

How Should You Pray for the 2024 Elections?

How should we pray for the 2024 elections? Should we pray for a particular candidate (or, in the case of the non-presidential elections, candidates) to win?

Should we pray for specific issues and ask God to raise up those who will do the best job on those particular issues? Or should we simply pray, "Your will be done, Lord"?

In my entire life, I have never once prayed for a particular person to be elected, even if I had very strong convictions about who would be best for the job. That's because I do not have God's perspective, and I don't know what He has in mind.

What if we are deserving of judgment, and putting the wrong person in office—meaning "wrong" from our perspective—would be an act of necessary and painful judgment? And what if that divine judgment would be thing needed to lead us to repentance?

Or what if putting the right person in office—again, meaning "right" in our eyes—would lead to complacency on our end, whereas putting the wrong person in office would awaken us spiritually and stir us to action politically and socially?

More simply still, what if we are only looking one move ahead but the Lord is looking millennia ahead? (For the record, He is! More accurately, His viewpoint is from everlasting to everlasting.)

How many times has one of our foreign policy decisions resulted in short-term gains, but long-term losses? How many times have we won the battle, but lost the war?

Things are much more complex than they seem, and only God

knows the full, future implications of our decisions today.

But that doesn't mean that we do nothing. Quite the contrary.

For our part, we do everything we can.

We get informed. We learn about the issues and the candidates. We vote.

Some of us are also called to donate or lobby or run for office or engage in other politically-related work.

By all means, let us do what we know how to do.

At the same time, let us not presume upon God to tell Him (or, even ask Him) to put a certain person in office. (For those who immediately say, "So, you wouldn't pray for God to stop Hitler?" The answer is that: 1) Of course I would pray for the Lord stop him and thwart the rise of evil; 2) I would still not know for sure that getting a different candidate in his place would actually stop the evil, so I would lean more on praying for the Lord stop Hitler; 3) Hitler is not running for office in America today.)

To look at this from another angle, how do you feel about churches that prayed openly, corporately and passionately for the election of Barack Obama? I can point you to large, influential, African American, evangelical churches that did this very thing.

More recently, other African American churches prayed openly, corporately and passionately for the election of other Democratic candidates by name, all of whom were "pro-choice."

How do you feel about that? And how do you think these Black churches might feel about White evangelical churches that prayed openly, corporately and passionately for the election of Donald Trump or other Republican candidates?

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Do you think God is moved by this? Do you think if enough Christians pray for a particular candidate that will influence the Lord?

Of course, there's the larger question of whether God, working in a democratic, voting country, puts a candidate in office or whether He simply allows the people to make the choice.

For the sake of this article, though, let's assume that our prayers to Him do play a role in the outcome of the elections. It could be as simple as we pray and He turns events in a certain direction to influence the outcome in a righteous way, such as bringing to light a smoking gun that sinks a corrupt candidate.

But that brings us back to the question of how we should pray.

Without a doubt, we can always pray that the Lord would raise up the right kind of people to lead our nation, allowing Him to determine exactly who those people are. We can pray for Him to set in office people "who fear God, trustworthy [people] who hate dishonest gain" (Ex. 18:21). We can pray for judges who will judge fairly and righteously (Deut. 16:18-20). We can pray for Him to raise up candidates who love and honor life.

✖ But there's something else we can pray, since there are bigger issues than even the temporary wellbeing, security and prosperity of our nation.

We can pray in this way (and I borrow in this part from a colleague who is a real man of prayer): "Father, we ask You to order the outcome of these elections in a way that will best contribute to the flourishing of the church, the good of the nation and the fulfillment of the Great Commission."

Can we possibly go wrong if we pray in this way?

In my view, we can pray prayers like this with great confidence, knowing that this reflects the heart and will of our God. It's a more specific way of praying, "Your will be done, Lord!" {eoa}

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