

Who Should You Vote For? Look No Further Than Here

My good friend Robert Jeffress was a guest on my program, "Turning Point," on Monday, and we had a frank talk about his enthusiastic public support for Donald Trump.

In the course of our conversation, he said that the Bible doesn't tell us how to vote, since there were no such things as elections in the Old Testament.

I have a gentlemen's disagreement on this score with Dr. Jeffress, a friendly disagreement rooted in a straightforward understanding of Exodus 18.

The backstory here is that Moses was being overwhelmed with the political challenges of providing leadership for a fledgling nation. He was up early every day and up late every night and still wasn't getting much done. He received good counsel: get some help. Enlist the aid of qualified men who can help you shoulder the load of civic and judicial leadership.

Here is the counsel he received, and on which he subsequently acted: "Look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people" (Ex. 18:21).

Now to be sure, Moses was the only one voting in this election, but vote he did, and according to a clear set of criteria. (According to Merriam-Webster, a "vote" is "a formal expression of ... choice.") We can learn from this passage of Scripture what to look for in a political leader.

There are five qualities God instructs us to seek in a man who would be our president.

The first is ability. Moses selected men who were “able” (Hebrew *hayil*). According to the Hebrew lexicons, there are two complementary meanings of this word. The first definition is “faculty, power, strength, ability, competence, capability, qualified for a task.”

So the first question we must ask is this: Does he have the skill set that is required to do the job? Does he have the kind of background, experience, knowledge and judgment to handle the responsibilities of the Oval Office?

Does he have a sophisticated understanding of the Constitution and a demonstrated willingness to defend it and act on its principles? Or does he display a lack of familiarity with and respect for the supreme law of the land? Does he have a track record of sound and consistent political judgment, or have his positions “evolved” to conform to changing cultural mores?

The second thing we are to look for in a potential president is character. The second set of meanings associated with this word “able” (*hayil*) includes the following: “noble character, strong character, a worthy person.” This requires an assessment of his integrity and his conduct over the course of his life. Does he demonstrate godly character in his personal life, in his marriage, in his family, and in his professional life? Is his life worthy of imitation? If the answer is “No,” then he is plainly not qualified to be president of the United States.

How does he treat others and speak about them in public? Does he name-call and demean his political opponents or does he speak to them and about them with civility even when he is compelled to disagree with them?

The third criterion is reverence for God. A man is not qualified for public service unless he is a man who fears God. The word “fear” in Exodus 18:21 (Hebrew *yare'*) means “reverence, worship, profound reverence to a superior.” So we

must ask: Does the man who wants to be my president have a personal relationship with God? Does he show evidence of having a profound reverence for God, or is his reverence and admiration primarily reserved for himself? Is he familiar with the Word of God, and does he show evidence that he is guided by its principles?

The fourth criterion is trustworthiness. The word translated “trustworthy” (Hebrew *emeth*) in Exodus 18:21 means “truth, firmness, faithfulness, reliability, stability.” Does he have a steady and stable temperament? Is he someone you can count on? Is he a man who is committed to speaking the truth regardless of the consequences? Can you depend on what he says, or does his position on major issues shift without warning from year to year or even from day to day?

Can you count on him to be a man of his word? Does he have a demonstrated track record of keeping his promises? For instance, has he done *after* he was elected what he promised to do *before* he was elected? Or has he abandoned the promises he made on the campaign trail once he got into office?

The fifth criterion is integrity in financial matters. He must be a man who is free from the taint of financial corruption, who is above reproach and whose hands are clean. He must be a man who “hate[s] a bribe.” The word “hates” (Hebrew *sane’*) means to “abhor, detest or loathe.” The word translated “bribe” (Hebrew *batza*) means “dishonest, unjust or ill-gotten gain.” It refers to gain “obtained by deception.”

Thus a candidate for public office must be a man who despises even the hint of financial impropriety or ethical compromise in money matters. He must not be a man who purchases political favors or whose political favors can be bought.

Bottom line: God has a voter guide, and here it is: We are to select for our president a man of ability, character, reverence for God, trustworthiness and incorruptibility.

The GOP field is now down to three finalists. Using God's yardstick, I grade one candidate out at zero for 5, a second at 3 or 4 out of 5, and the third at 5 for 5. Your grading of these candidates may vary from mine. But the indispensable thing is that we all must grade them according to God's standard rather than the standard of man. May we all choose wisely.