

Could Our Political Idolatry Destroy Our Nation?

Idolatry has been forbidden by God since the beginning. It is addressed in the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Idolatry is the act of putting anything ahead of our regard for God.

Election Day is now only days away. It may be one of the most important ones in our nation’s history. Without seeming overly dramatic, perhaps the survival of our country is at stake. We simply cannot afford to get it wrong, but we might. The reason? Many are looking in the wrong direction. Most Americans are deciding how to vote by starting with the candidate or “who” they will vote for instead of determining “what” they will vote for. In a democracy, the vote is our greatest power. In a socialist country, it is the redistribution of wealth. In a dictatorship, it’s the gun. But in a democracy, it’s the vote. In his book, *Well Versed*, Dr. Jim Garlow lists the four important considerations when determining how to vote. He calls it the four P’s: biblical principles, policies, politics and person (candidate), and in that order. As I considered this list and the sequential process it entails, I realized that most of us make our voting decisions in the exact opposite way. We start with the person (candidate) and place a huge emphasis on every single characteristic: their look, their speech, their style, their tone, their politically correct sensitivity to every cause, and on and on it goes. They are coached, prepped, dressed, styled and scripted, made up and made over. The success of a campaign can be decided by a single misstatement. But there is often little mention of the principles they actually represent.

We must not start with the person—the place to start is with the principles. The best way to do that in this election is to

simply read the party platforms of the candidates. Few voters actually do that. Both the Democratic and Republican platforms are about 50 pages long. They clearly state the principles for which both parties stand. There is nothing more impacting than seeing written in black and white the listed principles that they each represent and are actively promoting. The platforms of the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are directly opposite. Pick any issue: abortion, marriage, taxes, borders and so on. They are starkly different. The Democratic platform is perhaps the most liberal ever, and the Republican platform the most conservative.

As a Christian, if I begin with the principles and not the person, my decision becomes much easier. I personally am not registered as either a Republican or a Democrat. I cannot be if I am going to be voting each time based on principles. Party platforms change, but principles never do. I must vote for the candidates whose platform best represents God's principles. For many of us (including me), this is easier said than done. It's difficult to vote for a candidate we see as personally flawed. This presidential race is especially challenging because both major party candidates are flawed and less than perfect. But until Jesus is on the ballot, we will always have to choose between two or more imperfect persons. Nevertheless, we must always ask, "What are the principles that determine the policies that guide their politics that produced the person or candidate?"

We are never really voting for a "who"; we are voting for the "what." The person is only one heartbeat away from being replaced, but the principles they promote will remain after they're gone. This applies to every elected office in the land, not just the office of the president. There are dozens of down-ballot races this election season as well. Our voting responsibility begins first at home in our local School Boards, City Courts and City Council positions, and it extends to our State Capitols and State courtrooms and, ultimately,

the pinnacles of power in Washington, D.C. Because every elected official is given power and influence, it is our responsibility to know the principles each candidate is promoting.

So what are our options? Stay home and not vote, thereby relinquishing our greatest power as a citizen, or get out and vote for a flawed person that best represents our principles? Any attempt to produce a perfect candidate (person) before we choose to vote for them is not only difficult; it is impossible. Here is the danger: Many people will overlook the flaws of their candidate in order to promote their party's principles, yet many of their principles are destructive to our nation. So if you want to sit this one out because you haven't found the person that is perfect and allow the wrong principles to prevail, help yourself. But remember, placing any person ahead of godly principles is a form of idolatry. For some people, their political party is their god. But for me, God is first in my life, and His principles determine my vote. Remember, "Thou shall have no other gods before me" applies to elections too. No political party nor political person (candidate) takes precedence over a biblical principle.

On Nov. 8 when you stand in front of a voting machine and make decisions that will impact your city, your state and your nation, you exercise the greatest power in our democracy. Remember that God stands there with you looking over your shoulder. Have courage and cast your vote. In a representative government, you vote for your principles, but you have to mark a person's name—a flawed, imperfect person whose politics and policies should best represent God's principles. {eoa}

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