

Christians and Politics

A. Jesus told us to be salt and light in our fallen world.

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, **let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.**” Matthew 5:13-16 (NLT)

1. As followers of Christ, our primary citizenship is in heaven. We are only temporary residents in this world. “Dear friends, I warn you as **‘temporary residents and foreigners’** to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.” 1 Peter 2:11-12 (NLT)

2. Being salt and light means being ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. “For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. **So we are Christ’s ambassadors**; God is making his appeal through us.” 2 Corinthians 5:19-20a (NLT)

Important! The Holy Spirit empowers us to be Christ’s ambassadors. “But **you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you**. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” Acts 1:8 (NLT)

3. Being salt and light means caring for the needs of others and working to better the communities in which we live. “Pure and genuine religion in the sight of God the Father means **caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt you.**” James 1:27 (NLT)

“And work for the peace and prosperity of the city where I sent you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, for **its welfare will determine your welfare.**” Jeremiah 29:7 (NLT)

4. Being salt and light means being model citizens in whatever governmental system/political process God places us.

- We can model gentleness and humility. “Remind the believers to submit to the government and its officers. They should be obedient, always ready to do what is good. **They must not slander anyone and must avoid quarreling. Instead, they should be gentle and show true humility to everyone.**” Titus 3:1-2 (NLT)
- We can model honor and respect. “For the Lord’s sake, submit to all human authority—whether the king as head of state, or the officials he has appointed. For the king has sent them to punish those who do wrong and to honor those who do right. **It is God’s will that your honorable lives should silence those ignorant people who make foolish accusations against you.** For you are free, yet you are God’s slaves, so don’t use your freedom as an excuse to do evil. **Respect everyone and love the family of believers. Fear God and respect the king.**” 1 Peter 2:13-17 (NLT)

Important! In this world, there are no perfect candidates, governmental structures, or political parties. “Not a single person on earth is always good and never sins.” Ecclesiastes 7:20 (NLT)

- We can obey the law. “Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God, and those in positions of authority have been placed there by God. So anyone who rebels against authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and they will be punished. For the authorities do not strike fear in people who are doing right, but in those who are doing wrong. Would you like to live without fear of the authorities? Do what is right, and they will honor you. **The authorities are God’s servants, sent for your good. But if you are doing wrong, of course you should be afraid, for they have the power to punish you. They are God’s servants, sent for the very purpose of punishing those who do what is wrong.** So you must submit to them, not only to avoid punishment, but also to keep a clear conscience.” Romans 13:1-5 (NLT)

Note: God has established governments to restrain evil. “**The human heart is the most deceitful of all things, and desperately wicked.** Who really knows how bad it is?” Jeremiah 17:9 (NLT)

Important! We must not obey any law that prevents us from obeying the Lord. “We gave you strict orders never again to teach in this man’s name!” he said. “Instead, you have filled all Jerusalem with your teaching about him, and you want to make us responsible for his death!” But Peter and the apostles replied, **‘We must obey God rather than any human authority.’**” Acts 5:28-29 (NLT)

- We can take our responsibilities as citizens of our city/state/nation seriously. “Pay your taxes, too, for these same reasons. For government workers need to be paid. They are serving God in what they do. **Give to everyone what you owe them:** Pay your taxes and government fees to those who collect them, and give respect and honor to those who are in authority.” Romans 13:6-7 (NLT)

B. Seven ways we can be salt and light in our political process:

1. We can pray. “I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them. **Pray this way for kings and all who are in authority so that we can live peaceful and quiet lives marked by godliness and dignity.** This is good and pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth.” 1 Timothy 2:1-4 (NLT) “Bless those who persecute you. Don’t curse them; **pray that God will bless them.**” Romans 12:14 (NLT)
2. We can seek truth and get wisdom. “Get wisdom; develop good judgment... Don’t turn your back on wisdom, for she will protect you. Love her, and she will guard you. **Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do!** And whatever else you do, develop good judgment.” Proverbs 4:5-7 (NLT)

Important! The Bible is our guide in all matters of faith and practice. “All Scripture is inspired by God and **is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives.** It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip his people to do every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (NLT)

3. We can make our voice heard. **“Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves;** ensure justice for those being crushed. Yes, speak up for the poor and helpless, and see that they get justice.” Proverbs 31:8-9 (NLT) “Rescue those who are unjustly sentenced to die; save them as they stagger to their death. Don’t excuse yourself by saying, **‘Look, we didn’t know.’** For God understands all hearts, and he sees you. He who guards your soul knows you knew. He will repay all people as their actions deserve.” Proverbs 24:11-12 (NLT)
4. Some of us can run for office. “So be careful how you live. Don’t live like fools, but like those who are wise. **Make the most of every opportunity** in these evil days.” Ephesians 5:15-16 (NLT)
5. We can expect people to disagree with us when we talk and act like Jesus. “If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And **if they had listened to me, they would listen to you.** They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me.” John 15:18-21 (NLT)
6. We can treat others with respect and kindness regardless of how they treat us. **“Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you.** This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.” Matthew 7:12 (NLT)
7. We can refuse to give in to fear. “For **God has not given us a spirit of fear,** but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” 2 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV)

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Connect Group Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think over 40% of people who describe themselves as “people of faith” say they are unlikely to vote in this year’s election?
2. Read Matthew 5:14-16 and discuss the following implications of Christians being salt and light in our fallen world:
 - We are only temporary residents in this world. (1 Peter 2:11-12)
 - We are ambassadors of the Kingdom of God. (2 Corinthians 5:19-20, Acts 1:8)
 - We are to care for the needs of others and work to better the communities in which we live. (James 1:27, Jeremiah 29:7)
 - We are to be model citizens in whatever governmental system/political process God places us. (Titus 3:1-2, Colossians 4:5-6, 1 Peter 2:13-17)

3. Read Romans 13:1-7. Why does God allow human governments to exist? Why should we vote even though there are no perfect candidates, governmental structures, or political parties in this world? (Ecclesiastes 7:20)
4. Discuss the following seven ways we can be salt and light in our political process:
 - We can pray. (1 Timothy 2:1-4, Romans 12:14)
 - We can seek truth and get wisdom. (Proverbs 4:5-7, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
 - We can make our voice heard. (Proverbs 31:8-9, Proverbs 24:11-12)
 - Some of us can run for office. (Ephesians 5:15-16)
 - We can expect people to disagree with us when we talk and act like Jesus. (John 15:18-21)
 - We can treat others with respect and kindness regardless of how they treat us. (Matthew 7:12)
 - We can refuse to give in to fear. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Which of these comes easiest to you? Which are the hardest?

5. Spend some time as a group discussing important issues/races on this year's ballot. Alabama Sample Ballots: www.sos.alabama.gov/alabama-votes/2024-general-election-sample-ballots