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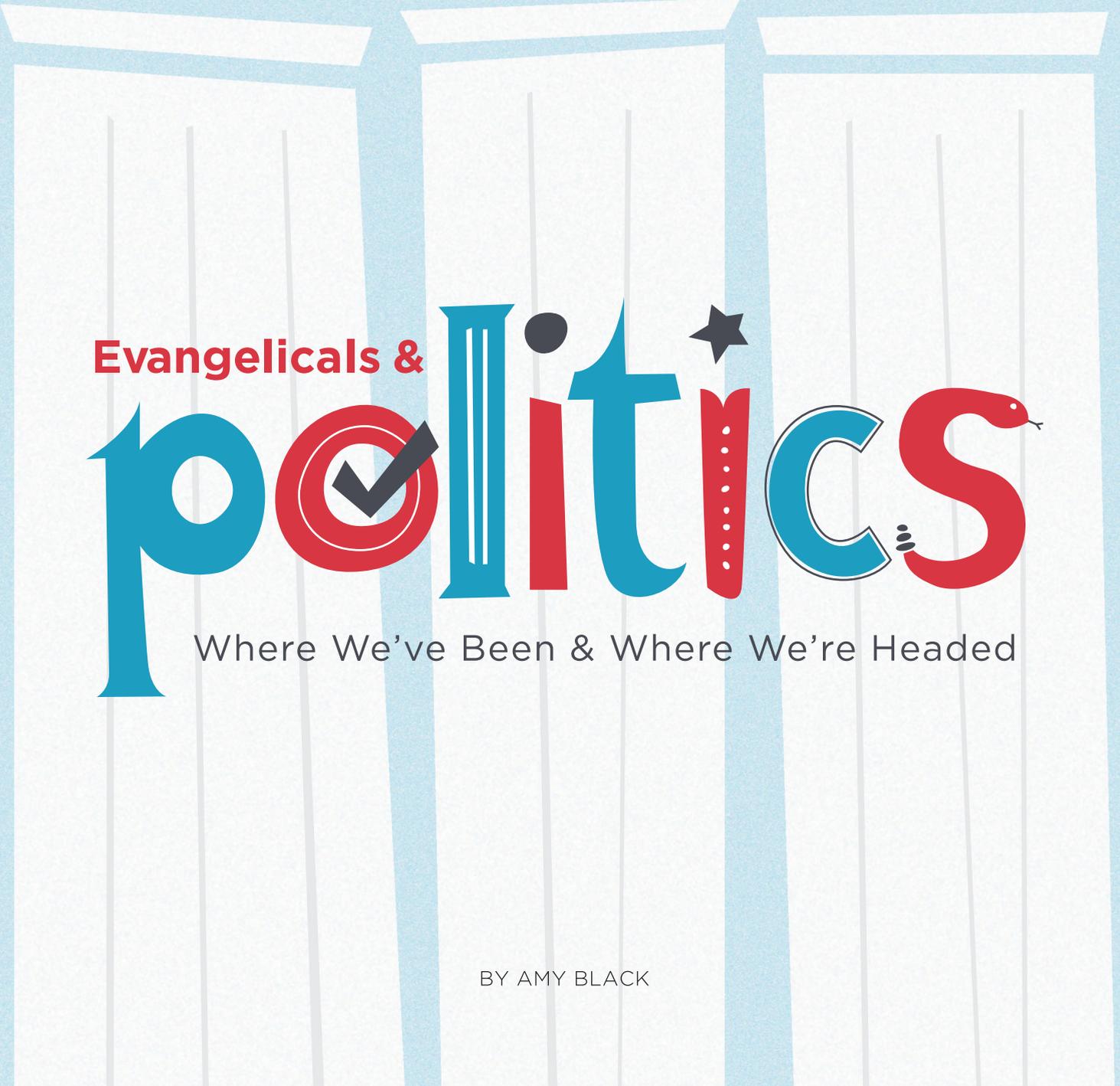
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Evangelicals &
politics

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A MESSAGE TO AMERICAN CHURCH LEADERS FROM BRUCE WILKINSON

In a recent poll, pastors in the U.S. said that 90-100% of the people in their churches struggle with unforgiveness! I have never been more convinced of the centrality of forgiveness in the gospel story – in our story. Nor have I been more convinced that Christ's teaching on forgiveness is largely misunderstood and seldom heeded.

For more than a decade the Lord has directed me to be focused on training, healing and reconciliation among Christian pastors and leaders in the Global South. It is no secret that in the continent of Africa and beyond, there is a desperate need for quality, affordable Bible teaching.

One of the courses I developed is a revolutionary teaching series on forgiveness, currently being translated

to go into more than 120 countries, including all of the Arabic and Middle Eastern Nations. From this we are already seeing massive personal healing, tribal reconciliation and national renewal.

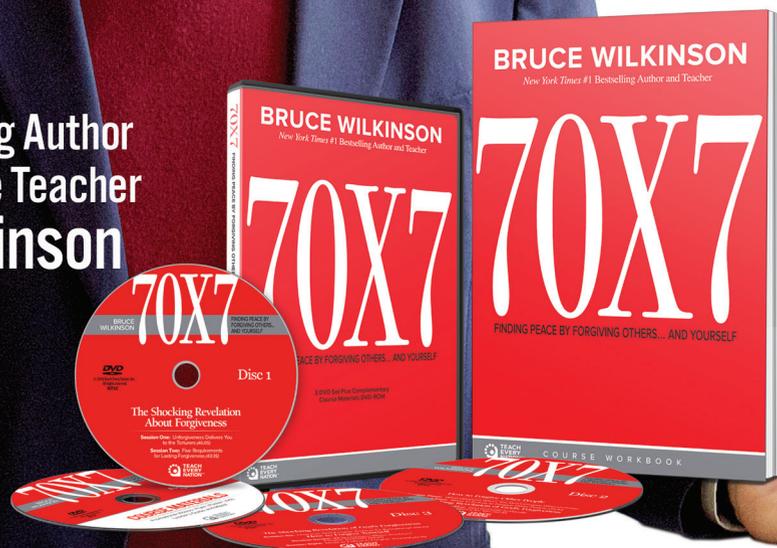
We are at a crossroads in our own country and I am just now releasing this teaching in America. **70X7: Finding Peace by Forgiving Others... And Yourself.** A Bible-based Video Curriculum designed for churches, classes and small groups.

