

LIVING THE LIFESTYLE OF JESUS IN A POLITICALLY CHARGED SEASON



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by [Dave Butts](#)

Every election season brings a certain degree of anxiety or uneasiness. It's a big change when one leader steps down and another takes his or her place. Recently, national elections are bringing out, what seems to me, to be a greater level of anxiety and even anger than most election cycles. Social media

is a reflection of that. Try expressing an opinion on social media without someone slamming you.

Today, Christians are faced with some tough choices, and I don't just mean which candidate to vote for. How do we handle the high level of animosity and tension that is so prevalent in our nation today? How do we live out the lifestyle of Jesus in our politically charged season?

I'm seeing a number of choices being made. Some develop a posture of being above it all. "Jesus is my King and I'm not lowering myself into the fray." Certainly we need to have a Christian worldview that recognizes the temporary nature of nations, elections, and culture itself in the light of eternity. But I would suggest to those taking this path that Jesus himself did not withdraw from the culture or even the politics of his day. He waded into some of the most controversial issues that divided Israel in his day, while at the same time, insisting that His Kingdom was not of this world.

There's another extreme that is also very prevalent. It happens when Christians forget that the advance of the Kingdom of Christ is not dependent upon who the president of the United States is. Ignoring that can cause us to become combative, angry, and over-emphasize the importance of this or any election. In this posture we forget that those in another political party or backing a different candidate are not our enemies. We can find ourselves demonizing others and forgetting the law of love.

May I suggest a broad middle ground that allows for many degrees of involvement or non-involvement? It recognizes that that in our nation we have been given as astonishing gift of selecting our own leaders. Yes, yes, I know they often fail us. But then, who of us doesn't fail in our best attempts at times. The truth of the matter is that we still get the opportunity to choose, even if the choices aren't always what

I would want.

The Apostle Paul commands us in I Timothy 2, to pray for those in authority so that we might live quiet and peaceful lives. He sums up that thought in verse 4, relating it to God's desire for everyone to be saved. Paul really was interested in who government leaders were, but not so he could have a nice, comfortable life, but so that the atmosphere of the nation would be conducive to evangelism. It seems to me that Paul demonstrates a beautiful balance for us regarding our involvement in selecting leadership and voting.

Of course, Paul could not even imagine the option of selecting his own governmental leaders. But as I hear his command to pray for those leaders in order to prepare the way for evangelism, I have no doubt that Paul today would add to his command to pray, the command to vote. Pray and vote, so that the purposes of God might be accomplished.

So in the midst of a divisive, tense, and angry time, how should we live in this political world? Again, I look to Paul for instruction. To the Philippians, and to us, Paul gives a most contemporary instruction: "Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God" (Phil. 4:5-6).

What a contrast this is to what is currently taking place! Gentleness . . . peace . . . prayer! That's how we approach an election season. And I believe Paul even shows us how to do that. In the midst of his commands he says, "The Lord is near." We often immediately rush to the Second Coming when we read this, but I'm not sure that's what Paul is saying. The Lord is near . . . he is close . . . he is right beside you.

With Jesus right next to you . . . near . . . you can live out his gentleness, his peace, and you will find yourself praying not only for your leaders, but for all that the Lord

places on your heart. Eventually the nearness of Jesus breaks through the clouds with the physical return of Jesus to Planet Earth. But until then, we draw near to him in prayer and he draws near to us and we demonstrate to those around us the life of Jesus

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