

The Idol of Politics

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Day One

One thing we can all agree on these days is that things feel heavy. There are so many social issues breaking daily on the news, and the headlines can be polarizing. The polarization is most often political. As a believer in Jesus Christ, are you overthinking about politics? Have you made politics an idol? Let's explore some of the pervasive ways politics can become an idol and how we can turn to the Bible for wisdom.

Why would I want to even touch this idol with a proverbial ten-foot pole? Because the real work we do at work matters for the Kingdom. A political candidate or a law will never save someone from sin. Only Jesus can. And living up to the greatest commandment to love God and love our neighbors as ourselves can get very clouded when politics becomes part of our identity—when they become an idol.

A woman in one of my professional groups recently shared she was afraid to share her Christian faith because one of the churches in her community had been very outspoken about the local political climate. Being known as a Christian alone had raised so much angst in the community.

By the numbers, over 50% of workers expressed concern over the impact of conversations about politics at work, but nearly 40% of U.S. workers have engaged in political discussions at work. Of this group, 60% report these conversations have impacts on productivity.¹

Add to this mix the other matter we care most about, sharing our faith. When these two topics blend, half of your audience will be concerned about the conversation and not in a good way.

Can we keep politics in their proper place? Can we engage but still follow Paul's advice in Romans 12:2 to not conform to the pattern of this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our mind? Have we conformed to the world so much that we have lost our salt? Do we behave too much like the culture around us?

This is not about politics, but it is about how we can check in with ourselves to see if politics have become an idol in our lives. As followers of Jesus, we are called into a dual citizenship. How we represent our heavenly one matters.

Day Two

Is your wellbeing impacted when a specific candidate or political party that isn't your preference has success? Are you bitter or depressed? Before we talk more about these emotions, I want you to consider what you are consuming. Specifically, if you analyze your last week, have you spent more time watching shows that talk about politically polarizing matters than you have spent in God's word? Are you listening to political podcasts, watching political reels on social media and endlessly watching

¹ CivicScience. (2025, February 11). Pulse of the U.S. Workforce Report: Political Leanings Shape Workforce Experiences, Perceptions of Leadership, and More. CivicScience. <https://civicscience.com/pulse-of-the-u-s-workforce-report-political-leanings-shape-workforce-experiences-perceptions-of-leadership-and-more/>

replays of some event that has caused the latest uproar in your community or in the country? In 2025 a Pew Research study found that Americans reported 70% of the news consumed is related to government and politics!

Overconsuming media that causes angst will most certainly impact how you feel. The weight you place on what you see on TV and social media and hear on a podcast or the radio can be an indication that politics is taking up way too much time. Colossians 3:2 reminds us we need to *set our minds on things above and not on earthly things*. We need to keep our identity focused on Christ and an eternal perspective to keep us balanced as we consume the mountain of political and government news on our screens both by choice and not.

This doesn't mean we consume nothing, but we must pay attention to how it makes us feel. When we see perceived wins and losses in the spotlight, it is important to remember we are not to put our trust in princes or any human powers that cannot save (Psalm 146:3). Being overly obsessed with a political outcome or seeing your candidate win takes your focus away from seeing the people around you that you could be leading to a saving relationship with Jesus. And it can seem like you are breaking one of God's commandments. *I am the Lord your God, thou shalt not have any God's before me* (Exodus 20:3). Are you making a candidate a higher priority than God?

Consider showing up for work after your preferred candidate experiences a setback or loss. How is your mood? Would your colleagues want to be around you or avoid you? Do you feel like you need to talk excessively about the results of this matter or can you let these earthly powers fade away so you can give a testimony about your faith?

Talking about God more than politics and keeping our eyes focused on things above can help keep us away from politics as an idol.

Day Three

From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers these things ought to not be so. Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and salt water? Can a fig tree, my brothers, bear olives, or a grapevine produce figs? Neither can a salt pond yield fresh water (James 3:10-12).

These verses in James 3 can apply to all the words we speak. Have you excused your words about politics and think they don't matter? Have you shared something on social media that is less than pleasant or something that incites a heated discussion? What about name calling and labeling of people? Your words can be an indication that politics have become an idol.

While you may not be doing this at work, your personal life is far less hidden than it was in the past with the pervasive online presence most people have. In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus calls us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us. This includes candidates and members of an opposing political view.