I challenge small groups all across America to watch this series and hear its message. It is time for us to once again heed the challenging words of Jesus. So we can once again experience a restored and powerful church.

Order today for Fall and Winter Small Groups by going to:
www.teacheverynation.org/70X7-2

–Bruce Wilkinson

From Best-Selling Author
and Master Bible Teacher
Bruce Wilkinson



Evangelicals

The Magazine of the National Association of Evangelicals

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Every president and vice president of the United States has claimed Christian faith. All but two have been Protestants (President John Kennedy and Vice President Joe Biden are the Catholic exceptions). Some have been deeply devout, and some have been nominal believers.

Not all our politicians, however, are Christians. Congressman Keith Ellison of Minnesota's 5th District was born, raised and educated as a Roman Catholic and is the brother of a Baptist pastor, but he converted to Islam and was sworn in as a Congressman with his hand on a copy of the Qu'ran once owned by Thomas Jefferson. Sen. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii is Buddhist, and Rep. Tulsi Gabbard, also of Hawaii, is Hindu. For the first time in American history, none of the justices on the U.S. Supreme Court are Protestants. (They are all Catholic or Jewish.)

While the Constitution prohibits government establishment of religion and protects citizens' free exercise of religion, we have a long history of conflating faith and politics. And, evangelicals have a mixed record of political engagement. Our evangelical predecessors led the abolition movement against slavery and the temperance movement against alcohol. For a time, we distanced ourselves from politics and focused on evangelism. Then the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* ruling to legalize abortion gradually drew many evangelicals back into political activism.

There is so much diversity among evangelicals that examples of political advocacy can be found for almost every policy. We've been Republicans, Democrats, Independents, Segregationists, Integrationists, economic liberals, economic conservatives, military hawks, pacifists and much more. Many of us have been shocked and embarrassed by the words and behavior of those who claim to be evangelicals. And, many of us have been thrilled and proud of our evangelical brothers and sisters in the political world.

This issue of Evangelicals reaches into today's political world with history, theology and practical advice. Most important to remember is that evangelicals are primarily people of faith not primarily people of politics. What makes us evangelicals is that we take the Bible seriously and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord. On the Bible and Jesus we all agree. On politics ... not so much.

On Predatory Lending

“ In other words, nearly half of American adults do not have \$400 cash on hand for an emergency. These people are our family, friends, fellow churchgoers, work colleagues and neighbors. They may even be us. They are in need ... Everyone has a responsibility to be a good steward of the financial resources God has given them. Everyone has a responsibility to protect the poor instead of profiting from their need.”

George O. Wood, General Superintendent of Assemblies of God, in “Protect the Poor, Don’t Profit From Their Need” in PE News

“ Back in the day, we called them loan sharks. Back in the day, the government enacted usury laws to regulate the interest that could be charged on a loan. These laws helped curtail the activity of organized crime. Each state is given the responsibility of setting its own usury laws. These laws are established and enforced to protect people from the consequences of their own decisions.”

Carl Kenney, Adjunct Professor at Missouri University School of Journalism, in the Missourian



Engaging the Election

“ Contrary to past election cycles, evangelical Christians were actually the faith group least engaged thus far with the presidential race. Only one out of five evangelicals (20 percent) said they were following news about the campaign very closely.”

Barna Research, March 2016

Repenting of Racial Sins

“ Therefore be it resolved, that the 44th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America does recognize, confess, condemn and repent of corporate and historical sins, including those committed during the Civil Rights era, and continuing racial sins of ourselves and our fathers such as the segregation of worshipers by race; the exclusion of persons from Church membership on the basis of race; the exclusion of churches, or elders, from membership in the Presbyteries on the basis of race; the teaching that the Bible sanctions racial segregation and discourages inter-racial marriage; the participation in and defense of white supremacist organizations; and the failure to live out the gospel imperative that ‘love does no wrong to a neighbor’ (Romans 13:10)...”

Overture 43 on Racial Reconciliation, which was overwhelmingly approved by 44th General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in America



Orlando Nightclub Shooting

“ All of our hearts are broken and awakened. Many of us, especially in the conservative evangelical branch of the faith, don't normally think of the vulnerability of many of the communities around us. It is not a part of our everyday agenda, but this has certainly put it on the agenda. This is something we need to specifically address on an ongoing basis to make sure that no population among us is threatened or marginalized.”

Joel Hunter, Senior Pastor of Northland, A Church Distributed, in Religion News Service



“ They're going to be listening for how the Church is going to respond. I think if we understand the gospel we're going to respond by loving them and being a healing presence and mourning with those who mourn. That's why we opened our church, and that's why we've offered our counselors, and that's why we sent people to donate blood.”

Gabriel Salguero, Pastor at Iglesia El Calvario, in Christianity Today

Common Ground

“ Finding common ground does not mean endorsing every goal or every value of the people to whom we draw near. But it does mean drawing near. That is at the heart of the vision of what I have called 'confident pluralism.' That vision is a challenge to enter into the reality of pluralism around us to find common ground. And we can do so out of a confidence in our own beliefs.”

John Inazu, Associate Professor of Law and Political Science at Washington University, in “Do Black Lives Matter to Evangelicals?” in The Washington Post



@GalenCarey says @NAEvangelicals has seen too much devastation caused by payday loans, and calls for just lending. #StopTheDebtTrap @CFPB
Diane Standaert @dianestand

When the entire world had turned its back on us, when political leaders would not touch this mess, it was a small group of Christians from World Vision that decided they needed to do something about it.

**Vinh Chung on his refugee story in Today's Conversation at NAE.net/
chungpodcast**

The four core belief statements presented by Leith Anderson and Ed Stetzer as the key factors for identifying an evangelical American were spot-on and well-written. Any evangelical church or parachurch organization working on their doctrine of faith could use these to ensure they are incorporated.
Steve Schultz of Midland, Michigan, on the Christianity Today article “Defining Evangelicals in an Election Year”

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EVANGELICAL CALENDAR

Please join the evangelical community at these events hosted by the NAE and its members. **Your prayers are welcome too.**

Many of these events include downloadable resources for promotion and participation.



