at least in part by how we do our jobs and by *how* we treat others along the way.