

To my evangelical friends re: my personal opinion: What's a faithful Christian to do in the 2016 US Presidential election?

Numerous evangelicals, including me, have agonized over the question. The stakes of this election are incredibly high and long term, impacting our nation for decades to come (Come quickly, Lord Jesus!), and I feel compelled to respond. Please interpret this as my own personal opinion. And bear with me. As Mark Twain reportedly said, "I don't have time to write a short letter."

Much hesitancy seems to center upon the character of the two candidates. Does character matter? Of course it does! But character is not the *only* thing that matters.

To many voters, neither of the major party Presidential candidates has much (if any) moral character. Because there are no truly "good" options, some fine Christians think that they can't vote for either candidate. It feels like we're being forced to choose between Nero and Nebuchadnezzar. How can a Christian choose between these two? Both of the candidates can be, at least on some issues, described as "morally loathsome." But barring the unforeseen, one of them will soon occupy the White House.

So what's a faithful Christian with an accurate biblical worldview to do? Drop out? Boycott the election? Cast a "protest" vote for a write-in or third party candidate? Vote only for other offices, and ignore the Presidency? Voting for the "lesser of two evils" seems repugnant to many. I understand that. Unfortunately, the ballots will always be filled with sinners. Jesus has never run for office, and the earth is 100% populated with sinful human beings. Not to vote for the lesser evil is to assist the greater evil. Voting for the lesser evil will result in the greater good for the country.

A frustrating realization: Politics, or our "earthly government," is always led by very human beings. Yes, this is a cursed world, ours is a depraved race, and government is faulty from the start. So do we Christians drop out and shake the dust of "*secular* politics" off our feet? That's simply NOT an option that is open to us. Our humanity—being created in the Image of God—chafes against it. More importantly, the Bible will not allow us to drop out. If you are alive, you are, by definition *poli*-tical. We are all part of the "*polis*" - the human community/state - and the most basic function of a community/state (especially in a constitutional Republic like ours) is to determine, by voting, our *poli*-itical leaders who will select the governing *poli*-cies (rules to govern our living together). Here is a most disgraceful fact: **In our last four election cycles 25 million registered and self-declared evangelicals did NOT vote, and another 13 million evangelicals who were eligible to vote were not even registered.** That means that **38 million evangelicals didn't vote their biblical values.** By not voting, they paved the way for the *poli*-cies of the current administration that are "*fundamentally transforming America.*" We evangelicals must repent from abstaining from the political process.

What does the Bible say about believers participating in *poli*-tics? God made His intentions clear through the prophet Jeremiah: "*SEEK the welfare of the city (state/nation) where I have placed you and pray to the (Sovereign) LORD on its behalf for in its peace you will find your peace.*" SEEK is an intense verb—active and earnest—sometimes even viewed as "worship" as in "*SEEK the Lord!*" If God instructed His chosen people to *seek intensely* the good of an evil empire that hauled them off to an utterly pagan idolatrous kingdom, how much more must we take a lesson to heart and seek the greater good of our own nation which has repeatedly and providentially enjoyed the blessings of God? The Bible indicates our Sovereign God determines

“the exact times and places” where the peoples (polis) should live.” Acts 17. God has placed you HERE and NOW. In the elections of 2016, how will you steward His appointment for you to live HERE and NOW in this Constitutional Republic called the USA where the ballot is your most basic tool?

In the greatest sermon ever preached, Jesus Himself requires His followers to be *“salt and light”* --to have a preserving, life-giving, truth-telling influence upon the way people live in their culture and nation—to impact cultural and governmental policies. Later, while teaching faithful stewardship to His followers, He directed them to *“occupy”* until He returned. Again, occupy is an active verb. It is not an instruction to sit-around-and-take-up-space. Jesus used it in an active, assertive *“get-out-there-and-DO-business-in-My-name”* context. That’s our commandment in this and every election: Christians must stop disappearing, and must act out kingdom values where we live here and now..

