

Does God Speak to Politicians?

Entering the turbulent election of 2024, we wonder—is God moving in our nation?

Most citizens are either firmly on the side of a presidential candidate or completely disenfranchised with all of them from both major political parties. Frustration is sky high with Congress as their approval ratings are at an all-time low of 15%.

We see the Psalm 2 reality of infighting in our nation's capital and wonder whether God can reach our leaders: "Why do the nations rage, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed," (Ps. 2:1–2, MEV). Are they stuck in the echo chamber of Washington, D.C., or our state houses and unable to hear any wisdom from ordinary citizens or even God Himself? What hope do we have that God is on the move and that He can reach our national leaders, even across party lines?

After spending 16 years in the political movements, working as a campaign manager, political consultant for members of Congress, state senators and representatives, I can tell story after story of how God reaches our leaders through normal people just like you and me. Sincere Christ followers who are going deep in the Word of God each day and attempting to be led by the Holy Spirit are being used by God in places of influence. Whether they are working on specific legislation—promoting biblical values, volunteering for a campaign, participating as a party activist or election judge, working full time as a staffer or consultant, facilitating Bible studies with the members or simply going to the Capitol as intercessors—elected officials are being met in simple and

unique ways week after week by the people of God.

Let me tell you, God is moving—and He can move through you and me.

Christians Need to Get Engaged

Our ministry, Christians Engaged, took 50 people to Washington, D.C., last summer, thinking we were going to educate everyone on our main tenets, but it turned into a mission trip to elected officials. We heard their faith stories and prayed over many members on Capitol Hill, including 10 members of the House and two senators.

We had two members confess to our whole group that they needed to be revived and come back to Jesus. We saw another member trying to do everything she could to clean off her schedule while we were there so she could get to our group for ministry.

Hunger for God is growing all over Washington, D.C., and I have seen it dramatically in our state legislatures as well, from Little Rock to Austin to Harrisburg.

We attempt to activate the body of Christ each day to pray, vote and engage regularly through our weekly prayer alerts, voter mobilization system for all 50 states, online curriculum packages on civics and biblical worldview topics, and church programs. Individual citizens are taking on issues like the sanctity of human life, homeschooling, school choice and fiscal conservatism, and becoming leaders in their communities. They are finding their voices, the simple education and connections to get the job done.

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One Simple Conversation Can Shift Everything

Years ago, I had a simple conversation as a staffer that impacted the life of one member of Congress. I had no idea until years later how deeply impactful it was. During my 10 years of working as the campaign manager for Congressman Jeb Hensarling, R-Texas, who served in the U.S. House from 2002 to 2018, I rarely traveled with him, though every now and then we had an event that did require travel.

The year was 2012, an election year, when Hensarling and I went to San Antonio for a rare out-of-town fundraiser. Sitting on a Southwest Airlines flight next to my boss, I was reading my Bible where I had left off the day before, the story of the faithful servant in Luke: "The Lord said, 'Who then is the faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his house servants, to give them their portion of food at the proper time? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you, he will appoint him over all his possessions'" (Luke 12:42-44). The Congressman, in an unusually chatty fashion, started a conversation with me. Staffers' rule of thumb is to leave an elected official alone if he or she is working, resting or deep in thought, but to go with it if he or she strikes up a conversation.

At that time, as the House Republican Conference chairman under Speaker John Boehner, Hensarling was the fourth-most-powerful Republican in the House of Representatives, an assignment he began in 2011. (He used to laughingly tell his constituents that it was the most powerful position in the House that didn't get a security detail.) Being the head congressman responsible for the GOP caucus's communications, talking points and media strategies was an extremely demanding job. He not only needed to grow his own campaign's war chest, but was also responsible for raising more money for House Republicans. It was also his job to counsel the members who couldn't help themselves and went off script from the messaging his team generated.

It was exhausting, and the stress lines on Hensarling's face had started to show.

