

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE **that men may glorify your Father in heaven**

“Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”
-- Matthew 5:14-17

Why should Christians engage in political activism?

Because Jesus said that we are the “light of the world” – and our light is of no benefit unless it’s displayed for all to see.

The fact is, as Christians we are to have a “brightness” in our lives that other people will take notice of. However, God doesn’t want us to let this light shine just with good *words* – he wants us to let it shine with good *works*. In fact, it’s through our good works that the world is able to see the light and love of Christ in us.

Did you know that God has laid out a path of good works for you to walk in? In Ephesians 2:10, the Bible says that “we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.” And in Titus 2:14, Paul reiterates the fact that Jesus “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). These good works, which God has *created* us to be “zealous” in, apply to *every* area of life, including government and politics.

Civil Government & Politics

There are four distinct, but overlapping, areas of “government” that God has established in the Bible: individual, family, church, and civil. The word “government” simply means “the management or control of something,” as in a captain who “governs” his ship through the water. All four areas of government are under the dominion of Jesus Christ Himself, whom the Bible declares to have the government “upon His shoulders” (Isaiah 9:6). Therefore, civil government is to be “managed” by Christ through His appointed ambassadors – whom the Bible makes clear are you and I.

This doesn't necessarily mean that Christians are all required to run for political office (although we certainly need believers to run); however, it does mean that we have a responsibility to be active in politics, from a Biblical perspective. But what does that mean?

“Politics” is nothing more than the totality of interrelationships between people, both individually and as members of groups, concerning issues and policies in the area of *civil* government. Like any other area of government in our fallen world, civil government can become corrupted by sinful men. America's founding fathers understood this, which is why they created a system of “checks and balances” in this country: national and state “federalism,” as well as a division among the executive, legislative and judicial branches at the federal level, were designed to keep too much power from residing in a single person or group of people. Our founders understood all too well the adage, “Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

Despite the fact that all men are sinful, God ordains certain ones to be rulers and leaders in the civil government. Whether they are elected or appointed to their offices, the Bible makes it clear that each one is “the minister of God to thee for good,” as well as “a revenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Romans 13:4). Our political leaders have an awesome responsibility before God – and we, as believers, have an awesome responsibility as well: *to assist them*.

Remember, this particular command of Christ doesn't say, “Let your light so shine that men will hear your good words.” Yes, we are to speak out to our political officials about good and bad policy; however, many of the politicians we're communicating with won't want to hear what we have to say if they haven't seen our works of love. This is why God makes good works such a priority for believers.

In Titus 3:8, the apostle Paul says, “This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to **maintain good works**. These things are good and profitable unto men.” Why are they “good and profitable”? Because the good works that we do to others will cause them to look up to God and behold His glory: “Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good

works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” (I Peter 2:12).

For too long now, folks on the “religious right” in American politics have been belittled and “spoken against as evildoers,” instead of being seen as what God has ordained us to be: *light-bearers*, known by our good works. A good work is meeting a need in the life of another that will cause him or her to give glory to God. These good works bring wide-open doors to believers.

I know of a state legislator who was a pretty “typical” liberal, and usually voted what I would consider the “wrong” way. This lady had become powerful in politics, but her personal life was falling apart; her marriage was in shambles, her children were in rebellion, and she was becoming more and more depressed.

Then a fellow legislator, who was a believer, invited her to a Bible study that was held regularly there in the Capitol. Actually, he had invited her many times, but she had usually refused. This time, however, he went a step further: he asked her if there was anything they could pray about for her.

She cautiously said yes, and asked for prayer for her daughter, with whom she had had a huge argument the night before. He took the request to the Bible study group, where they all cried out to God on her behalf. The following week, this lady came running up to her fellow legislator, thanking him for his prayers. “I don’t know what happened, but a couple of days after we spoke, my daughter came to me crying, and asked me to forgive her for her rebellion. We’re having conversations now like we haven’t had in years!”

The legislator rejoiced with her, and then, as he had done many times, invited her again to visit the Bible study. This time, she said yes; two weeks later, she gave her life to Christ, and within six months her whole family did the same. They continue to worship together as a family to this day.

What happens when we obey the command to let our light shine in the political arena? For example, what if Christians got serious about praying for all of those in authority over us? What would happen would be something that you might not expect: we would reap spiritual rewards, especially in the area of revival and the spreading of the kingdom of God. After all, we would be “sowing” according to the laws of the harvest, and as

II Cor. 9:6 makes clear, “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” The more we sow, the more we reap!

In I Timothy 2:1–4, Paul writes, “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.” Do you see the relationship between prayer support for leaders and widespread salvation? Why do you think that is?

It’s because political leaders are responsible to God for doing good. As we *assist* them with their responsibilities – through good works, including prayer – we benefit those under their care. In this way, we’re able to carry out the Biblical instruction, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). We can do good unto all men, by doing good to their *leaders*, thereby making possible the fulfillment of Christ’s Great Commission to teach all nations “to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20).

What good works can you do for the government leaders in your area? Many of us have sent letters, emails and faxes to City Hall or Washington, D.C., reminding the elected officials there that you’re a constituent and a voter, and telling them what the right way to vote is. But have you ever sent a personal letter to any of them, thanking them for their sacrifices and the benefits they bring to your life?

Remember the first part of I Peter 2:12, where the apostle says to have our “conversation honest” with others? That phrase means to make sure our conduct is “honorable” when we communicate with them. Paul discusses the same thing when he says, “Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Philip. 2:14-15).

I confess that I’ve sent a good number of letters to politicians where my conversation wasn’t very honorable, and where I was definitely “murmuring

and disputing” with them; I’m afraid I wasn’t doing a very good job at shining as a light in the world. Don’t get me wrong – I believe we’re supposed to speak the truth to our authorities; however, the Bible says that if we’re not “speaking the truth in love,” then we’re not doing any better than what the unbelievers do, who have their “understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:15-18).

Our understanding is not darkened, if we allow the light of God’s Word to shine on it. It’s through His precepts that we get that understanding, as we allow it to light our way in all that we do (Psalm 119:104-105). “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light,” (Prov. 6:23), and if we follow His commands, we “shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

Letting your light shine in the political arena means speaking the truth *in love*, and overcoming darkness by doing Godly works in such a way that He will get the glory for them. On the front page of the website at ActiveFaith.us, there are links that take you directly to the contact pages of your U.S. Congressman, your U.S. Senator, the President, and other government officials. Why not start out by taking a few minutes to write a letter of thanks right now?

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.” (Ephesians 5:8-11)