With regard to our relationship to human government, Jesus issued a straight up command: ***“Render to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”*** “Render!” is a strong verb meaning “to meet an obligation.” Our country is a Constitutional Republic governed through foundational principles. *“We the people”* are obliged by our Constitution to participate as informed, intelligent and active citizens. Our most basic tool as citizens is the ballot box. Jefferson said it well, *“We do not have a government of the majority, but a government of the majority who participate.”* Our Lord says, “Render!” Our government says “participate!” And we disregard both when we do neither. Can we not agree that to fail to vote is to disobey our King, who sits at the Father’s right Hand? Further, it is to disrespect our Constitution. Our choice is binary--Hillary or Trump. Barring some highly unusual development—and regardless of our personal distastes or moral convictions--one of those two will soon occupy the White House. And we will ALL have participated in the election—either by voting... or by not voting... or by “protest” voting for a hopeless third party... or by writing in some name... or some other equally ineffective option. Jesus’ words again come to mind—we must be *“wise as serpents and harmless as doves.”*

Some of my dearest evangelical friends feel strongly that a believer in the God of the Bible could not vote for such an ungodly, immoral man as Trump’s past indicates him to be. I can sympathize. Believers long for an intelligent, faithful and skilled Christian to be involved in politics at the highest levels. Such a person, for example, as Mike Pence. Mike’s Christian conscience evidently moved him to serve under Trump. **Is it even right for a Christian to vote for, let alone serve such a scripturally flawed leader as Trump?** The one figure in Scripture (other than Jesus) of whom no major sin is recorded, is Joseph. He evidently felt it was right to serve as No. 2 under a cruel dictator in an evil government. Joseph, under Pharaoh, served basically as the Vice President of ancient Egypt. The Pharaohs were notoriously pagan. In fact, they acted like the gods they literally believed themselves to be. Joseph’s boss was the ultimate egotist. The Pharaohs were some of the biggest immoral bullies in history. By choosing to serve under Pharaoh, Joseph was in a position to be used by the providential Hand of Almighty God to advance a Scriptural agenda—the preservation of God’s own people. And consider Esther. What tough personal choices this noble woman had to make! She displayed a devotion to God’s agenda that many believers cherish. Can you imagine submitting to serve as one of many concubines in an evil pagan man’s harem? Her leader/husband was the detestable Persian King Xerxes (the same man who slaughtered “the 300” Spartans at Thermopylae in 480 BC). Esther did what she did, in the words of her cousin and guardian, *“for such a time as this.”*

Yes, Trump has serious spiritual flaws. So did Abraham the liar, and Moses the murdering fugitive. So did David the (much married) adulterous murderer, Peter the lying denier, and Thomas the obstinate doubter. Call it the sin nature. Call it depravity. But whatever you call it, we all suffer from it, and we all fall short. So how many moral flaws are enough to disqualify a candidate from serving as President? One? Or two? 5? A dozen? More?

There are only two real candidates. Both are distasteful personalities with badly stained track records. **But the two candidates are not identical!** FAR from it! One of the two is clearly better than the other. The contrast between the two and their parties and their platforms-- is fearsome. Note just a few of many critical differences between the two candidates:

The Sanctity of Human Life! Trump is pro-life. Hillary is viciously pro-abortion. Democrats have the most pro-abortion platform in history. Trump, however, is not only pro-life but is the only presidential candidate in history to say upfront, *"I will appoint pro-life Supreme Court Justices."* Surely every pro-life believer sees the urgency on this issue alone! And there are so many more clear differences between the two.

Religious Freedom! Hillary and the Party she represents have zero respect for religious liberty, especially for Christians. If they had their way, Christians and the church would be completely removed from the public square. In contrast, Trump has pledged to rescind the 1954 Johnson amendment which threatens the 501(c)3 status and attempts to silence the church from addressing moral issues and public policy, candidates, and elections. Trump insists that Christians be involved in the public square as they have been from the beginning of the nation—openly and freely--absolutely free to speak biblically at all times and on every subject.

