

IN THE MARGINS: Why Christians can't sit out elections

By Tony Martin

Editor

When election season rolls around, it can feel overwhelming: candidate ads flood the airwaves, social media is filled with arguments, and it's easy to wonder if participating even makes a difference. But as Christians, we carry both spiritual and civic responsibilities, and voting is one of those duties we simply can't neglect. In this editorial, I'll explore why Christians are called to engage thoughtfully in the electoral process, how to discern between candidates, and the critical role of prayer throughout the journey. Let's also remember that no matter the outcome, God remains sovereign.

Voting as a Civic Duty

Scripture reminds us that God has placed us within systems of governance for a reason. In Romans 13:1-2 (ESV), Paul writes: *"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."*

While we are ultimately citizens of God's Kingdom, we are also called to be good citizens here on earth. Voting is one way we participate in shaping our communities, pursuing justice, and promoting the common good. Avoiding the polls or refusing to engage doesn't exempt us from responsibility – it's simply a missed opportunity to influence the direction of our nation in a way that reflects godly values.

Jesus, in Mark 12:17 (ESV), told His followers to *"render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things*

that are God's." Voting is one of the ways we "render" what belongs to our earthly obligations. It's not just about politics – it's about stewardship. We are entrusted with the privilege of electing leaders who will impact policies affecting the vulnerable, the marginalized, and future generations.

Discernment: Listening with Wisdom

The process of evaluating candidates and their platforms requires wisdom and discernment. It's easy to get caught up in political rhetoric, but as believers, we're called to listen beyond the soundbites. Proverbs 18:15 (ESV) says: "*An intelligent heart acquires knowledge, and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.*"

Discernment means looking at more than campaign promises. It's important to consider a candidate's character, policies, and how their platform aligns (or doesn't) with biblical principles. This isn't about finding the perfect candidate – because let's face it, no one is perfect – but it is about asking the right questions:

- Does this candidate promote justice and care for the vulnerable?
- Are they leading with humility and integrity?
- How do their policies impact issues of life, peace, and the well-being of others?

Additionally, it helps to seek diverse perspectives. Surround yourself with wise counsel (Proverbs 11:14), listen to different viewpoints, and measure everything against God's Word.

The Essential Role of Prayer

No matter how clear or confusing the election may feel, prayer is essential at every stage. 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (ESV) urges us:

“First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.”

We pray not only for wisdom in our decisions but also for those running for office, that they would be guided by righteousness. And yes, we pray even for leaders we don't agree with, trusting that God can work through them just as much as He can work through leaders we admire.

Prayer also keeps us grounded when the outcome isn't what we hoped for. Elections can stir anxiety, but Philippians 4:6-7 (ESV) encourages us: *“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

We need that peace, especially in an election season marked by tension. Prayer aligns our hearts with God's will, reminding us that He is in control no matter the results.

God's Sovereignty in Every Season

It's easy to place too much hope in political outcomes, thinking that the “right” candidate will save the day or that a defeat spells disaster. But here's the truth: God is sovereign, regardless of who wins or loses. Proverbs 21:1 (ESV) reminds us: *“The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.”*

This verse is a powerful reminder that God's purposes prevail, even when earthly leaders falter. As believers, we don't tie our hope to any political figure. We anchor our hope in Christ, knowing that God is working all things together for good (Romans 8:28).

Engaging in the political process is important, but the

results don't define us. Whether our candidate wins or loses, our mission remains the same: to love God, love others, and reflect His light in a world that desperately needs it.

Final Thoughts

As Election Day approaches, let's not sit on the sidelines. Voting is both a privilege and a responsibility, a way for us to contribute meaningfully to our communities. But let's do so prayerfully, with discernment and trust in God's sovereignty. No candidate or platform can substitute for the hope we have in Jesus.

So, let's vote with open eyes and faithful hearts, knowing that the real King of Kings is already on His throne. Regardless of the outcome, He is in control. And that, my friends, is good news.