

North Wake Church Issues Guide

October 2012

The purpose of this guide is to equip the members of North Wake Church with the necessary information so that they may make informed, wise and worshipful decisions about those whom they choose as leaders of our civil government.

Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you. For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience. (Romans 13:1-5 NIV)

Then he said to them, "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's." (Matt. 22:21b)

I. The Big Question First

Should Christians vote? Should the Christian even care about their country of citizenship or about its ruling authorities?

From the passage above, we see that that obedience to our governing authorities is required because all authority comes from God. In America, because we are blessed with a representative republic, we are the leaders! Here at least, we express our obedience to a loving God, by lovingly exercising our leadership responsibilities and by selecting those co-leaders to represent us through the process of public elections.

In elections, God uses His people (us) as His agents to determine what is best for not only His people, but for our lost neighbors as well, who he has commanded us to love. (Matt. 22:39), calling that commandment the second greatest.

A Christian's most basic convictions are often revealed in the voting booth. Even those who choose not to vote must live with the consequences of their actions. If we are to be known for how we love our neighbors, then wouldn't we want what is best for them as the result of our selection of leadership? (Rom. 13:9)

If we believe the Bible, then we believe that Christian values contribute positively to society and to the wellbeing of our neighbors and fellow citizens. Biblical solutions make the most sense!

So, whether pleasant or not, easy or hard, in a free society like ours, we're God's agents for choosing, and to the best of our ability must vote for the most righteous and able men and women to lead us. We should, as co-leaders and God's agents, do so with fear and trembling and joy (Ps. 2:10-11), knowing that we are lovingly obeying our good God when we love and serve our neighbors and fellow citizens in the voting booth.

II. The Important Issues

When voting, for whom do you vote? That is not the purpose of this guide, as that choice is to be made after much prayer, and consideration. However, what follows are several issues of import to believers, which should inform your decision and bear weight on your choices. These are not the only issues a candidate might profess an opinion on – only those that have special merit for the confessing Christian, and therefore should be considered among the most important.

A. The Sanctity of Life

For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13)

Before I formed you in the womb I knew you (Jeremiah 1:5a)

Then he said to them, "Whoever welcomes this little child in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me welcomes the one who sent me. For he who is least among you all—he is the greatest." (Luke 9:48)

Children, from the first knitted stitch, are called out by our Lord and Savior for special protection. They are the most vulnerable and the "least" among us. Our founding fathers recognized this when they enshrined, in our Declaration of Independence, (italicize) the protection of "certain unalienable rights, that among these are life..." They called the right to life, both "self-evident" and "unalienable" and they listed it first among equals. Put another way, our

country's founders understood life to be the cardinal right requiring special protection and that this fact was self-evident in nature, or self-revealing. Life is first, its value is understood by revelation, it cannot be taken away unjustly by the state or its people, and the ability of the state to protect this right is preeminent with all other rights hinging upon it.

Therefore, as citizens and God's agents, how should we approach the issue of abortion? The unborn are the most vulnerable and the least represented in our form of government. Will you choose to be their representative in the voting booth? Will you welcome your Lord and Savior by welcoming the least among us? To the best of your ability, cast your vote for life.

B. Marriage

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." (Genesis 2:23-24)

This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. (Ephesians 5:32-33)

God made marriage. God declared it good along with all His creation and created order – it was the crowning achievement of God's good work. As the means of the transmission of life, the nurturing of children, marriage is a tripartite covenantal union with God Himself. It is the first institution of society and the foundation of all other institutions. It is, quite simply, absolutely essential for an orderly human society and for all human flourishing.

Thus because all humans are created with equal value before the Lord as image bearers each human person should be free to marry whomever they choose according to the design God built into the very fabric of the universe.

For example, in marriage each man should be granted the equal opportunity to marry a woman, as that is God's design for marriage. Likewise, each woman should have the equal opportunity to marry a man, as that is God's design for marriage.

Who is man to redefine God's design – His created order? If we believe what the Bible says – that marriage is the central part of God's creation covenant, and that biblical marriage mirrors the bond between Christ and the Church (His bride), and that Christ gave himself up for his Bride in complete sacrifice – how can we not make respect for true marriage an important criteria for selecting our governing representatives? The Christian citizen is called to protect society (the "common good") out of love for our neighbors. We are called to protect the treasure that is Biblical marriage.

C. Religious Liberty

I will walk about in freedom, for I have sought out your precepts. I will speak of your statutes before kings and will not be put to shame, for I delight in your commands because I love them. (Psalm 119:45-47)

Our country's founding fathers enshrined the protection of "liberty" just after life, in our Declaration of Independence. Further, the first citizens, before they would ratify their new Constitution, required specific protections for religious liberty via a set of amendments called the Bill of Rights. It was religious liberty that received the first protection of the first amendment. ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...") This was no accident, as the nation's founders understood religious liberty to be necessary for the transmission of good character and the inculcation of the virtuous behavior necessary for the republic to survive and flourish. Religious liberty – the prohibition of any restraint on religious conscience – is therefore necessary for our country to prosper. Forcing a Christian or a Christian organization to act in a way that violates, either directly or indirectly, God's commands and precepts are a perversion of America's law and a violation of God's law. From a Birmingham jail, Dr. King, citing Augustine and Aquinas, rightly said, "an unjust law is no law at all".