OCTOBER 24-28, 2016

Developing Excellence Forum

Ridgecrest, NC

Accord Network
AccordNetwork.org

Each year, evangelical leaders in relief and development come together to leverage their combined learning and to work towards the highest effectiveness in serving the vulnerable. The NAE is joining the Accord Network and the Lausanne Movement to host the Creation Care Summit as part of this week of events.



NOVEMBER 30-
DECEMBER 1, 2016

Denominational Executives Retreat

Kansas City, MO

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.net/denominational-executives-retreat

NAE denominational executives spend time together — learning from and encouraging one another in their unique position of ministry.

OCTOBER 27-28, 2016

Presidential Summit

Orlando, FL

Association for Biblical Higher Education
ABHE.org

The Presidential Summit offers a mix of presentations and group discussions aimed at sharpening the professional competency and leadership capacity of Christian college presidents.



NOVEMBER 16-17, 2016

Christians Engaging Global Conflict

Washington, DC

Evangelicals for Peace
EvangelicalsForPeace.org

This convening of evangelical leaders, practitioners and policy experts will focus on vital lessons from the conflicts with ISIS and in Syria to help the U.S. church respond with actions for peace that demonstrate biblical wisdom.

JANUARY 10, 2017

Centurion Banquet

Alexandria, VA

NAE Chaplains Commission
NAE.net/centurionbanquet

Join us for a grand night of music and fellowship as we recognize the Centurion of the Year, a leader who has exemplified commitment to the ministry of evangelical military chaplains.



NOVEMBER 1-3, 2016

Mosaix

Dallas, TX

Mosaix Global Network
Mosaix2016.com

About 1,500 multi-ethnic church pioneers and practitioners — including church planters and pastors, network and denominational leaders, authors and educators, and more — are expected to gather at this national multi-ethnic church conference. Mosaix is held every three years.



JANUARY 23-27, 2017

Christian Student Leadership Conference

Washington, DC

National Association of Evangelicals
NAE.net/csle

The Christian Student Leadership Conference is a place where college students who care deeply about today's pressing issues come to learn and consider how to engage in public policy. This year's theme centers on Faithful Advocacy.

WORTH NOTING

✓ **New Leadership at World Relief**

After 12 years with World Relief, Stephan Bauman resigned as president of the NAE's humanitarian arm to become executive director at Cornerstone Trust, a foundation based in Grand Rapids, Michigan.

Scott Arbeiter, former chair of World Relief's board and former lead pastor at Elmbrook Church in Wisconsin, assumed the president's role in August. Arbeiter will serve alongside Tim Breene, CEO of World Relief.

Breene said, "Stephan played a pivotal role in bringing World Relief back to its core mission and roots. He has overseen the expansion of World Relief's footprint both in the U.S. and the Middle East. In the last year in particular, Stephan has been a leading voice on the plight of refugees and the displaced around the world. Stephan, Scott and I have worked closely in defining the next chapter for World Relief. With Scott stepping into the president's role, we anticipate a seamless transition."

For more than 70 years World Relief has empowered the local church to serve millions of vulnerable people in some of the hardest places in the world.



Learn more about
World Relief at
WorldRelief.org.

✓ **Religious Freedom for All**

Out of a deep commitment to religious freedom for all, the National Association of Evangelicals joined with nearly 20 civil rights and religious groups in asking a court to support a Muslim group in New Jersey that has been trying to build a mosque for almost a decade.

The Islamic Society of Basking Ridge sought permission to build a mosque in a suburban New Jersey community, but faced hostility and opposition from protesters and illegal obstruction and delays by the local zoning board.

After 39 public hearings in which the town refused to approve plans for the mosque, or to offer the same accommodations that it had applied to other houses of worship, the congregation filed suit under the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), a law that the NAE was instrumental in passing. We argue that the law should be applied fairly to all faiths.

"Our exemplary treatment of others is not only the Christian thing to do, but it also gives us credibility when we ask leaders of other religions to support the religious freedom of Christian minorities in other lands," said Galen Carey, NAE vice president of government relations.

✓ **Pray Together Sunday**

On July 10, hundreds of churches — ranging in size, location and denominational tradition — took part in Pray Together Sunday, sponsored by the National Association of Evangelicals. Churches committed to a time of prayer during their worship service — asking Jesus to reset our nation.

"We had a special time of prayer, largely praying over the past week's events, and for healing and repentance in our nation. There was an incredible response from our church," said Brandon Doss of Cultivate Church in Birmingham, Alabama.

Six days after Pray Together Sunday, hundreds of thousands flooded the National Mall for a day of worship and prayer as part of Together 2016. Plans are underway to hold a second Pray Together Sunday in 2017.

✓ Southern Baptists to Consider Joining NAE

The Southern Baptist Convention, the second-largest faith group in America behind Roman Catholics, will consider joining the National Association of Evangelicals this year.

Ed Stetzer, the newly appointed executive director of the Billy Graham Center for Evangelism, brought a motion at this summer's Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting asking its executive committee to study "ramifications and opportunities" of joining the NAE. The executive committee will report findings and recommendations at next year's SBC annual meeting in Phoenix.

"Southern Baptists are evangelicals, so it seems pretty logical they should be a part of the National Association of those Evangelicals," said Stetzer, who previously served as executive director of LifeWay Research, part of LifeWay Christian Resources of the Southern Baptist Convention.

The SBC, a fellowship of about 46,500 churches in the United States, has never been a member of the NAE, though Southern Baptists are increasingly involved in evangelical relationships. Stetzer serves on the NAE board.



✓ Contraception Case Update

In a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court announced this spring that it would not rule in *Zubik v. Burwell*, a combined religious freedom case centered on whether religious institutions other than churches should be exempt from covering contraception to their employees.

This action sends the case back down to the lower courts to work out a compromise. In the meantime, the government is prevented from imposing crippling fines on the plaintiffs for not hiring a third party to provide services that they do not morally agree with to their employees.

The National Association of Evangelicals, co-amici on a brief defending the Little Sisters of the Poor (one of the plaintiffs), welcomes the court's decision that encourages lower courts, government and religious groups to work together to find solutions that uphold the conscience and integrity of religious groups that are dedicated to education, health care and social services.

Galen Carey, NAE vice president of government relations, said, "The Supreme Court's action is a strong win for the plaintiffs, and for all who care about religious freedom. The lower courts should respect the rights that are provided under the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, and find a solution that truly accommodates the Little Sisters' religious convictions."



