

How to View Politics as A Christian

Class #1: Introduction (Going over some of the scriptures from the heart study)

- We shouldn't judge by appearance - 1 Samuel 16:1-7
- We shouldn't judge by our emotions - Jeremiah 17:9
- We shouldn't judge by what we think is wrong or right - Proverbs 16:25
- We must forsake our ways - Isaiah 55:6-9
- We should not trust in ourselves - Proverbs 28:26
- We should not walk in the tradition of our fathers - Galatians 1:13-15
- We should not make decisions according to our feelings but according to the word - John 12:48
- We have basically two options: Trust God vs. Trust ourselves - Proverbs 28:26; Psalm 19:7-11
- **Discussion Questions:**
 - Why is it so easy for us to trust our hearts instead of the word of God?
 - When making decisions, big or small, why is it always important to seek answers in the word of God first?
 - How can we help ourselves be better at trusting God with our big and small decisions?

Class #2: Worldview - What is it?

- **Definition**
 - Oxford Dictionary - a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world.
 - Apologetics Press - the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world. A collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group.
 - Simplest Terms - In the simplest terms, it's how you see the world around you.
- **Four Popular Worldviews**
 - Naturalism - The natural universe occupying space and time is exhaustive of reality and should be explained by purely naturalistic theories. IOW, nothing beyond the Universe (i.e. God) exists.
 - Examples: Atheism, Agnosticism, Existentialism, Darwinism.
 - Media: Happy Feet

- Pantheism - Most importantly the belief that God or the gods are equal to the universe, its physical matter and the forces that govern it.
 - Examples: Hinduism, Taoism, Buddhism, New Age Conscientiousness.
 - Media: Star Wars
- Postmodernism - There can be no absolute, universal statement of truth that applies in every circumstance, or to everyone. Instead of language revealing reality it constructs reality.
 - Examples: Pluralism, Deconstructionism, News Channels, Social Media.
 - Media: Satirical Movies
- Theism - The belief in the existence of a Supreme Being.
 - Examples: Judaism, Islam, Christendom.
- ***Unpopular Worldview***
 - Biblical Worldview: Based on the infallible Word of God. The belief that the Bible (from Genesis to Revelation) is entirely true!
 - Scriptures
 - Romans 12:2
 - Romans 1:20-25
 - Colossians 2:8
 - 1 Peter 1:13-16
 - 1 John 4:1
 - 2 Timothy 4:2-4
- **Discussion Questions**
 - Why is it important for a disciple to have a strong Biblical Worldview?
 - How do you strengthen your mind against so many competing worldly philosophies?
 - What questions do you currently have about viewing politics as a Christian?

Class #3: My Identity Defines My Worldview

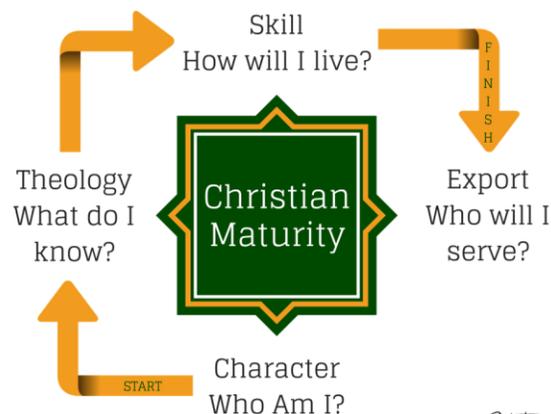
- **2 Review:**
 - All human beings live life with a worldview.
 - “Worldview” is defined as “the overall perspective from which one sees and interprets the world; a collection of beliefs about life and the universe held by an individual or a group” (*American Heritage*, 2000, p. 1983).
 - People live life and make their daily decisions based upon their worldview.
- *What is the lens you look through?*
 - There can be large schools of thought influenced by culture, education and media, as we reviewed last time.