Supreme Court Appointees! It is likely the next President will appoint at least two and possibly as many as five Supreme Court Justices. Think of that! Trump has pledged to appoint Justices and Federal Judges (both are lifetime appointments) who are pro-life, who are constitutionalists ("like Scalia") who view the intent of the Constitution as it was originally written (originalists) and not as a so-called "living" document which changes with the whims of our culture. Trump has already released a list of potential Supreme Court nominees, all of whom are solidly conservative. We know Hillary will appoint liberal activists who will legislate from the bench. **If Hillary wins, it is likely there will not be another conservative victory at the Supreme Court for the rest of our lives and perhaps for generations.** The Bill of Rights itself will come under disastrous legal attack, especially the 1st and 2nd Amendments. It will likely be the effective end of the American Republic as we have known it for more than two centuries. If you are uncomfortable with voting for Trump, then consider a vote for him as a vote for the Supreme Court, for the unborn babies, and for your own religious liberty. The future of the Supreme Court is, in itself, fearsome enough to motivate us to vote for Trump. And Mike Pence!

Space doesn't allow discussion here of **other very important issues which also demonstrate an equally great and vivid contrast between the two candidates:** Balanced budgets, Economy and Job Creation, Reducing the \$19 Trillion National Debt, Islamist Terror and Jihad, Revitalizing a decimated Military, Israel, dismantling the disastrous Iranian Nuclear Deal, Energy Independence, Border and Immigration policy.

At another level, let me include here some personal observations about Mr. Trump, with whom I sat thru two very frank meetings recently, one of which was entirely very direct Questions and Answers. I don't believe Mr. Trump is always the brash, arrogant, rude egotist he appears to be

on television. Without the media and cameras present, Trumped seemed to be rather pleasant, thoughtful, and sometimes even funny. I readily admit I have not been drawn to the man. I preferred another candidate during the primary debates. As we all have seen, Donald Trump can be mean, vulgar and brutish. He has said outrageous things and sometimes appears actually juvenile in manner. I abhor his moral record. On the other hand, you seldom have to wonder what he himself is thinking. It's written all over his face and pours out of his mouth. Some call that thoughtless narcissism. Others call it spontaneous (New Yorker?) transparency. In complete contrast, Hillary is totally calculated and manipulative with no regard for truth. At moments, I find some of Trump's silliness to be at least a bit refreshing. He does seem to have a developed disregard, even hatred, of the reigning religion in our country – political correctness. It is strangling the life out of America. God help us.

Back to where we began... "Does character matter?" Of course! But it is not the only thing that matters. I have often said that *"no man rises above the opinion of his children."* I am hopeful therefore that the unanimous, and apparently very genuine, opinions of all Donald Trump's adult children-- evidenced consistently both on stage and behind the curtain-- will prove to be insights into the character of the man. While Donald Trump is a very human being, and the possibility of deep disappointment in him is yet very real, Mr. Trump has convinced many, including me now, that he will fight for the issues which matter most. It is clear, for better or worse, he is not afraid to fight.

Dr. Jim Dobson spoke for many evangelicals when he said: *"All I can tell you is that we have only two choices, Hillary or Donald. Hillary scares me to death. And if Christians stay home because (Trump) isn't a better candidate, Hillary will run the world for perhaps eight years. The very thought of that haunts my nights and days. One thing is sure: we need to be in prayer for our nation at this time of crisis."*

A recent article cast this election in even more potent terms: This is a 9/11 *"Flight 93 election—take over the cockpit or die!"*

"Silence in the face of evil is evil itself... Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." --Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Dare we add, dear Christian, the logical conclusion in our circumstances—not to vote is to vote?)

Disclaimer: The perspectives contained herein are the personal opinions of Stu Weber alone and do not represent any ministry, church, organizational or professional capacity with which he may be associated.

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