Deployed to the World

The Unique Call of Chaplains

When asked the difference in being a pastor and a chaplain I simply say, “My main focus as a local church pastor was on the worship community; my main focus within the chaplaincy is on the mission field.” Both calls are required to further the kingdom.

The primary mission of chaplains is to facilitate the free exercise of religion in a secular environment. By definition a chaplain is a minister, such as a priest, pastor or rabbi, sent out by a religious body to minister in an organization or institution. In this context, they are beacons of hope for believers and non-believers, the churched and the unchurched, the saved and the lost.

From War Zones to Workplaces

Chaplains can be found in war zones comforting troops who are unsure if they will live through the day to see their families again. They minister to families and medical staffs in hospital emergency rooms where a life hangs in the balance. Chaplains regularly deliver death notifications to loved ones who immediately need the comfort of someone who cares. They work with first responders in the police, fire or rescue departments to help them process the tragedies they experience.



Steve West is executive director of the NAE Chaplains Commission, which provides endorsement and support to evangelical chaplains.

In times of crisis, chaplains become visible reminders of God.

Over 100 National Association of Evangelicals Chaplains Commission chaplains are ministering in 33 states and eight countries around the globe. While 90 percent of our chaplains serve in the Armed Forces, the NAE also endorses Veterans Administration (VA), health care and industrial chaplains.

The ministries of NAE chaplains expand far beyond the walls of a church building and touch people who may not have a personal faith. Their position offers the ability to minister in unlikely, unorthodox and unexpected situations, making them unique force multipliers for the gospel.

Faithful in a Pluralistic Environment

Chaplains can be teachers of what ministry in a pluralistic society looks like. The military provides clear guidelines for ministry in a secular environment. Army Regulation 165-1 states:

In the pluralistic religious setting of the military, the Chaplain Corps performs or provides religious support for all Soldiers, Family members, and authorized Department of Defense (DOD) Civilians from all religious traditions. Chaplains cooperate with each other, without compromising their religious tradition or ecclesiastical endorsement requirements, to ensure the most comprehensive religious support opportunities possible within the unique military environment.

In the U.S. military, soldiers, their family members, and authorized DOD civilians are entitled to religious support. Chaplains advise the command on all matters pertaining to the free exercise of religion and assist the commander in providing for the accommodation of religious practices.

Chaplains hold fast to their particular traditions and refer to others when accommodations of other faiths are required. Christian chaplains wear crosses on their uniforms, and they try to serve in a way that is faithful to the gospel the cross

represents. There is not a pluralistic ministry, but ministry in a pluralistic environment — much as being in this world but not of this world.

(Chaplains are the only military members to be managed in any way by a non-governmental institution. Bound by military regulations and tradition, chaplains can only serve the military with an endorsement from an officially recognized endorsing agent, such as the NAE Chaplains Commission or a denomination.)

A Personal Ministry

Because counseling with a chaplain is considered privileged communication, people feel safe and seek their help. When I sit down with someone for their first counseling session, I clarify that though I am not there to convert them, my counseling will come from a biblical perspective. I let them know if that is not acceptable to them, I can refer them to another counselor.

Never, in my 28 years of chaplain service, has someone asked to be referred. The truth is, when they walked through those doors, they knew who they were coming to see. I have had the privilege of seeing more people come to Christ each year as a military chaplain than I did as a local pastor.

When I served as a civilian pastor, most people outside of my church had no idea who I was or where I worked. On the other hand, chaplains are recognized almost

universally as caregivers. If a chaplain walks into a shop, section or office, they are readily welcomed and expected to talk with the workers. Often leaders in the workplace give workers paid time to meet for counseling with the chaplain.

The opportunities for chaplaincy ministry are unlimited. Chaplains accept this special charge often knowing that it will require separation from their families, being placed in harm's way, and sharing the pain of the suffering under their care.

Chaplains answer the call of the Great Commission to go forth and minister to the ends of the earth. Call them missionaries for they are commissioned from our local churches and denominations to reach people for Christ. ❸





Amy Black is professor of political science at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

Evangelicals & politics

Where We've Been & Where We're Headed

Every election cycle, journalists and pundits talk at length about the “evangelical vote,” offering bold predictions and musing about this group’s likely influence. Ironically, many who speak so freely about evangelical voters know very little about the contours of American religion and have little understanding of the evangelical movement.

Since the 1980s, evangelicals have been a key Republican voting bloc in presidential elections. Yet this active political engagement and strong Republican partisanship is relatively new, and it masks the smaller — but still substantial — minority of evangelicals who align with Democrats. To appreciate the contemporary context requires briefly tracing the roots of evangelical political activism. This will also help us consider what can be learned from our history.

Evangelicalism as a Middle Path

Throughout the 19th century, many evangelicals were active in social and political reform movements. But rapid modernization and the emergence of new scientific ideas, including Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, led to growing theological divides.

Tensions arose over differing views of human nature and conflicting interpretations of God's work in history. Theological conservatives who called for Christians to focus on individual salvation and maintain the fundamentals of the faith created the movement called fundamentalism.

The 1925 Scopes Trial placed a spotlight on the Fundamentalist-Modernist conflict, highlighting growing tensions between different religious groups and their responses to scientific discoveries. Many fundamentalists retreated from the public square, forming schools, publishing houses and other institutions that reflected their religious values.

Not all theologically conservative Protestants chose this path. A small group of Christian leaders who were concerned that fundamentalists were too isolated met in 1941 and 1942. They founded an organization, the National Association of Evangelicals, and developed plans for like-minded Christians to work together for greater social engagement. The end result was a new movement that reclaimed the label "evangelicalism."

The Christian Right

The 1960s ushered in another set of rapid cultural and political changes. Local controversies over textbooks and sex education in public schools, the tax-exempt status of religious schools, and gay rights raised concerns. Activists motivated by their religious beliefs began grassroots efforts to promote their causes locally, and their efforts eventually captured national attention.

By the 1970s, high-profile Christian leaders began to talk more publicly about politics, and several founded organizations, such as Jerry Falwell's Moral Majority, the Religious Roundtable, and Christian Voice, to encourage theologically conservative Christians to get more involved. Over time, these organizations and activists became known as the Christian Right, a reference to their right-of-center political leanings.