- Bias also influences how we look at the world.
- Bias tends to cause hatred - prejudice implies a desire to not understand but to judge. Is it because you don't want to accept/understand?
- Sometimes the way we are influenced to be biased/prejudiced is through peer groups, also called **cliques** or **tribes**.
- **3** How **cliques** distort our bias - **tribalism** (the state of being organized in tribes; the exaltation of the tribe above other groups)
 - Refusal to recognise we're all in the same boat:
 - **4 Romans 3:9-12 (NIV)** What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that **Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin**.¹⁰ As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;¹¹ there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.¹² All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."
 - Social Dilemma
 - Social Media circles (friends) reinforce your own perspective/bias which increases prejudice or a slant towards a world view that may not be your own (herd mentality)
 - **5** The Social Dilemma Documentary - about how social media has radicalized our political perspectives by polarization instead of bringing us together by common interests
 - Discuss graphs in slides:
 - **6** 1994 Median Distribution
 - **7** 2014 Polarized Distribution
- **Identity in the world or in Christ?**
 - We are helpless to falling for some bias if we seek to be identified with the world
 - Only in Christ can we learn how to truly be a human being created in God's image.
 - **8** Talk about the Elephant in the Room - we're all going to lean differently but we cannot judge each other by how we lean differently politically.
 - I need to be OK with my brother if he votes differently than me because he's doing so with his conscience.
 - Does there have to be a political feud between brethren who vote differently? Is that being kingdom-minded?
 - **9 Romans 14:17-18 (NIV)** For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit,¹⁸ because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and **receives human approval**.

- What the Bible says about tribalism.
 - **10 1 Corinthians 1:10 (ESV)** I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.
 - **11 Romans 16:17 (ESV)** I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them.
 - **12 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 (ESV)** For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, ¹⁹ for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized.
- **13** Politics shouldn't be a form of social tribalism, as it sometimes happens with sports (as an example), because you identify yourself too much with that idea or tribe as opposed to Christ.
 - Are you known for your tribal leanings or for following the way of Christ?
 - Are you OK with your brother even though he likes the sports team which is your bitter rival? Would you say it is silly?
 - Apple vs Android, etc.
 - Isn't it the same when we divide ourselves over politics as well? You may say they are not the same category, perhaps for some politics carries more of a conviction, like lifestyle (vegan, keto, no chemo, etc), and spiritual matters.
 - - just a thought -- *I think the last bullet makes the point; this one though valid, not sure sports and politics would be in the same category? I.e. one is mere recreation, the other, one might say could directly affect lives here on earth. I think you can make the point without using the "sports" analogy. Just my 2 cents for what it's worth. :)*
- **My identity in Christ**
 - **14 1 Corinthians 1:11-13 (NIV)** My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹² What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ." ¹³ **Is Christ divided?** Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?
 - Tribalism is the result of following people rather than Jesus.
 - Tribalism is the result of following trends rather than truth.
 - **15 Ephesians 4:2-6 (NIV)** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. ³ Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. ⁴ There is one body and one Spirit,

just as you were called to one hope when you were called ; ⁵ one Lord, one faith, one baptism; ⁶ one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

- To counter tribalism we need to surrender to the influence of the Spirit: humility, gentleness, patience, kindness and love
 - The spirit of tribalism is about selfishness, arrogance and
 - In Christ we are part of one Body, One Lord, One Faith, One baptism, One God and Father of all who is in all.
- **16 Ephesians 2:14-18 (NIV)** For he himself is our peace, **who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier**, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ **and in one body to reconcile** both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.
- **17** He made out of the two one body



- Emotional/Intellectual Maturity is needed to overcome the vulnerability of stepping out of your bubble and trying to understand others.
 - Jesus and His disciples are about peace.
 - **18** Questions?
- **19 Discussion Questions**
- How has tribalism affected you? What have you been *tribal* about?
 - What are some of the devil's schemes to derail our identity and get us to adopt popular worldviews?
 - How do you strengthen your mind against the dangers of tribalism?