Real freedom is not something that the State (“Caesar”) can take away. And when the State hinders it, it diminishes its very own legitimacy. As Christian citizens of a land founded on the primacy and necessity of religious freedom, we are called to protect God’s word and the vessels and conduits thereof, from being muzzled, hindered, stifled, or persecuted. As Christian citizens we are called fully and willingly to render to Caesar what is Caesar’s but under no circumstances will we render unto Caesar that which is God’s. Vote for religious liberty.

D. Race

the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. (Genesis 2:7)

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. (Genesis 1:26-27)

From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live (Acts 17:26)

Biblically speaking then, there is no real distinction among humans as it relates to race. Or to say this another way, there is only one race – the human race. We all come from Adam, we are all image bearers and all have a body and soul by God’s design. The only clear distinction between humans that God made crystal clear is gender – male and female.

Therefore, what we commonly call “race” today should really be described as ethnic or cultural differences... many of which have developed among people who have similar skin color, shape of eyes, etc. Therefore, because all people regardless of skin color are of one race, any form of discrimination as it relates to skin color is not only sinful it is a denial of the creative beauty of God. Ethnic diversity can and often should be celebrated – moral diversity when it falls outside the clear teaching of Scripture is not a value to be approved.

Practically speaking then, there are two primary issues related to how one should think about “race” as it relates to voting. The first is a consideration of the prejudice on a person level, the second is a consideration of policy making that might be based on prejudice.

Regarding the first, if a person decides to vote for – or not to vote for - another person merely or primarily because of the skin color of a candidate then he or she is not only making a shallow evaluation of the candidate, such a decision making process is likely a result of unbiblical prejudice and repentance for such thinking is appropriate.

For example, if a person with lighter skin tone (“white”) were to refuse to vote for a person with darker skin tone (“black”) merely or primarily because the skin color this would be a form of wickedness for which that person ought to repent. Similarly, if the person with lighter skin tone (“white”) chose to vote for a candidate primarily because he or she possessed the same skin color this would also reflect a shallow sinful perspective needing confession and repentance.

Likewise, if a person with darker skin tone (“black”) were to refuse to vote for a person with lighter skin tone (“white”) merely or primarily because the skin color this would be a form of wickedness for which that person ought to repent. Similarly, if a person with darker skin tone (“black”) chose to vote for a candidate primarily because he or she possessed the same skin color this would also reflect a shallow sinful perspective needing confession and repentance.

Regarding the second, because all human beings are image bearers, each human being should be treated equally as is appropriate for the given context. Therefore any policies that directly and intentionally discriminate against a person or persons based on skin color should be utterly rejected.

Differing opinions about how to provide the best social and economic policies related to giving fair and just opportunities to all citizens regardless of differing social and economic values should be evaluated as to whether or not they unjustly treat a group of people based on ethnicity. However, one should not assume a policy is to be based on prejudice merely because one political party or the other advances it as part of its agenda. Each policy

must be evaluated based on quality and merit of the individual policy in question regardless of which political party advances the agenda. In Closing

The national election will be held on Tuesday, November 6, 2012. If you are not registered to vote, check with your local county election boards for rules and processes regarding registration. (Noted below) If you are registered, you can find your local polling precinct location at the same noted web sites. For detail information relating to the issues and positions held by the candidates, search for their respective campaign websites on the internet. Warning: In our confusing information age, reliance on one source of political information may be hazardous to your spiritual health.

III. References, Sources, For Additional Information:

1. The Holy Bible, NIV
2. Focus, Michigan Catholic Conference, Vol. 40, Number 3, August 2012.
3. Letter From Birmingham City Jail, quoted from The Book of Virtues, William J. Bennett, Simon & Schuster Publishers, 1992
4. The Manhattan Declaration, accessed from: www.manhattandeclaration.org
5. *Why Christians Should Vote*, Chuck Colson, 2006. Accessed from the Chuck Colson Center, www.colsoncenter.org, August 2012.
6. Thoughts on the Upcoming Elections, Timothy George, August 2012, Accessed from the Chuck Colson Center, www.colsoncenter.org, August 2012.
7. Why We Need To Vote As Christians, excerpted from the book, Vital Truth: Christian Citizenship (February 2003). Jeffrey L Myers. Copyright 2002, LifeWay Christian resources of the Southern Baptist Convention. Accessed from http://barryboucher.typepad.com/ministers_matter/government/
8. For a discussion on the relationship between the Church and the State, from the Founders perspective: http://www.hillsdale.edu/hctools/ImprimisTool/archives/2012_09_Imprimis.pdf

IV. Elections Resources

A. County Boards of Elections, Registration Information, Sample Ballots

1. Wake County: <http://www.wakegov.com/elections>
2. Franklin County: <http://www.franklincountync.us/services/board-of-elections>
3. Other Counties: www.ncsbe.gov and click on “My Election Board”

B. North Carolina Voters’ Guides

1. The North Carolina Family Policy Center’s 2012 Voter’s Guide. <http://ncfpc.org/pdffiles/VoterGuide2012GeneralElection.pdf>
2. The NC State Board of Elections, North Carolina Public Funding Programs: 2012 General Election Voter Guide (Judicial offices, and the offices of Auditor, Commissioner of Insurance, and Superintendent of Public Education): www.ncsbe.gov/GetDocument.aspx?id=2560