From Issue-Based to Party Politics

Still, in the 1970s, evangelicals tended to support Democrats. Jimmy Carter's successful presidential campaign in 1976 connected well with evangelicals who were growing more active on individual political issues but were not particularly active in party politics. Carter, a Southern Baptist Sunday School teacher, spoke often about his faith and described himself as "born again."

During the Carter presidency, however, evangelical support began moving toward the Republicans. Although evangelicals did not join the pro-life movement immediately after *Roe v. Wade*, by the late 1970s they saw the importance of the abortion issue and its connection to central Christian teachings. By the 1980 presidential election, abortion was a centerpiece of Christian Right politics.

Ronald Reagan's campaign and the Republican Party recognized the importance of evangelical voters and actively sought their backing. Beginning in 1980, the Republican platform included planks supporting organized prayer in public schools and defining human life as beginning at conception, and the party began to embrace the term "pro-family" to describe its agenda. Evangelical voters responded, providing strong support for Reagan in 1980 and 1984.

By the end of the 1980s, evangelical voters had become an essential part of the Republican base. Republican candidates and party leaders actively sought evangelical voters, crafting issue appeals to win their support.

In recent elections, a new division between voters, often called the "God gap," has emerged. Those who frequently attend religious services (regardless of faith background) are more likely to vote for Republicans, while those who rarely or never attend tend to vote for Democrats.

Emerging Organizations

The earliest Christian Right organizations were hierarchical, typically centered around charismatic — sometimes controversial — leaders. By the 1990s, more decentralized organizations were emerging that built strong networks of supporters and emphasized grassroots mobilization.

The most successful of these groups was the Christian Coalition, founded by religious broadcaster Pat Robertson after his unsuccessful 1988 presidential bid. The Coalition offered a more pragmatic approach to politics. In 1995, the Christian Coalition boasted 1.6 million members and 1,600 local chapters.

Although most of the largest and best-financed Christian advocacy organizations were ideologically conservative, other Christian groups, such as Sojourners and Evangelicals for Social Action, emerged offering an ideological counterpoint and raising more progressive concerns.

George W. Bush and Evangelicals

The election of President George W. Bush energized conservative evangelicals. His open discussion of his personal faith along with his positions on social issues and judicial appointments appealed to many. With Republicans in control of the presidency and Congress, evangelical leaders looked forward to many political victories.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, shifted the policy agenda in Washington. Domestic issues of greatest concern to the Christian Right were eclipsed by national security and foreign policy. In 2004, Christian Right leaders worked aggressively for Bush's re-election, expecting that Bush would prioritize their agenda in a second term.

By the middle of Bush's second term, some former supporters were openly criticizing him for neglecting domestic issues, especially battles against abortion and gay marriage. Some leaders openly questioned the effectiveness of their strong connections to Republicans, suggesting that the party was taking the evangelical voting bloc for granted.

Even as some older generation leaders were raising concerns, a new generation of activists was gaining influence in many issue advocacy groups. With backgrounds in politics, not religious leadership, they had a more pragmatic approach and sought to work alongside legislative staff. Their leadership style moved away from bold demands for change, looking instead for more incremental changes that had a greater likelihood for success. In the early 2000s, this approach led to a series of legislative victories, including the passage of three pro-life bills.

The God Gap

In recent elections, a new division between voters, often called the "God gap," has emerged. Those who frequently attend religious services (regardless of faith background) are more likely to vote for Republicans, while those who rarely or never attend tend to vote for Democrats. As a consequence, candidates and parties consider religion as they design strategies.

Republicans seek to maintain and build their evangelical base without losing support from less religious voters, while Democrats try to expand their appeal by speaking about religion without alienating secular voters.

Future Prospects and Challenges

For many decades, evangelicals have sought to influence the political process with mixed success. Several lessons from these experiences can help evangelicals chart a positive path forward.

We can start by ensuring that biblical principles, not party or ideology, shape our political vision. Evangelicals should look to Scripture as they evaluate and prioritize political issues. Biblical values transcend party lines, so we should seek opportunities to build authentic alliances in both parties and space to speak meaningfully into political conversations.

Likely the biggest political challenge currently facing evangelicals is the growing tension between religious freedom and LGBT rights. In the wake of the 2015 Supreme Court decision that legalized gay marriage, the cultural and political landscape is changing rapidly.

Advocates of gay and transgender rights are seeking legal and social changes — some of which threaten free exercise of religion and freedom of conscience. Evangelical leaders need to make a compelling case for the centrality of religious freedom for people of all faiths and seek a place at the table to preserve these fundamental human rights.

Although cultural concerns remain a priority, evangelicals have begun to address a broader range of issues, expanding the agenda to include Christian advocacy on issues such as poverty, hunger, immigration, criminal justice and the environment. This broadening agenda opens more opportunities for evangelical witness in the public square.

Because evangelical voters are an important voting bloc, politicians have many incentives to pander to them. We should critically evaluate candidates' appeals and actions, testing their authenticity.

Pastors and theologians can contribute to the political discussion through theological education. In this time of rapid social change, church leaders need to train people in the pews on how to respond, helping them understand and embody the core commitments of the Christian faith.

The lure of influence is strong. In the process of seeking to influence political debates, it is easy to get caught up in the trappings of power and lose sight of our central calling as Christians. Political decisions matter, and governing institutions shape our lives in significant ways. But politics must always be subordinate to our ultimate allegiance to the kingdom of God and our ultimate calling to share the gospel. **E**





Ron Sider is distinguished professor of theology, holistic ministry and public policy at Palmer Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and author of over 30 books, including *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger*.

Taking the Hate Out

Changing the Tone with Each Other and Elected Leaders

I fear that historians may someday report that the 2016 presidential election was the nastiest in my lifetime. It has already been vicious, dishonest and depressing.

But we must resist the temptation to withdraw in disgust and revulsion for two reasons. First, elections and the resulting political decisions have an impact — for better or worse — on the lives of billions of people. Second, our most basic Christian confession is that Jesus Christ is Lord even of “the kings of the earth” (Revelation 1:5; Matthew 28:18). Therefore, Christians must seek to act politically in ways that reflect Christ our Lord. Since we live in a democratic society, our vote — or even our failure to vote — shapes what happens in the important arena of politics.

