

What Christians Should Do Before and After Casting Their Ballot – Biblical Perspectives

By Chad Stuart

(This article is adapted from a sermon Chad Stuart preached at the Spencerville Seventh-day Adventist Church on November 5, 2016, three days before the United States presidential election. Even though this particular election has passed the general principles delineated in this article are still valid and applicable. The complete sermon can be accessed at <https://vimeo.com/190463303>).

Ellen G. White counsels, “Keep your voting to yourself. Do not feel it your duty to urge everyone to do as you do”.¹ But Adventists today, like many Americans entering the ballot box on November 8, are very much engaged with the political process. Both sides have predicted great calamity if the other side wins. And privately there is also great concern of great calamity even if your candidate is elected as well.

We, as a nation, may be in for some challenging times. We have people like Eddie Gaude Jr., the chair of the Center for African-American Studies at Princeton University, a devout Democrat, saying he will not vote for Donald Trump—yet he refuses to vote in good conscience for Hillary Clinton. Then we have John Kasich, the Republican Governor of the State of Ohio, who has already submitted his ballot with the write-in-name of John McCain for president, thus bringing back the Republican candidate from 2008. It is truly a presidential election like no other I have seen in my lifetime and, from my understanding, like few others in history.

God is Still in Control

Many people have expressed concern over this election—even true anxiety beyond the typical dislike of candidates that always exists. However, there are biblical principles that can alleviate some of the anxiety we feel when it comes to political decisions:

First and foremost, let us remember 1 Chronicles 29:10–12:

*Blessed are You, LORD God of Israel, our Father, forever and ever. Yours, O LORD, is the greatness, The power and the glory, The victory and the majesty; For all that is in heaven and in earth is Yours; Yours is the kingdom, O LORD, And You are exalted as head over all. Both riches and honor come from You, And You reign over all. In Your hand is power and might; In Your hand it is to make great And to give strength to all.*²

Those who have had moments of great concern for our nation should remember this truth: all that is in the heavens and in the earth is God’s. This earth does not belong to the Democrats, the Republicans, the Libertarians, or the Green Party. The earth belongs to God. God is exalted as head above all. This is the truth we need to hold in our hearts before we cast our votes and it is the truth in which we should find comfort afterwards. No matter which candidate wins the election, God is still God. Does God find it more difficult to be God should one become president over the other? Is God perplexed at the outcome of elections?

God is God no matter who is president. As Christians we must maintain perspective: God is still great! God is still all-powerful! God is still our ultimate leader!

No Vote is Truly Righteous

Another truth to remember—which may be harder to accept—is that none of us cast a truly righteous vote. None of the candidates are righteous per se. It does not matter if one seems to have sinned less than the other, or if one's failings are more apparent than the other. Sin is sin to God!

Of course we desire for our political leaders and candidates to seek God and His will. But let us not consider our votes or these candidates to be spiritually right or wrong; we are spiritual people voting for a *secular* office. The Bible reminds us that there is “none righteous—no not one” (Rom 3:10). This includes the person voting in the booth, so let us remember not to denigrate those who may cast their ballot in a different direction. The candidates running for office and the individuals in the ballot box are all great sinners in need of a great Savior. There is no one righteous—no, not one!

Pray for Kings and All in High Positions

Scripture instructs us on our moral responsibility toward political leaders after they have been appointed: no matter who wins, we are to pray for their success and well-being.

Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim 2:1–4, emphasis supplied)

Regardless of who wins an election, our responsibility as Christians is to pray for them. We must remember that our moral commitment to Christ is higher than our allegiance to any human being, and we are to follow God's counsel to pray for all men and for all leaders!

God wants us to pray for our leaders so that we may have peace, and because God desires the salvation of all. Jesus loves Donald Trump, Hillary Clinton, Gary Johnson, and Jill Stein every bit as much as He loves you! His death on the cross was for them just as much as it was for you. The sins of Donald Trump and Hilary Clinton are no more responsible for hanging Jesus on the cross than your sin or mine.

Nebuchadnezzar was an immoral narcissist who built a giant gold statue of himself. His nickname was “The Hammer” (cf. Jer 50:23) because of all the people he killed. Yet God allowed Daniel to be put in Nebuchadnezzar's presence so that He could bring salvation to Nebuchadnezzar. Studies of Daniel may focus on the prophecies and what they mean for us in the here and now, but do not forget there was a man in the Babylonian kingdom that God wanted to save. At each junction Nebuchadnezzar was urged to acknowledge God as his God, but it wasn't until the very end that he declared, “*Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, all of whose works are truth, and His ways justice. And those who walk in pride He is able to put down*” (Dan 4:37).

Daniel's mission was not only to lead us into an understanding of 1844. His first mission was to help lead the heart of a wicked despot into a saving relationship with the God of the universe. So we are to pray for whomever is elected, remembering that God loves that person. Pray that God will send someone to be in their midst and help them grow in their relationship with God. Remember that elected individuals are loved by God just as we are—they are not simply caricatures to be mocked and ridiculed. Jesus died for them too and wants them in the kingdom of heaven.

Finally, remember our vote should not compromise our positive influence and mission. Our mission as Christians does not change—and should not change—because of elections.

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9).

We have the right and privilege to vote. But our vote should not hamper our mission. When elections are over, we should not have done or said anything that would have caused our witness for Christ to be compromised. Pledge to do as Ellen G. White counsels: “keep your voting to yourself,”³ so that our witness can be for everyone.

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¹ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958), 337.

² All biblical quotations are from the New King James Version (NKJV) (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1982), unless otherwise indicated.

³ Ellen G. White, *Selected Messages*, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1958) 336, she adds: “My brethren, will you not remember that none of you have any burden laid upon you by the Lord to publish your political preferences in our papers, or to speak of them in the congregation, when the people assemble to hear the Word of the Lord.”