



With the election coming up, it's not always easy to figure out who to vote for. What does God's Word have to say about electing leaders?

Jesus tells us in Matthew 22:15-22 "*Give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.*" In so doing, Jesus sets down the principle that as Christians we have a duty to our government ("Caesar"). There are certain things we "owe" the officials who rule over us.

Jesus gave this response to a specific question about taxes. So, yes, we owe our taxes to our government. It's how they pay for services provided to the citizens. But our obligation to our leaders doesn't stop there. We owe...

Our prayers -

specifically for laws that will enable us to live "peaceful, quiet, godly and dignified lives" and enable us to share the truth of the message of salvation that comes through Jesus Christ alone. (1 Timothy 2:1-4)

Our respect, honor, and submission to their authority -and thus, our obedience to their laws.

The one exception to the "obedience" responsibility is when our rulers would make laws that would *force* us to disobey God. In that case we must say along with Peter and the other apostles in Acts 5:29 "*We must obey God rather than men.*" (And, of course, be willing to suffer the consequences of that civil disobedience.)

Since we are to pray for the ability to live "godly" lives, it logically follows that we should, in a nation that allows our participation in government, use our voice and our vote to do we can to see that "godly" laws are put into effect and that "ungodly" laws (those contrary to what God has told us) are done away with.

Of course, voting won't convert hearts. Jesus didn't send his disciples out to "take over governments" but rather to "make disciples." Faithful followers of Jesus can never be *mandated* by governments, but can only be *cultivated* by the Holy Spirit through the sharing of the Gospel. But faithful Christians voting for godly laws is definitely a way of following God's command to "Love your neighbor," since ungodly laws are by definition harmful to our neighbor.

Below is also a summary of qualities God has told us in His Word that are ones we need to look for in those who are chosen to exercise authority over us.

The #1 QUALITY: Someone who fears God more than men.

In other words, a person who values what our unchanging God thinks more than ever-changing public opinion. A person who seeks to follow the laws God has already set out for us and who seeks God's wisdom and direction in making laws for us today.

Other qualities the Bible tells us to look for: Someone who ...

- Shows no favoritism. Who leads according to what is fair, just and godly, not according to the wishes of those who have the most money or with whom the person has many things in common.
- Is in it to serve. Not someone seeking the wealth and power that ruling can bring.

- Is humble. Not a person who pridefully thinks they are better than those they serve.
- Can be described as wise, understanding and respectful in their dealings.
- Cannot be bribed or bought and is not easily deceived.

(From: Deuteronomy 1:9-18, Deuteronomy 17:14-20, 2 Chronicles 19:4-7, Psalm 2:10-11, Proverbs 20:28, Proverbs 29:4,12,14)

Rev. Fredric Hinz, our Minnesota State LCMS Public Policy Advocate suggests, *"If you are looking for a helpful resource to inform you about the various public policy issues, you might want to consult the Minnesota Family Institute 2014 Voters Guide at www.mfc.org. Please note that this guide gives the stance of candidates on a variety of issues to which our faith speaks. It is not a list of recommended parties or candidates. Rather it allows us to see where candidates stand especially on the issues mentioned above.*

Another worthwhile preparation is prayer. Believers around Minnesota are joining a 24-hour prayer vigil specifically for the 2014 election, starting at 8PM on Monday, November 3rd and ending at 8PM on Tuesday, November 4th (when the polls close). You can join the effort by finding "MN Christians in Prayer" on Facebook and signing up for a time to pray during that 24-hour period.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net