So we must engage in politics. But it doesn't stop there. We are also called to submit to governing authority and to “show proper respect to everyone, love the family of believers, fear God, honor the emperor” (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:17).

How do we show proper respect to those in power even if we ardently disagree with them? How do we let Christ be Lord of our politics?

A Biblically Balanced Agenda

We must start by having a biblically balanced agenda. To flesh out a biblically balanced agenda would require another article (or book). But the NAE's official policy document, “For the Health of the Nation,” rightly calls us to be pro-life and pro-economic justice, pro-family and pro-creation care, pro-sexual integrity and pro-peace.

A broad agenda gives evangelicals credibility in the public square. We don't solely speak to pet topics, but we attempt to speak into the breadth of concerns present in Scripture.

A Passion for Truth

Christian voters must have a passion for truth. Sadly, politicians often tell lies — half lies and whole lies. Christians know that God hates lies — and also that lying in politics is bad for democracy. Christians should demand honesty and civility from all politicians.

Biblical faith calls us to respect every person — no matter how much we disagree with them — because every person is made in the image of God and is loved by God.

And if politicians claim to be Christians, then we should be especially strong in condemning any dishonesty or lack of civility in their actions. In fact, prominent evangelical leaders have done precisely that in prominent condemnation of unChristian political behavior. And all of us should listen carefully to their critiques as we reflect on how to vote this November.



It is easy to go online to Politifact (They won a Pulitzer Prize.) or Factcheck. Responsible fact-checking organizations like these can quickly tell you whether what a politician says is true.

And we should take great care to be truth-tellers ourselves. Before forwarding an email about a candidate or governmental official's position on a topic or some other piece of information meant to demean or attack the person, we should fact-check to make sure we are being truth-bearers. This is a way to respect those God has put in authority over us.

A Passion for Civility

Lastly, Christians should have a passion for civility as they engage in politics. Biblical faith calls us to respect every person — no matter how much we disagree with them — because every person is made in the image of God and is loved by God.

Perhaps the most important thing evangelicals could do during intense political seasons is model honest, civil discussion in our local congregations. Civility demands that we truly listen

to those we disagree with so that we genuinely understand what they are saying.

Every local congregation could decide to form a “study-discussion” group focused on political engagement. The group should include Republicans, Democrats and Independents. If your congregation is entirely Republican (or Democratic), then partner with a neighboring church with different views. Every person who joins the group should promise to listen carefully to each person's views and arguments. (One great way to test if one is listening carefully is to rephrase the other person's views and then ask if that is what they truly mean to say.)

If holding the group during a presidential election, each group could research the platforms and behavior of the presidential candidates and then compare their overall platform (and also what one can reasonably expect them to try and implement if elected!) with the balanced biblical agenda of the NAE's “For the Health of the Nation.”

After vigorously — and with truth and civility — arguing for different

positions, each group could pray together asking God to guide their advocacy and election outcomes, since we humans can only “see through a glass darkly.”

A New Era of Political Discussion

We are privileged to live in a democracy where every person has a vote and the people (at least theoretically) can decide who will be our political leaders. But democracy only works well if citizens are informed and thoughtful and if politicians are honest and civil.

America has urgent problems that require political decisions. Tragically, the lack of honest, civil political dialogue has produced dangerous gridlock. But Christians and local churches can model civil, honest political dialogue and debate across genuine political disagreements. By doing this, we might even encourage our politicians to embrace a new era of honest, civil political discussion. **1**





Why Local Politics Matter

In 1997 I was elected to the local city council after writing a 25-year vision statement for the town of 50,000 the year before. I didn't want to serve on a city council. I wanted to serve in the state legislature. I had run for that job the year before and lost — badly. I didn't see where my particular passion for social issues and tax policy could be of use when debating the names of the new streets and whether or not we'd have a full-time fire department.

Something changed on my way to the state legislature though. God had a bigger plan — a plan that mattered to the 300 residents who helped craft the town's vision statement. They were being disregarded by the current city council. They wanted a champion, and I reluctantly volunteered to serve.

There was a big lawsuit that certainly would have bankrupted the city if it wasn't resolved, and God put me in a position to help see that through. More importantly God measured my steps and reminded me each day that I was in the position to serve others, and not myself.

If you are considering running for a seat in your state legislature or Congress, you may think local politics is something you'd rather skip. Or perhaps you don't see yourself serving in any political office but prefer to focus your advocacy solely on national politics. I urge you to reconsider.

Being on a city council or school board is far more difficult politically than serving as a governor or senator. It's harder work, more personal, and there is no national television coverage to revel in. People know who you are and where you live, and they will come talk to you in your office hours and open meetings.

Advocacy on the local level directly impacts you and your neighbors. Caring about local advocacy shows a deep concern for the “least of these” right in your backyard. Since local leaders often serve as feeders into state and national politics, your local vote could have greater impact than you know. If you don't like the tone and tenor of national politicians, consider rallying behind candidates of character and civility on the local level who may someday become your state and national representatives.

There is no more direct impact you can have on the lives of your fellow man than in your service locally. It is a chance for you to put the Light that is Jesus in the town square to attract others to him.

Even if you never hold elected office, our neighborhoods desperately need engaged voters who will apply the command to love our neighbors to the laws and policies that get enacted in all areas of public life. For the last 30 years, for example, everyday activists have helped Prison Fellowship stand for criminal justice reforms that reflect the dignity of each person held in their nearest correctional facility, and help restore the 650,000 people who are released to local communities each year.



And who knows what comes next if you get involved in your local politics? After losing my first run for state representative and spending a few years building relationships locally, I never had another serious challenger run against me my entire political career. I went on to be elected to the Michigan House on God's time without a primary or general election opponent and was elected speaker of the House unanimously just two years later at age 34.

None of this would have happened if I stayed on "my" path instead of God's. I'd have never been any good at helping people in my state if I hadn't learned how to help my neighbors first. The same goes for advocacy.

Serving on a city council and engaging in local politics puts one's Christian values of loving your neighbor on display in a unique and powerful way. It also provides valuable experience for greater reach — whether that's on a state, national or global level. 📌



The Expectations Project, a faith-based education advocacy organization, featured NAE voices on education equity in an eBook. Download your free copy at bit.ly/NAEEbook.



