

Let's Talk About Politics and Religion

You may have grown up hearing the famous warning that there are two things to never discuss over the dinner table: politics and religion. If you grew up in a Christian household, discussing faith was unavoidable, but you may have been raised to steer away from discussing politics, much less getting involved in politics and engaging civically. After all, being a Christian and engaging in politics must be mixing church and state. That is an evil thing—don't you know?

Many of us look at politicians as godless, corrupt people and that Christians shouldn't enter this sphere because they'd inevitably end up losing their way.

Let's Talk About What We Shouldn't Talk About

Now as a woman who loves Jesus with all her heart, who has served in ministry for over 30 years and worked in politics for 16 years, I can say confidently that politics is not inherently evil. And not just that, but it is also our duty as Christians to be engaged in current events and to stand up for righteousness and to stand against injustice. We need to talk about the two things they warn us about.

But in order to do this, we must first begin to deconstruct the preconceptions that we have formerly had of what politics is and understand what it truly is. Politics—the necessary process of certain people getting what they want in government—is not evil or wrong. It is necessary.

Discipling the Nations Through National Leaders

Like many of you, my father, Jack, wasn't always on board with me getting involved politically. He loved me dearly, but he had originally wanted a different path for me in "full-time

ministry.” I share this story more in-depth in my new book, “Jesus and Politics: One Woman’s Walk with God in a Mudslinging Profession.”

My dad didn’t want me to leave what he considered to be the call on my life leading worship or teaching the Bible to go into politics. He had understood my work in business, working beside my husband. But in the back of his mind, my dad felt that I was called to preach the gospel in some way, and he was going to keep encouraging me to that end.

My dad grew up in a denominational setting that was very apolitical. I don’t remember politics being discussed much in our home growing up.

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My father shared the belief as others, that as a Christian, corruption in politics was unavoidable and a Christian wouldn’t make it out unscathed. But this was where I disagreed with him. I had been in the fight, and I believed that this was what God had called me to do.

Deep down, my father knew I was in the will of God, but like so many other Christians, he struggled with the idea of believers in the political world. And he was genuinely worried about me, as any normal father would be.

It wasn’t until years later, when he was on his deathbed, that my dad came around.

During a week with my dad right before he died, I spent a lot of time sharing stories with him. He was spending every minute he could talking to every nurse about the Lord, doing marriage counseling with his main caregiver and her husband, and telling everyone how excited he was to see Jesus soon.

This was the week I really drilled down with him on all my

stories from my career. I told him about my friendship with Jeb Hensarling and about other elected officials that I had met and ministered to, as well as the Bible study I was leading with state and congressional staffers.

I told him what a privilege it was to walk with these candidates and elected officials, to encourage them and help them reach their goals for the sake of the nation. I told him about my expectations that the fruit of my life would bear out something special for our nation. I told him about my daily desire to bring light into government workers' lives with my joy, optimism and faith in Jesus.

I laid out the message that I was truly sharing the gospel and discipling leaders in my own way. God had called us to disciple the nations. What better way to start than through our national leaders?

My dad understood. He rested. He spoke into my life again regarding my identity in Christ and God's call on my life. Then he said this: "I know wherever you serve, Bunni, you will change the world. The congressman is blessed to have you."

Shortly after this visit, my father died. I am so grateful and blessed to have been with him during this time and to have received his blessing before he was reunited with the Father.

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Salt and Light

My father loved the Lord, and even during his last days here on earth, he spent time ministering to people. He truly embodied what it meant to be salt and light. And this is what we must remember: We are to be the salt and light everywhere we go. Our time on earth is limited; it is fleeting; it is precious. We must capitalize on that opportunity and give our

lives to what God has called us to do.

“‘You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot’” (Matt 5:13, NIV).

God has called us to be salt and light. What better way than to shine the light of truth into situations that arise in politics? What better way to be salt that preserves than to see the good in people, not just the bad and the ugly?

But I want to make it clear. Politics does not mean anything if we are not sharing the gospel first, if we are not prioritizing the Good News of Jesus.

Though we engage in politics to protect liberty and to strengthen America (one of the leading nations that funds the sharing of the gospel all over the world), we cannot use that as an excuse not to share the story of Jesus. America’s strength is found in the hearts of her people, and if her people are not healed, set free, revived and grounded in the Word of God, then we lose the ultimate power of what makes us great as a nation. We must see God transform people’s lives each and every day.

Sharing the story of the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus and how it has changed our lives is the greatest thing we can do in this generation. Period. Only Jesus can save, and only Jesus can change someone’s life. If we don’t share Jesus with others, we are hiding our greatest instrument for change in our nation.

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom. 1:16, NKJV).

We should be talking about the very things they warn us against—politics and religion (that is, faith in Jesus). If we

do, we can impact America one heart at a time.{eoa}

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✖ **Bunni Pounds** is president and founder of Christians Engaged—a ministry activating the body of Christ to pray, vote and engage regularly. Formerly a congressional candidate and 16-year political consultant, she is a motivational speaker, author and Bible teacher. Her book—“Jesus and Politics: One Woman’s Walk with God in a Mudslinging Profession”—is available now.