With fellow believers the conversations become even more divisive as we start to judge someone's level of justification and commitment to their faith based on who they voted for. You have heard this before. So and so cannot be saved if they voted for X. Only God can judge the intentions of someone. We cannot and should not. And God's Word reminds us not to judge, or we will be judged in return (Matthew 7:1-2). How can you self-examine first? How can you remove the log in your own eye before you look at the speck in your brother's (Matthew 7:3-5)?

Believer or not, those that are on the opposing side of your views are also made in the image of God (Genesis 1:27).

Jesus calls us to love our enemies. This includes candidates and members of an opposing political view.

Think about those around you at work who are believers in Jesus. Would your words reflect your calling as an ambassador of Christ? Remember, our ultimate goal is to make disciples—not of candidates but of Christ!

What can we do instead? Remembering sometimes the most peaceful thing we can do is be silent and let God fight our battles. We can pray for those who persecute us. We can choose to see the best in others.

Day Four

Do you excuse things that contradict your faith? What is important to God doesn't have a label or a party. It is not a temporary term, nor can it be solved by human hands. Being true to Christ means standing for truth and justice and being honest about the temporary parties and candidates we may be supporting.

The politics of the day are quick to point out the "sins" of one candidate but excuse the actions of the other. Consider these verses in John 8.

The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery and placing her in the midst they said to him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now, in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. So, what do you say? This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And, as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is among you be the first to throw a stone at her. And, once more, he bent down and wrote on the ground. But, when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones, and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him (John 8:3-9).

Behaving like the scribes and the Pharisees, are you excusing sin of a candidate in the name of perceived better alignment with your faith? This can be another indication that politics have become an idol.

All sin and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Jesus calls us to recognize our own sins. I don't think it is a mistake the woman who committed adultery was standing one on one with Jesus when all the others had walked away. Jesus is the only judge and the only true "cure" for sin!

How can you point someone toward salvation if you are excusing the sins of man in the name of winning? Instead of making excuses or comparing sins between parties, point out all sin is just that—sin in the eyes of God! There isn't one better or worse. While we know the woman in John 8 was an adulteress, we don't know the sins of the scribes and Pharisees. What we do know is they didn't challenge Jesus to make excuses for their sin being better or less than adultery!

Focus on telling people how you pray for the candidate's recognition of their sin instead!

Day Five

We cannot repair culture with politics, but this is not what the candidates for any political party want you to think. The effect your faith should have on politics should remove from politics what it can never deliver—a redeemed and perfect kingdom. When candidates or laws are up for a vote, are you filled

with fear for what that change might mean? Do you catastrophize what terrible things may happen based on the outcomes of an election?

In an updated article for October of 2024 from The American Psychological Association titled, “Fear: A Powerful Motivator in Elections”, it is clear fear is a primary tactic when it comes to an election.²

Why? Because it works! The author points out this could involve factual or misleading statements about the other candidate or that a potential victory for the other party would lead to disaster. Even this article provides practical advice to check facts and, yes, turn off the news if you are feeling anxious and fearful! This is great advice, and, as a believer, you need to remember placing your hope in a temporal political candidate rather than prioritizing and trusting in God’s sovereignty in all things can be an indication you are making an idol of the politics that are intentionally trying to make you fearful!

Trusting in the Lord with all your heart and not leaning on your own understanding, submitting to the Lord in all ways and trusting that he will make your path straight can seem easier said than done (Proverbs 3:5-6).

As believers we are promised that God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Trusting the Lord even if the earth gives way, and the mountains fall into the sea is counter to what culture tells us (Psalm 46:1-3).

Politics promise to solve problems of social consequence like homelessness, hunger, poverty, human trafficking, murder, crime—and the list could go on. Like me, you have probably lived through enough election cycles to see the wash, rinse, and repeat. The promises and laws do not stop the injustice.

“When the sin-sick soul stops being the central problem, then God’s provision of the person and the work of Christ stops being the central solution. When the travails of the here and now become the central problem, then politics become the central means of providing solutions.”³

This quote from the article “Christianity and Politics” by Dan Bryant summarizes what we need to remember as believers—our God saves, not man.

² Waldroff, K. (2020, October 13). Fear: A powerful motivator in elections. American Psychological Association. <https://www.apa.org/news/apa/2020/fear-motivator-elections>

³ Christianity and Politics | Modern Reformation. (n.d.). www.modernreformation.org.
<https://www.modernreformation.org/resources/articles/christianity-and-politics-2>