

November 2006

How Would Jesus Vote?

By Jeff Bonzelaar, Executive Director

I heard a leading Evangelical on Christian radio the other day talk about some pro-gay curriculum that had been introduced to a second grade classroom in a school district here in America. After stating his alarm over such material, he urged fellow Christians to exercise their right and responsibility to vote in the upcoming election. His argument was, "If we don't stem back the tide of moral perversion on this front, the nation will spin out of control."

I can appreciate such concerns but wonder if much of these efforts (e.g., fighting to keep prayer in school and the Ten Commandments in court houses and the phrase "under God" in our pledge of allegiance and etc.) are misguided. While we as Christians are to resist and make war against the moral decadence of our society, could we be fighting the wrong *battles*? Let me suggest three reasons as to why I believe, by and large, the Church's present politicking of public morality is flawed:

1. It Is **UNBIBLICAL**

The Church (that's you and me) has no business imposing its standard of righteousness on the world. All the same, the Church has no right in pronouncing judgment on others, and in particular, unbelievers. Unlike God, we cannot judge and love at the same time.

James says that when we judge we are assuming a role that God has exclusively reserved for Himself alone. "There is one lawgiver and judge who is able to save and to destroy," he says. "So who, then, are you to judge your neighbor?" (Ja. 4:12).

Jesus did not come to fix civil morality. He came to establish His church and advance

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God's rule and reign through His people. Yes, Jesus confronted the sins of the Jewish *religious leaders* but never those outside the walls of self-professed faith ("I pass judgment on no one," Jn. 8:15). In like manner, Paul acknowledged that

while Christian leaders must evaluate the behaviors of their own parishioners, he flatly denied that he had any right, ability, or interest in judging “those outside (the church)” (1 Cor. 5:12).

2. It Is *INCONSISTENT*

In the Church we tend to single out certain sins. We have an unpublished hierarchy of sins. We rail against the sin of homosexuality and call it an abomination before the Lord, but is not gluttony just as bad? (see Phil. 3:19 and 1 Cor. 6:19) Yet I can’t remember ever hearing a full scale sermon on this sin. This is strange considering that over 60% of Americans are overweight and 20% obese (1-2% of the population is gay), and that more people suffer and/or die from health issues related to being overweight than from smoking!

And then there’s the abortion issue. We call this murder (which it is) and passionately vote pro-life, but seldom do we express the same concern about other sins. Is not neglect of the poor a sin (see Deut. 15:11 and Prov. 31:9)? And what about the precious waste of natural resources and abuse of the environment (part of the original divine mandate given to humans in Gen. 1:28)? While we publicly make known our displeasure at killing the unborn, are not greed, divorce and remarriage (except in the case of adultery), gossip, and racial injustice just as evil? The world sees this odd prioritization of sin and calls it for what it is—hypocrisy.

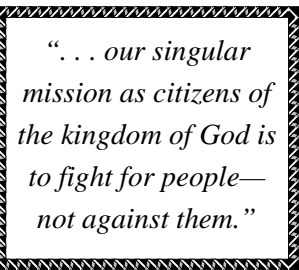
I am certainly not minimizing one sin and elevating another. Sin is sin and, as such, dishonors God (see Ja. 2:8-11). We are all liable before a holy God and in need of His great grace. Nor am I saying that because we are just as sinful as our neighbor (see Rom. 2:1-4) we are, for that reason, restricted from ever addressing important issues. What I am saying is that if we are to have any credibility and our words are to have any weight, we should remove the 2 x 4s out of our own eye before attempting to get the

splinter out of our sister’s eye (see Mt. 7:1-5).

3. It Is *INEFFECTIVE*

The Church is not called to conquer society but to transform individuals. Legislation and laws do not change people. They may curb wrong behaviors (and that is important for the well-being of society), but they do not convert human hearts.

God’s program for reaching a lost, morally corrupt world is through Christ’s scandalous, outrageous love shining from Calvary reflected through His body. Our job in this world as Christians is to openly display the beautiful holiness of God’s kingdom through our economics, social relations, and care of the earth.



“. . . our singular mission as citizens of the kingdom of God is to fight for people—not against them.”

I am not suggesting that political involvement is useless. Thank God for persons like William Wilberforce who fought a forty-six year battle for the abolition of slavery in the British Empire and finally saw it made illegal. I am simply saying that political involvement has limitations.

On the night of Jesus’ arrest, Jesus rebuked Peter for cutting off the high priest’s servant’s ear. He showed by His example that His kingdom would not and cannot be advanced by wielding the sword but only by bearing the cross (Lk. 22:50-51).

CONCLUSION

The question is not *whether* we as Christians should get involved in politics; it is *how* we should be involved. Bringing religion into the public square doesn’t best happen by the takeover of the mechanisms of the state, but by manifesting an alternative Calvary-quality community.

The issue is not so much how Jesus would *vote*; it is

how He would *live*. It is not the power of one's vote that, in the final analysis, will defeat evil. Rather, it is the mustard-seed power of God's kingdom lovingly fleshed out.

Pastor and author Greg Boyd writes, "Our trust, time, energy, and resources must not be centered on improving government but on living out the revolutionary kingdom of Jesus Christ in every way, shape, and form." For this we must ask, "How can we take up the cross and bleed for the world?"

We have a duty to pray for our leaders. But let us not place undue trust in any political candidate or program. The hope of our nation (and this world) lies in a kingdom that is not of this world, a kingdom that operates with a completely different understanding of power, a kingdom that seeks to love rather than coerce. Whatever our opinions of how the kingdoms of this world should rule, our singular mission as citizens of the kingdom of God is to fight *for* people—not *against* them—just as Jesus fought for people. We do this by laying down our lives in service for our enemies.

Testimony

Michelle Turonek

"I was born in 1982 in Warren, Michigan. My father was an alcoholic and a drug dealer. When I was six, my mother divorced my father and remarried shortly after.

I did well in school and was involved in lots of extra curricular activities. It was important for me to fit in. I would be devastated if I found out someone didn't like me.

When I was 18, I met a man who appeared to love me. He asked me to marry him. We moved to Missouri, bought a house, and began to plan for a family.

I became lonely and got involved with the wrong people. I eventually left my fiancée for other men and drugs. In less than a year I was homeless, sleeping on

peoples' couches, and getting food from shelters. I moved back home to Michigan in 2002. My parents had no idea of the life I was living. I would work and go to college but my weekends were spent doing any drug I could get my hands on.

The whole drug scene fascinated me. I educated myself on everything there was to know about drugs and street life. Pride and arrogance crept in. I thought I was indestructible.

In 2004 I began using heroin. I could not fight the hold it had on me. I was on a mission of self-destruction. I wound up alone in a filthy apartment with just my mattress.

I turned to my mother for help. She knew of Life Challenge from a rally that had taken place at her church. She gave me the phone number and told me it was my decision.

I called to set up an interview and entered the program November 1, 2005. I was broken and ready to surrender. I was given a Bible, and for the first time Jesus Christ came alive to me. I was amazed by what He had done to save someone as sinful as me.

Today I have so much relief and freedom knowing that God is in control and I'm not. I am growing daily through the Spirit's guidance. I praise God for His amazing grace. I am so thankful for having this year to experience and develop a relationship with Jesus Christ who is now my best friend! "

P.S. Michelle graduated last month and is doing a six-month internship in the Women's Division.



Join us in our vision of raising up holy conspirators whose ultimate allegiance is to the King of Kings and the advancement of His kingdom for the good of all peoples (not just Americans) to the glory of God.

Together for souls,

Jeff