

Choosing a Presidential Candidate Amid the Rhetoric

Erin Smith, a Virginia delegate who is a financial planner in Fairfax with Raymond James Financial Services, received Christ when she was 7 years old. She has led an initiative to bring single women into the Republican fold. While in Tampa, she took a few minutes to talk about her faith and her prayers for America.

Some Christians struggle with how to be involved politically. What do you suggest they do when neither party is 100 percent in line with their beliefs or when they see rhetoric that they know is twisting the opponent's record and views to make the candidate's own views look better?

I think you have to understand in a two-party system that we're never going to be in full agreement with a particular candidate. As Christians, it is important that we are involved in policy so that we can have an influence and have a voice for what we believe.

But we also have to be respectful of the beliefs of others. Not everybody sees things through the lens that we do as followers of Jesus Christ. And we have to learn how to work with them and show them what a relationship with Christ is really about. At the end of the day, the most important thing is our souls. And we can't reject people that don't agree with us, because we could have been them, and at some point, we were them.

So we have to accept that many people are at different places along the journey, with half of the population being in one party and half of the population [choosing] the other. We choose the one that is closest to what we believe, and then we continue to pray that it becomes more in line with what we

feel like Christ is asking of us.

What is your prayer for this election and for the nation?

One of my concerns is that we have had a lot of conversation defining what success and richness is. We have rhetoric that is talking about 99 percent and 1; we have people and leaders and speeches talking about success and things. You know, [saying] we don't need to apologize for success, or pitting rich people against those that don't have as much. And that saddens me, because in richness and prosperity are things you can have without having lots and lots of money.

Success in life is how you define it, not how a political party defines it. And richness is how you define it, through your relationship with Christ or whatever source you're seeking for happiness and contentment. And so, one thing that saddens me is the conversation and rhetoric that puts a lot of emphasis on richness and success that's not necessarily in line with our definition of what that is as followers of Christ.

You can live a rich life through Jesus Christ, regardless of how much money is in the bank.

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