Class #4: Am I thinking with a Christian Worldview?

- **1** Review
 - **2** Tribalism - Us vs Them
 - **3** Are you able to discuss your ideologies with an open mind and sober thinking? Avoiding radicalism (emotionalism)
 - **4** Are you able to be at peace with others who think differently than you and keep your focus on God's Kingdom?
 - **5** Are your (political alignment) ideas faith-based or slanted towards a human philosophy/opinion?
- We will examine some *isms* today
- **6** ***Worship of the mind***: Humanism
 - An outlook or system of thought attaching prime importance to human rather than divine or supernatural matters. Humanist beliefs stress the potential value and goodness of human beings, emphasize common human needs, and seek solely rational ways of solving human problems.
 - **Humanism** is a philosophical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively. The meaning of the term humanism has fluctuated according to the successive intellectual movements which have identified with it. Generally, however, humanism refers to a perspective that **affirms some notion of human freedom and progress**. It views humans as solely responsible for the promotion and development of individuals and emphasizes a concern for humans in relation to the world.
 - The problem here is a sole reliance upon human agencies rather than on God.
 - Many political ideologies have come from this humanistic way of thinking:
- **Examination of isms/political ideologies**
 - ***Fascism**
 - Fascism is a form of far-right, authoritarian ultranationalism characterized by dictatorial power, forcible suppression of opposition and strong regimentation of society and of the economy which came to prominence in early 20th-century Europe. The first fascist movements emerged in Italy during World War I, before spreading to other European countries. Opposed to liberalism, Marxism, and anarchism, fascism is placed on the far right within the traditional left–right spectrum.
 - An authoritarian and nationalistic right-wing system of government and social organization.
 - ***Anarchism**

- Anarchism is a political philosophy and movement that is skeptical of authority and **rejects all involuntary, coercive forms of hierarchy**. Anarchism calls for the abolition of the state which it holds to be undesirable, unnecessary and harmful. It is usually described alongside libertarian Marxism as the libertarian wing of the socialist movement and as having a historical association with anti-capitalism and socialism.
 - Belief in the abolition of all government and the organization of society on a voluntary, cooperative basis without recourse to force or compulsion.
 - Like all other ideologies, there are more radicalized elements in them, but in its simplest form, anarchism is an idealized utopia of living without artificial limits or forms of external control.
- **Liberalism**
 - **7** Willingness to respect or accept behaviour or opinions different from one's own; openness to new ideas.
 - Classical Definition: Liberalism is a political and moral philosophy based on **liberty, consent of the governed and equality before the law**. Liberals espouse a wide array of views depending on their understanding of these principles, but they generally support free markets, free trade, limited government, individual rights, capitalism, democracy, secularism, gender equality, racial equality, internationalism, freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of religion.
 - This political philosophy is what has been shaping the western world for the last 100 years or so.
 - In the last 10 or so years, here in the US, we have seen a polarization between the leftist and rightist elements as they collide with each other as to what "liberalism" is. There are Republican or Conservative Liberals as well as Democratic or Socialist Liberals.
- **Conservatism**
 - Commitment to traditional values and promoting the perpetuity of cultural traditions and social institutions.
 - **8** Conservatism is a political and social philosophy promoting traditional social institutions in the context of culture and civilization. **The central tenets of conservatism include tradition, hierarchy, and authority, as established in respective cultures, as well as property rights**. Conservatives seek to preserve a range of institutions such as organized religion, parliamentary government, and property rights, with the aim of emphasizing continuity.

Adherents of conservatism often oppose modernism and seek a return to "the way things were".

