

Christians & Politics: Where Art Thou, Perfect Candidate?

Navigating and prioritizing in an imperfect political landscape

By Jesse Phillips

For some people, politics is like marriage. Before getting married promises are made, hopes run high, and romanticized thoughts of the future fuel our hope for a better tomorrow. The bride looks longingly to her Prince Charming, her Knight-in-Shining-Armor, to rescue her and live happily ever after.

Then reality sets in. Soon the damsel becomes distressed that her Prince Alarming has a few quirks he “forgot” to tell her about as they rode away on the white stallion. It’s called Post Honeymoon Syndrome. Everybody experiences it—the process of “getting to know you”—the good, the bad and the ugly warts and all.

I trust you’re not having difficulty anticipating how I’m going to tie this to politics. As in marriage, candidates make promises. They court you, tell you that you are important to them, and that they are dedicated to being faithful to you and your desires forever. Or until their term do you part. Hopes run high that this person is “the one” who will be your advocate in high places and protect your interests. Romanticized thoughts of a better tomorrow run through your mind.

The interesting thing about politics, however, is that the Post Honeymoon Syndrome often sets in before the vote. You begin to learn things about the prospective candidate in advance of the election. His opponents are happy to tell you all the bad things about him. Any initial enthusiasm begins to wane as you realize the imperfections of the candidate.

The real moment of discouragement comes when you realize that *neither* candidate presents a perfect option. Both choices have serious flaws. Nobody seems ideal, and both come with serious risk and downside. It’s like a woman who only has two men to choose to marry. One of them is a nerd, and the other has a unibrow. *What’s a girl to do?*

A common response to this dilemma is to not vote at all. Many people refuse to cast their votes for a candidate about which they do not feel personally excited. Is this the correct way to go? How can we navigate the flawed characters and imperfect political landscape that characterizes life in this fallen world?

Politics is About Priorities

As Christians, we have a responsibility to demonstrate biblical priorities in our civic involvement. In short, biblical priorities—not the candidates’ personality, likeability, charisma, or even the presence or absence of flaws in his platform—that should govern our voting decisions.

Every choice is going to have some baggage in their past. Some association that makes you uncomfortable. Some remark they made 10 years ago that you find embarrassing. Welcome to a world tainted by sin.

The problem is that many times these secondary matters, however important they may be, tend to dominate the conversation to the neglect of issues that really matter. In an incessant effort to drown the important in the sea of the trivial, the media and politicians will endlessly discuss these non-issues as though they are life and death issues. This results in woefully neglecting *true life and death issues*. As Christians, we must focus on issues that truly matter, allowing

the responsibility we have to follow and promote biblical principals to govern our actions and passions. Here are two questions we must ask when considering how to vote.

1. Which issues are the *most* important issues, and who seems to get it right on these issues?

2. Will this vote promote the proper function of government on the most important issues, as biblically defined? Will a choice *not* to vote place the blood on my hands by passively neglecting my responsibility to stand up for truth, while knowingly allowing evil to be unaddressed?

For the remainder of this article we will discuss the issues of high priority this election cycle. You will hear people who are passionate about many different issues try to convince you that their pet issue is the most important. You’ve probably heard that *this election is the most important one in which you’ve ever voted*. Of course it is for the candidates involved. Health care, government spending, the public school system, the economy, taxes, energy policy, foreign policy, Supreme Court appointees and the right to bear arms have all been described as the most important issue for voters to consider.

The question remains: *what are the most important issues to God?* I present two issues that are substantially more important than the others from a divine perspective: *marriage and life*.

Marriage: God’s Self-Portrait

One of the key issues in this election, particularly in Florida, is marriage, specifically the debate of the legitimacy of homosexuality. Should homosexual relationships be recognized as marriage? Should marriage be restricted to a heterosexual definition? This issue has been put forth to the voters in the form of an amendment to the Florida state constitution.

Marriage is important for us as voters because it is important to God. Marriage is important to God because *his glory* is important to him. One of the chief ways God has chosen to glorify himself is through creating mankind in his image, the carriers and caretakers of the precious image and glory of God. In the wisdom of God it was determined that the creation of men and women was the best representation of his glory, and therefore his prescribed means of portraying the stamp of his image on an otherwise incomplete universe.

“So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them” (Gen. 1:27). When God had created the universe—from the marvelous expanse of the heavens to the intricate ecological balance of planet Earth, and all the plants, animals, oceans and canyons therein—he *still declared that something was lacking*. The problem with creation thus far was not that it wasn’t breathtakingly beautiful. The problem was that it God didn’t see himself in it to the greatest degree of clarity. He didn’t see his image in creation. He fixed that by creating one man and one woman to unite in marriage.

Mankind, consisting of one man and woman, was the initial divine self-portrait. When God created Adam and Eve it was as if he said to creation, *“Look at this one man and one woman, united as one flesh through marriage. Do you know*

what you're looking at? You're looking at me and my glory. You can see what I'm like through this covenant with more clarity than you could find anywhere else in creation."