Closing out his eighth year as an elected school board member for Richmond, Virginia, Don Coleman looks back on his tenure with pride. In particular, working with fellow board and community members to transform a low-income,

underperforming elementary school into one with a recognized International Baccalaureate program was rewarding.

For Coleman, who is also lead pastor of East End Fellowship, serving on the school board is not about personal agendas or politics, but rather about trying to give public school kids a brighter future. "I felt like God was saying to me, 'If kids can't read, then they can't read the Bible.' This is what motivated me to become a policy maker in the school district," he said.

"It was most important for me to keep my Christian witness — particularly in closed sessions where board members are not as concerned with keeping a civil tone. These rooms are exactly where Christians should bring Christ-likeness. And we ought to live in such a way that if we left the neighborhood, people would notice."



FOR EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON

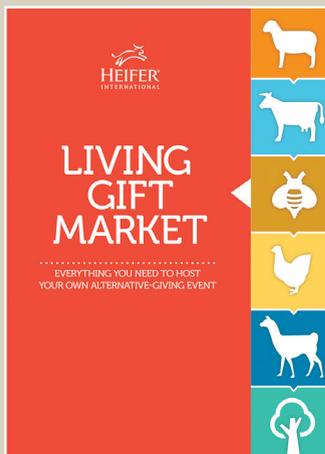
Bring “love your neighbor” to life year-round with Heifer International church programs.

Dan West, a farmer and member of the Church of the Brethren, founded Heifer when he had the idea to offer dairy cows as a source of ongoing nutrition to people in need rather than temporary aid.

Heifer’s mission ever since has been to end hunger and poverty while caring for the Earth by empowering families to become self-reliant through gifts of livestock and training in sustainable agriculture.

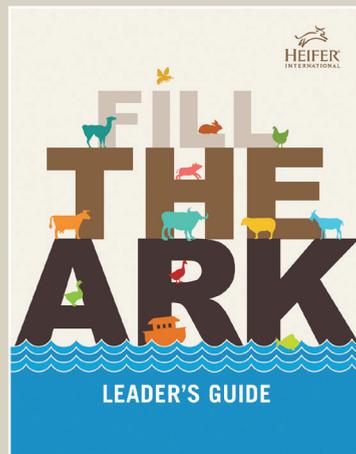
A TIME TO GIVE

These **FREE**, hands-on resources can help you transform hearts in your own church while helping to end hunger and poverty worldwide.



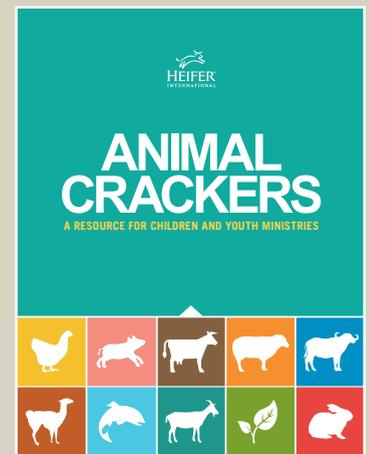
LIVING GIFT MARKET

Host an event that allows your church to purchase “living gifts” like goats, bees and cows through Heifer International that help feed hungry families.



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Bill Wichterman is senior legislative advisor at Covington and Burling. He previously served as special assistant to President George W. Bush and spent nearly 20 years as a senior congressional aide.

Citizens of the Kingdom

I have spent my career in politics because I love justice and I hate injustice. And I have usually enjoyed the politics, too. But for the past year, I haven't enjoyed it one bit.

Jesus promised his followers they would be strangers in the world. Many of us feel less and less at home in our nation, which serves as a good reminder that we are citizens of another kingdom.

It's true that our primary allegiance is to the kingdom of God. It is also true that politics is, like the rest of the world, a fallen enterprise. But it does not follow that we can opt out of advocating for justice through government.

The kingdom of God is much more than praise songs, prayer meetings and Bible studies. It entails resistance to injustice and the promotion of virtue. To be a Christian means to care for the "least of these" and to love honest weights and scales. These are not optional kingdom pursuits but are part and parcel of what it means to "set your minds on things above" (Colossians 3:2).

God's kingdom is just and peaceable, and we are obliged to do our best to approximate the justice of that eternal kingdom here and now. We will fall short, to be sure, but ours is the trying.

Being a responsible citizen who cares about justice may include writing-in a candidate where there are no suitable choices or voting for the lesser of two evils. But it must not include sitting at home on Election Day.

Politics may not be "your thing" in that you do not enjoy it, but seeking to advance justice through government is always "our thing" as Christians. Our fight against injustice must never take a sabbatical. Our rest will come when the kingdom of God is fully consummated in heaven. **E**

To be a Christian means to care for the "least of these" and to love honest weights and scales.





For the Health of the Nation

A Brief History of NAE Advocacy

From the humble beginnings of its 1942 founding, the National Association of Evangelicals has grown into a respected, unifying voice for evangelicals in our nation’s capital.

An early concern was protecting access to the airwaves for evangelical radio broadcasters. Delegates to the annual conventions also approved resolutions on public policy issues ranging from confronting communism to promoting racial justice to banning smoking on airplanes.

In 1953, newly elected President Dwight D. Eisenhower met with NAE leaders in the White House to discuss the need for national moral and spiritual renewal. The Korean War was drawing to a close, but the struggle with communism abroad and the sexual revolution at home would continue for decades. Most presidents since then have either spoken at NAE events or met with NAE leaders.

For many years the NAE was represented by Clyde Taylor, Sr., a former Christian and Missionary Alliance missionary to Peru. Taylor’s experience proved valuable as he helped many recently formed evangelical missionary societies negotiate passport and visa issues with the State Department and foreign embassies.

While NAE members appreciated the practical assistance with government representation, Billy Melvin, who served as NAE executive director from 1967–1995, recalls that some evangelicals frowned upon political involvement. This changed over time.

After years of patient work in educating legislators, forming coalitions and mobilizing constituent support, the NAE helped

1956

The NAE holds its first Federal Seminar (now called the Christian Student Leadership Conference), introducing generations of evangelical collegians to opportunities for public and government service

1973

The Supreme Court decides *Roe v. Wade*

1944

The NAE forms World Relief, the Chaplains Commission and the National Religious Broadcasters



1979

The NAE launches *Washington Insight*, a monthly publication providing updates on public policy issues of concern to evangelicals



get two important bills through Congress in one year: the Equal Access Act of 1984 (EAA) and Church Audit Procedures Act (CAPA).