- Conservatism also has left and right leanings. You will find liberal conservatives as well as democratic and republican conservatives. There are even social conservatives.
- **9** Traditional conservatism: emphasizes the need for the principles of natural law and **transcendent moral order, tradition, hierarchy and organic unity**. Agrarianism (economy based on production from crops and farmland), classicism, and high culture are affirmed as well as the intersecting spheres of loyalty.
- **Federalism**
 - **10** Federalism is a mixed or **compound mode of government** that combines a general government with regional governments in a single political system. Its distinctive feature, exemplified in the Constitution of the United States, is a relationship of parity between the two levels of government established. It is thus a form of government in which powers are divided between two levels of government of equal status.
 - Federalism was a political party back when the US was taking shape. Now that this idea is embedded in the constitution, you don't hear people talk about it anymore.
 - **11** in the US we live under both national and state governments. There are also powers that some states give to cities: policing, taxing and educational powers.
- **Republicanism**
 - **12** Republicanism is a political ideology centered on **citizenship in a state organized as a republic**. Historically, it ranges from the rule of a representative minority or oligarchy to popular sovereignty. It has had different definitions and interpretations which vary significantly based on historical context and methodological approach.
 - **13** The USA is a republic, as described in article 4, section 4 of the constitution.
 - Although the republican party platform may contain some of these definitions, it has morphed and changed throughout the years.
 - There are liberal republicans, conservative republicans and social republicans, all having in common the idea of how the country should be organized and governed.
- ***Communism**

- Communism is a philosophical, social, political, economic ideology and movement whose ultimate goal is the **establishment of a communist society, namely a socioeconomic order structured upon the ideas of common ownership** of the means of production and the absence of social classes, money and the state.
- A political theory derived from Karl Marx, advocating class war and leading to a society in which all property is publicly owned and each person works and is paid according to their abilities and needs. See also Marxism.
- **Democratism**
 - **14** Democratism is an economically center to center-right, civically moderate, and culturally center-left ideology, hanging around the center of the political compass, exclusive to the United States. Democratism advocates for social and economic equality, along with a welfare state, providing government regulation in the economy to promote public interest.
 - Among the *progressive elements*, in terms of economic policy, Democratism believes in environmental protection, support for organized labour, maintenance and expansion of social programs, affordable college tuition, universal healthcare, equal opportunity, and consumer protection. In terms of social policy, Democratism supports LGBT rights, criminal justice, immigration reform, stricter gun laws and legalization of certain recreational drugs like marijuana.
 - You will find social democrats, conservative democrats and liberal democrats, all having in common the idea of **supporting social and economic equality along with a welfare state. They will look to the government to regulate the economy to promote public interest.**
- **Socialism**
 - **15** A political and economic theory of social organization which advocates that the means of production, distribution, and exchange should be **owned or regulated by the community as a whole.**
 - Socialism is a political, social and economic philosophy encompassing a range of economic and social systems characterised by social ownership of the means of production and workers' self-management of enterprises. It includes the political theories and movements associated with such systems. Social ownership can be public, collective, cooperative or of equity. While no single definition encapsulates many types of socialism, **social ownership is the one common element.**

- Touted as the opposite of capitalism and free market economy.
- There's democratic socialism, conservative socialism, etc.
- Although it sounds like a good idea, we haven't observed good results from nations or countries that have tried to practice it because those in power (the representatives of the community) are usually corrupted by said power and what the people end up sharing is misery instead of wealth. Examples: USSR, China, etc.
- It is also interesting to note that such an idea as socialism, which has leftist tendencies, can turn extreme right in certain conditions, such as with nationalism, or national socialism, which morphed into fascism in some countries in the past: Mussolini's Italy, Hitler's Germany, and Castro's Cuba as examples. All these started out as socialist governments.
- **Libertarianism**
 - A political philosophy that advocates only minimal state intervention in the free market and the private lives of citizens.
 - **16** Libertarianism is a political philosophy and movement that upholds liberty as a core principle. **Libertarians seek to maximize autonomy and political freedom, emphasizing free association, freedom of choice, individualism and voluntary association.** Libertarianism shares a skepticism of authority and state power, but libertarians diverge on the scope of their opposition to existing economic and political systems.
 - **17** Libertarians believe they stand in the middle of the political spectrum. However, various schools of libertarian thought offer a range of views regarding the legitimate functions of state and private power, often calling for the restriction or dissolution of coercive social institutions. Different categorizations have been used to distinguish various forms of libertarianism. This is done to distinguish libertarian views on the nature of property and capital, usually along left–right or socialist–capitalist lines.
- **18** Our form of government, whether republican or democrat, is truly representative of **social democratism** (the closest to classical liberalism we've gotten so far), which is the most centrist of all political ideologies as you see on this chart. This is just my interpretation.
- Within that centrism, there are left and right leanings, mostly about how to implement social justice and the role we give the government in our individual lives.
 - Republicans want a government that is small and doesn't have too much power to influence our individual lives while democrats want