This is why marriage is under such violent attack in our culture. It should come as no surprise that haters of God are haters of marriage as he designed. People hate marriage under the guise of being "compassionate toward gays." In reality, they're not compassionate at all. They are using the sin of homosexual lust as a convenient means of expressing their anger at God and disapproval of the created order. They hate the glory of God.

In short, their message is this: *"God, if you really wanted to be glorious in our eyes, you should have created Adams and two Eves, so they would have a gender choice for a mate."* Of course, producing Cain and Abel would have only been possible if each chose the opposite sex. Otherwise, the human race would have gone extinct, demonstrating the sad, yet logical end of homosexuality: the extinction of God's glory from the earth.

I'm not trying to sound harsh by pointing out this utter depravity and logical ineptitude. I am simply expressing why this issue of marriage is important to God, because he loves his glory. If you get rid of marriage between one man and woman, you eradicate the fundamental expression of God's image on earth. The homosexual agenda is a giant eraser that seeks to remove God's face from the earth he made.

Abortion: Killing God's Image

Another matter that is absolutely essential in this election, and even more vital and fundamental, is *life*. My goal is not to communicate a hierarchy of sins, as though there is any one particular sin that is more responsible for Jesus death on the cross than another. Rather, my point is that abortion is rooted in fundamental hatred of God's glory. If you despise the glory of God as revealed in marriage, you must also trivialize the precious life marriage produces.

One of the most bold-faced and easily disproven lies is the argument that abortion is about protecting and providing quality of life. Hypothetical arguments about women in potentially life threatening pregnancies are used to justify an immoral practice that is not concerned about saving lives, but rather ending them.

Since *Roe v. Wade* the discussion has centered on whether a woman has the right to choose whether or not her baby should live. It's time to move the discussion beyond a debate about a right to choose or when life begins. That life begins at conception is indisputable, yet ignored. Instead of arguing about when life begins, it's time to evaluate the very heart of why people want abortions.

People want abortions because they think they have a right to be in control at any cost, even if it means terminating an unborn child's heartbeat. Yet, the premise that must be attacked is the argument that simply terminating another life can establish our control or happiness.

God's glory is the only thing that can truly satisfy the longing hearts of men for happiness and joy. Pursuing possessions, fame, or the promises of this world will never satisfy us. It is only through being captivated by and living for the glory of God that men and women can be happy.

God's glory is made available to us to pleasurable enjoy in marriage. We take delight in God's representation of

himself through marital union. And, wonder of wonders, the glory of God actually reproduces itself in that union through the children that are born in the image of God. These children then grow in the stature and representation of God's image, eventually consummating God's self-portrait in creation and producing children of their own. This miraculously continues the perpetual cycle of God's glory being transferred and displayed by common grace in every generation.

Proponents of abortion must stop believing Satan's lies that terminating this process can bring anything but sorrow. We were created to glorify God. It is only by participating in God's means of self-glorification that we can find happiness and satisfaction. Killing the unborn puts the brakes on a vehicle to true happiness.

Abortion proponents may charge, "Are you saying that a woman who endures the awful circumstances of an unwanted pregnancy should have to be further punished by the burden of raising a child?"

What I'm saying is that God works all things together for our good. God's glory is not defeated by the sins of man. Even though a pregnancy may result from the vilest of circumstances, the inextinguishable glory of God shines through even in that moment when a child bearing his image is born. Many single mothers will tell you that their babies are the single shining light in a season of utter darkness, and though at one time they could not imagine life with a child, now they cannot imagine life without their child.

To answer the charge I would respond with a charge, "Would you, abortion proponent, snuff out that shining light, that singular consolation, and rob the mother of that transformative experience reaching the point where she can no longer bear the thought of losing the child she has grown to love?"

Out of hatred for the glory of God, the abortion agenda robs women of the experience of God's consoling gift of life for herself or a woman to whom she passes this gift. Choosing life, however, provides the sense that something good can come from the darkest circumstances, even if only to deliver up for adoption, and protects women from the prison of regret and condemnation.

Looking ahead

The issue of life plays out in the presidential election. Barack Obama is staunchly supportive of abortion. According to many sources, he has the most prolific pro-choice record of any presidential candidate that has ever run for office.¹ He has vowed support for the Freedom of Choice Act, which is aimed at overturning all state restrictions on abortions and drastically increasing the number of people killed in America each year under this legalized holocaust of the unborn.

Whether the issue is marriage or the unborn, we have an obligation to love God's glory by protecting marriage and life. Please consider the questions asked above. Vote in such a way that promotes a government that persecutes evil and rewards good. Also, ask yourself if choosing not to vote would neglect your responsibility to stand up for the truth.

Next week: God, Government and Gold—lessons learned from a receding economy.

¹ <http://theologica.blogspot.com/2008/10/robert-p-george-voting-for-most-extreme.html>