

How to Engage in Political Evangelism

Locating Politics within the True Story of the Whole World

<u>Creation</u>	<u>Fall</u>	<u>Redemption</u>	<u>Restoration</u>
Creation's goodness Image of God	Creation Corrupted & Misdirected	Christ as Savior and King	New Creation goodness
Creation's spheres	Politics Corrupted & Misdirected	Desiring the Kingdom	New Creation's spheres
Pre-Fall Politics	Broken Shalom	Between the Times	New Creation Politics
Pre-Fall Shalom		Colossians 1:13-23 Romans 13: 1-7 Mark 12:13-17	New Creation Shalom

Four Views of Christianity and Politics

1. Some Christians think that politics is bad in-and-of-itself.
2. Some Christians think that politics should be done without reference one's Christianity.
3. Some atheists and secular progressives think that politics should seek to undermine Christianity.
4. My view, in opposition to the three views above, is "the political realm is ordained by God as a good realm for Christian activity. Because it has been corrupted and misdirected by sin and idolatry, we as Christians should engage in politics and public life in a way that witnesses to Christian truth. We should not withdraw from politics or any other sphere of culture. Instead, we should enter into public life as a matter of witness and obedience, and to be a preview of God's coming Kingdom."

The Gospel as Public Truth

We embrace the gospel in a personal way; therefore it also shapes our public lives.

- Religion is heartfelt. It is personal but not private. It radiates outward into all of life.
- Every person has a god (Jesus, sex, money, power) who shapes their politics/public life.

Jesus is the cosmic King; he rules over all spheres of culture, including politics.

- Jesus is King over art, science, education, family, and yes, even politics.
- He rules the spheres directly rather than doing so through church control.

We leverage our Christianity to shape public life, but not in theocratic ways.

- We do not separate religion and politics, but we do separate church and state.
- We are against both statism and ecclesiasticism (church-ism).

The Gospel in a Diverse Society

We make a provisional peace with the religious diversity of our society.

- The gospel is freely given and freely received.
- For that reason, we avoid any type of coercion; people are free to follow their religious convictions unless those convictions pose a clear and present danger to our nation.

We seek a public square that is both convictional and diverse.

The Church as a Formation Center for Public Righteousness

1. Seeking the Good of the City

- Jer 29:5-7: we do not seek only our own interests, but the interests of those around us.

2. Living Realistically in a Time between the Times

- If we view politics as a savior, we only be disappointed. On the other hand, if we view politics as unworthy of our interest, we lose an opportunity to be an ambassador of Christ.

3. Being Shaped for Public Righteousness and Civility

- It is a place where we learn truth. But it is also where we learn to love those with whom we disagree, and to display grace and kindness in our public interactions.

4. Taking a Longer and Broader View

- Long view: long-term political witness vs. merely short-term political activism.
- Broad view: invest in family, church, art, science, education, business, sports (not just politics)

5. Choosing between Thick and Thin

- We want to be wise in how we articulate our viewpoints, sometimes choosing to use specifically Christian language and other times not doing so..

6. Politicking in the Pulpit (or not)

- We want to be very careful in what we say from the pulpit. Christianity is a deeply political religion, confessing, as it does, that Jesus is Lord and Caesar is not. And yet, we should be very careful addressing public policy issues from the pulpit, as the Bible is not a public policy manual.

Conclusion

Because of Christ's resurrection, we are set free to engage in politics and public life with a humble confidence. The realm of culture, as dark as it may often seem, will one day be raised to life, made to bow in submission to Christ. Christ will gain victory and restore the earth, but it will be *his* victory rather than ours, so we remain confident but humble. In this vein, Lesslie Newbigin wrote:

The point is that [a transformed society] is not our goal, great as that is. ... Our goal is the holy city, the New Jerusalem, a perfect fellowship in which God reigns in every heart, and His children rejoice together in His love and joy. ... And though we know that we must grow old and die, that *our labors, even if they succeed for a time, will in the end be buried in the dust of time ... yet we are not dismayed.* ... We know that these things must be. But we know that as surely as Christ was raised from the dead, so surely shall there be a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwells righteousness. *And having this knowledge we ought as Christians to be the strength of every good movement of political and social effort, because we have no need either of blind optimism or of despair.*