the government to be involved in our individual lives and want to give it a bigger role and more power.

- Republicans don't seek to try to change institutions they believe are already established and working right (if it ain't broke, don't fix it) while democrats have a more progressive view towards certain established institutions and want them to adapt to their perceived changes in society quickly.

- The Rock Amidst the Sinking Sand

- **19** Cycle of Nations: as nations/peoples go through the stages they may adopt different political ideologies/worldviews
- **20** Even as people we go through some changes in how we think as we go through our own life cycle
 - If my identity is not in Christ, I will not be able to be objective about humanistic thinking. I will lean heavily towards humanistic ideologies.
- But **Christ doesn't change**: He is the rock and everything else is sinking sand
 - **21 Hebrews 13:8 (NIV)** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.
- Jesus has always had the best answers to life's problems and questions.
- No other intellectual philosophy or religion can provide answers to life's questions and dilemmas
 - Why do people suffer?
 - Why do we die?
 - Why can't there be peace?
- Jesus wants us to use our rational reasoning.
 - We often look to our ideologies for explanations, which is why more ideologies come forth to try to cover the errors of the previous ones.
- We can be confident because our faith does not depend on our intellect or choice of philosophy, but on facts and attestations/eyewitnesses.
 - **22 2 Peter 1:19-21 (NIV)** We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
 - As though coming from left field, God gives us an answer as to how to view our situation with hopeful eyes. The hope is not in the

answer man gives, which is temporary and limited, but in what God gives, which may appear not to address our current issues at first, but God wants us to trust Him.

- **23 Hebrews 2:1-4 (NIV)** We must pay the most careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. ² For since the message spoken through angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³ how shall we escape if we ignore so great a salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. ⁴ **God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**
- In a time where there were so many magicians, naysayers and seers, God confirmed His word through signs, miracle and wonders which the harshest skeptic and critics could not deny.
- The first Gospel message contains that appeal:
- **24 Acts 2:22 (NIV)** Fellow Israelites, listen to this: **Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs,** which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know.
- Why would we ignore this confirmed truth and run to **humanism**?
- **25** The Bible is not anti intellectual or anti science. It is anti **intellectualism** and anti **scientism**. **26**
 - Intellectualism: the exercise of the intellect at the expense of the emotions.
 - Scientism: unwarranted application of science in situations considered not amenable to application of the scientific method or similar scientific standards.
 - We shouldn't use science to prove things that cannot be proven, as in creation or evolution. We accept creation not because it can be proven scientifically, but because we trust the Bible to be God's Word and true to what it says, not to mention that it fits many other scientific observations, where Darwinian evolution does not.
 - God calls upon our reason and intellect as well as our emotions to choose truth over lies, enlightenment over deception, light over darkness, faithfulness to Him over cult of self.
- **27** Mindset after elections are over and perhaps not in your favor

- **28 Romans 8:28 (ESV)** And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.
- **29 1 Peter 1:13 (ESV)** Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
- **30 Hebrews 10:23-25 (ESV)** Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵ not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.
- **31-32 Discussion Questions**
 - Now that the election is over, what are your biggest concerns?
 - How do you know that God will continue to protect us no matter who is president?
 - What questions do you still have about how Christians should view politics?