One advantage of his leadership post was that he was one of four leaders who met together every week to hammer out plans and tactics for the other GOP members. Hensarling was known around the Hill as a solid conservative leader who wasn't afraid to express his convictions to the Speaker, but he did it behind closed doors. He didn't air anyone's dirty laundry in front of the media. He was measured and thoughtful, and did everything with purpose and tact.

That day on the airplane he was struggling. Being the most conservative member at the leadership table, Hensarling was continually hearing the frustrations from the rest of the conservative sections of the conference. He wasn't personally frustrated about policy; for the most part everyone at the leadership table agreed on those issues. Rather, he was frustrated with Boehner's tactics. I could see the weariness on his face.

As he shared his heart, I just listened. I gave him plenty of space to say his peace. When he finished, he seemed resigned to the fact that he didn't know where he wanted to go in leadership next, whether to stay as the conference chairman for the next term, potentially work his way up the food chain to be Speaker or to simply get out of leadership altogether.

Looking down at my Bible, I was reminded of the verses I had read just a few minutes before. But now they took on a whole new meaning. Without fanfare these words came out of my mouth: "Sir, I was just reading the passage about the faithful and wise steward, and I know God sees your faithfulness to the Speaker. What you are doing is right for what God has called you to. Just keep honoring Boehner in public and speaking your convictions behind closed doors. You are being faithful to watch over His field well, but soon God is going to give you your own field to take care of."

As soon as I said it, I knew it was a word from God. I couldn't have thought that last statement up on my own.

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That was September 2012. I will never forget it. I had never had a conversation with Hensarling on his desires or potential plans for the future. I didn't even know what his real options were. It is one thing to be a Christian hearing from God in a church setting, but it is another great adventure to have God show up on the job.

A few months later, on Jan. 3, 2013, Hensarling was elected by his peers to take over as chairman of the House Financial Services Committee, which oversees the nation's housing and financial services sectors, including banking, insurance, real estate and more. As chair of this powerful committee, he could make his own agenda and work on his own policy incentives.

The man got his own "field." He served faithfully in that field for six years (three terms) until his retirement from Congress at the end of 2018.

How Do We Let God Speak Through Us?

We have this backward idea that what happens in church is sacred but what happens in the rest of our lives is secular. This division of our hearts and minds is what hinders us from being free to walk with God wherever we go. We minimize His power in the places that we don't consider sacred.

Does God reside only within the four walls of a church? Can His precious written words not spring to life for us in the midst of our mundane lives—in our careers, around a water cooler or even on an airplane with a member of Congress? Can He use ordinary citizens full of the Spirit of God to impact candidates and elected officials with His glory?

We limit God's involvement in our lives every day when we tell Him how, when and where He can move through us. By not inquiring of Him in every circumstance, we hinder the partnership we were created for from the beginning. The prayer that Jesus taught us to pray says, "Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven," (Luke 11:2). When we live out biblical Christianity, heaven impacts earth through our lives as we walk with God.

This is the answer for Washington, D.C., our state houses, our county seats and our city governments—Christians discipling the nation one heart at a time, one elected official at a time.

2024 is going to be a challenging year for America, but it can also be one of the greatest opportunities for awakening Christians to step up, walk in obedience and allow God to speak through us. God loves to speak to politicians, but the question is, are we listening and willing to be used as His "hands and feet" in these places of influence?

This is my story. If God can use a simple girl with a political resume for His glory, He can use you, too.

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Bunni Pounds is the founder and president of *Christians Engaged*, a nonprofit organization that seeks to awaken, educate and empower Christians to pray, vote and engage regularly in efforts to improve the nation's wellbeing. She was a political consultant for 16 years, and in 2018 ran for Congress herself, the only woman to make the Republican runoff ballot in Texas and the only person endorsed by Vice President Mike Pence that primary season. A graduate of Christ for the Nations and Dallas Baptist University, Pounds loves Jesus and

sharing the gospel with anyone who will listen—from the halls of Congress to her own hometown. She and her husband, Tim, have been married since 1996 and have two grown sons, who are both married, and two grandchildren. Her latest book is Jesus and Politics, available now.