The EAA guarantees the rights of students to meet on high school campuses for religious purposes, where the school allows non-curricular secular groups similar privileges. The Christian Legal Society’s Kim Colby said, “The NAE worked tirelessly for the EAA. The EAA is why public secondary students can read the Bible, pray and share their religious beliefs on public school property.”

That same year, the NAE pushed Congress to pass the CAPA, which protects churches from unduly intrusive audits by the IRS, as part of broader tax reform legislation.

In 1990, religious freedom advocates were shocked when the Supreme Court declared that the Constitution does not protect religious believers from a neutral law of general applicability that hinders the free exercise of their religion.

The NAE worked with a broad coalition to pass the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (RFRA). When the Supreme Court ruled that RFRA did not apply to state and local governments, the NAE advocated for the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA), which addresses religious discrimination by prison officials and local zoning boards.

Another landmark law with NAE fingerprints is the International Religious Freedom Act.

Successful advocacy for domestic and international religious freedom is a consistent thread throughout the NAE’s history. “When it comes to advancing religious liberty for all persons of any faith over the past 25 years, the NAE can only be

Engagement in the public square is one way — along with strengthening denominations and churches, endorsing chaplains, resourcing leaders and more — in which the NAE furthers its mission to honor God by connecting and representing evangelical Christians in the United States.

described as indispensable,” said Steve McFarland, legal counsel for World Vision.

The NAE’s advocacy agenda over the years has been broad. President Ronald Reagan’s famous “Evil Empire” speech was delivered at the NAE’s 1983 Orlando convention. A major NAE initiative on Peace, Freedom and Security Studies — conducted as the Cold War raged — provided sophisticated and balanced analysis that critiqued distortions of both right and left.

Other NAE advocacy focused on human rights, contributing to passage of the North Korea Human Rights Act, the Sudan Peace Act, the Prison Rape Elimination Act, and the Trafficking Victims Protection Act.

The NAE also supported pro-life legislation including the Hyde and Weldon amendments and the Partial Birth Abortion Act. In recent years, major NAE activity has built significant evangelical support for immigration reform, criminal justice reform and ending predatory lending abuses. The NAE’s approach is summarized in “For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility.”

1983

President Ronald Reagan delivers his “Evil Empire” speech to the NAE



2009

The NAE board engages in a consultation process leading to a resolution on immigration policy, resulting in robust evangelical support for immigration reform

1993

Religious Freedom Restoration Act passes Congress in near unanimous vote

2004

The NAE’s “For the Health of the Nation” publication outlines policy focus issues, including religious freedom, family life and children, sanctity of life, poverty, human rights, peacemaking and creation care



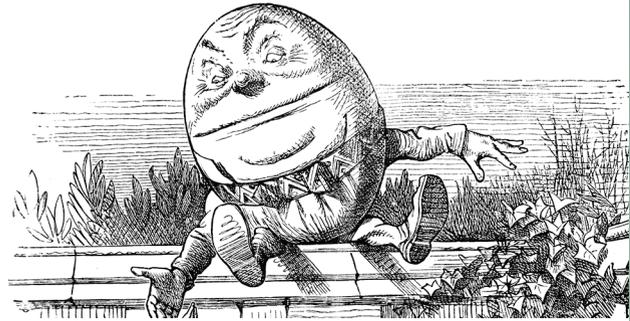


Humpty Dumpty Politics

“Vote for Humpty Dumpty” seems like an unlikely bumper sticker — although stranger things have been happening this election year.

You already know the nursery rhyme by heart — it is one of the most popular and best known in the English language:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the king’s horses and all the king’s men
Couldn’t put Humpty together again.



What do these words mean? Well, we really don’t know. Author unknown. Meaning unclear. We usually assume that Humpty was an egg, but that’s not what it says. The lines are probably political — the ways of yesterday have come crashing down and all the government’s resources can’t put them back the way they used to be.

It sort of means whatever you want it to mean. In Lewis Carroll’s “Through the Looking-Glass” (1872), Carroll tells about a conversation between Humpty and Alice (of “Alice In Wonderland”).

“I don’t know what you mean by ‘glory,’” Alice said.

Humpty Dumpty smiled contemptuously. “Of course you don’t — till I tell you. I meant ‘There’s a nice knock-down argument for you!’”

“But ‘glory’ doesn’t mean ‘a nice knock-down argument,’” Alice objected.

“When I use a word,” Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean — neither more nor less.”

Sound familiar?

The good news for Christians is that our faith is centered in Jesus Christ — not the ways of yesterday, the uncertainties of tomorrow, the outcome of elections or Humpty Dumpty politics. We remember when Israel had a great fall and was carried into distant captivity in Babylon. They yearned for God to put everything back together again, and God told them to stay put, build houses, plant gardens, get married, have children, increase in numbers and “seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to God for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper” (Jeremiah 29:7).

Alice didn’t know what Humpty meant by “glory,” and Humpty totally twisted the meaning. Christians know all about glory and echo the words of Psalm 34:3, “Glorify the Lord with me; let us exalt his name together.” The classical roots of the biblical word “glory” refer to a person’s reputation. To glorify the Lord is to enhance God’s reputation. Our call is to make God look good. Politics change. Humpty Dumpty’s rise and fall. God doesn’t change and never falls. As we debate, campaign, pray and vote — make God look good. **E**

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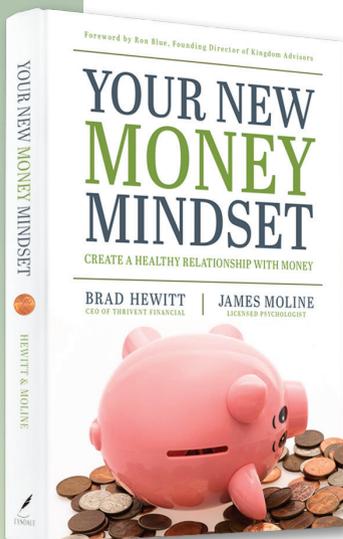
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—Leith Anderson, President of the National Association of Evangelicals



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