Class #5: Strengthen my Christian Worldview - The Battle Is Not Against Flesh and Blood

- **1** Voting is an issue of conscience, not salvation
- **Examine party platforms and vote with your conscience** - Being Bereans with everything, not just with Scriptures.
- **2 Acts 17:11 (NIV)** Now the Berean Jews were of more noble character than those in Thessalonica, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.
- Whatever our political leanings, we will be tested in our faithfulness to God by how we humble ourselves in times when things may not be going as we desire.
- **Our political responsibilities as citizens of God's Kingdom:**
 - **3 Romans 13:1 (NIV)** Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
 - **John 19:11 (NIV)** "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above." - Jesus said to Pontius Pilate, Roman procurator of Judea
 - **4 1 Peter 2:13-15 (NIV)** Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to

commend those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.

- **5 1 Timothy 2:1-2 (NIV)** I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— ² for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.
- **6** The Holy Spirit says we have four political responsibilities, all of which we should carry out today as Christians
 - We need to do what is right - Rom 13:3; 1 Pe 2:15
 - We are to pray - 1 Tim 2:1-2
 - We are to pay taxes - Rom 13:6
 - We are to obey the government—insofar as it does not infringe on our commitment to God. - Rom 13:5; 1 Pe 2:13ff; Titus 3:1
- We are not part of nations that will evolve and eventually pass away, but one that will outlast all created things. We are the Rock not cut by human hands! Remember Daniel's prophecy! (Daniel 2:36-45)
 - **7 Daniel 2:44-45 (NIV)** In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. ⁴⁵ This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands —a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.
 - **8** The Kingdom of God was founded at one of the most politically, racially and ethnically divided times in all of human history, with many more levels of hostile division than we even have today
 - There were loyalists to Rome, loyalists to the nation of Israel, the Religious establishment which also had many different leanings from left to right; there were Samaritans, Jews, Romans and Greeks, and many other ethnic groups living among these which had diverse opinions on the political and religious structure of the time.
 - We need to avoid us falling into Satan's trap of people's expectations and presumptions. We don't want to be pegged as loyal to any humanism or ideology, but faithful to the core work of God's Kingdom, our ambassadorship to Jesus. The fact He reigns and rules regardless of what nations have been handed over to.
- Identify our problems as humans - **Romans 3:9-18**
 - Are they political, cultural or ethnic?
 - We are all alike under sin! Rom 3:9
 - **9 Romans 3:10-12 (NIV)** "There is no one righteous, not even one; ¹¹ there is no one who understands;

there is no one who seeks God.

¹² All have turned away,
they have together become worthless;
there is no one who does good,
not even one.” Quote from Psalm 14:1-3

- **Romans 3:18 (NIV)** “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” - Quote from Psalm 36:1
- They are spiritual! Guilty conscience, immorality, sin and death.
- Don't fight against your brother! Fight the Good Fight! People cannot help you solve these problems! - **Ephesians 6:10-20**
 - Peace will not come by worldly solutions
 - **10 Ephesians 6:12 (NIV)** For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
 - Peace with god only comes by the solution the Savior brought us
- Jesus' strategy to overcome the world is not to adopt its thinking (conform to it), but to rise above it via transforming our minds by God's Word.
 - **11 Romans 12:2 (NIV)** Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.
 - We need to trust God's answers. We won't know God's good, pleasing, and perfect will by being humanists.
 - No political platform reveals God's will - they are humanistic. They are part of a system that people and nations have been handed over to. God's people are not part of that system. We live within it, as we live in the world, but we are not of it.
 - Should our loyalty be with it?
 - Should we let its ever-changing and morphing nature affect our moral and kingdom choices?
 - Trusting the world's answers hasn't gotten anyone out of guilt or death
 - Jesus provided answers that rise above what the world has to offer
 - Politics, culture and ethnicity are not obstacles but can turn into ways to influence others towards **love and unity**
- **12** Jesus assembled a motley crew of disciples to prove **love and unity** will overcome any radicalization and division! - **Matthew 10:2-4**
 - In the New Testament, Jesus gave high praise to a Roman soldier for his exemplary faith ([Matthew 8:5-13](#)). These and other examples confirm that government, whether in theocratic ancient Israel or secular Egypt, Babylon, Persia and, or Rome, has always been part of God's plan.
 - When it comes to politics, God and Jesus always side with Themselves:

to make a living and be at peace in Galilee. They were probably more focused on the politics that kept them feeding their families! And yet, they left their boats and father compelled by Jesus' message from God.

- **Nathaniel** was a no filters kind of guy. **John 1:46-47 (NIV)**
“Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked.
“Come and see,” said Philip.
⁴⁷ When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”
- **Thomas** was a skeptic and probably a pessimist
- **James son of Alphaeus** was a background guy, probably why he was known as James the Less (Mark 15:40).
- **Judas** focused more on the here and now than on Jesus and lost his purpose and soul by making a political or what he thought was a personally beneficial move to betray Jesus to the ruling party.
 - He sold out Jesus
 - He sold out the 11 apostles
 - Eventually He sold himself out by committing suicide
- All because he allowed himself to focus on what people were saying when he should have been focused on the Words of Christ

- **15 Questions?**

- **16 Discussion:**

- How can we ensure that we don't become distracted by earthly agendas?
- What strategies have you developed to help you love and unite with brethren who may be very different from you?
- Now that we have a president elect, how can we promote unity in the church, our community, and beyond?
- What are some questions you still have about viewing politics as a Christian?

Class #6: Being a part of the solution: Volunteering

- **1** *November 18th, 2020*
- **2** Jesus' charge to the 12 and the rest of His disciples: be known in the community for good works - be light, be salt.
 - The 12, with all their different political ideologies and religious prejudices presented a **united front** to the community as they rallied around Jesus' **Kingdom focus**.

- **3 Matthew 5:13 (NIV)** 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.
- Infighting, hatred, worldly partisanship, and prejudice indicate a loss of saltiness
- **Matthew 5:14-15 (NIV)** You are the **light of the world**. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.
- Advertising your political ideologies is putting your light under a bowl
- Be known for your faith, not your politics!
- People often like to complain about their situation or the world around them but as Christians we are called to action
 - **4 Phil. 2:14-16** - As disciples we are expected to do everything without complaining and instead we are asked to hold out the Word of Truth in a dark world.
- The solution is not necessarily lobbying, protests, or voting differently; the solution for kingdom citizens is doing the good works God prepared in advance for us to do.
- Being the salt of the earth and the light of the world is not about political influence, but about moral influence that can influence politics.
- Tonight we would like to encourage everyone to get off the sidelines and really get in the game.
 - **5 1Cor. 4:20** - "For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power."
 - Too many people right now are spending too much time talking about pandemics and politics and not enough about how to please God!
 - The kingdom of God, the kingdom that Jesus died for was never a group of people sitting around talking about what would be done or what should be done. They were people who got involved. They didn't necessarily get involved with the gov't instead they were involved with people.
 - **6 1Peter 4:10** - As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace
 - Challenge #1 - What is/are your talents? The bible says we have all received a gift to be used to serve others. What is yours? Are you using it to serve others?
 - Or are you spending more time talking than allowing the power of God work in you?

- **7 Galatians 6:10** - So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.
 - Start local, with simple ways to help older members, the sickly or those going through hard times
 - As you look to serve, God will open more doors for you to continue.
 - Ask yourself, what good have I done lately?
- **8 Acts 20:35** - In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must **help the weak** and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"
 - Brothers and sisters, we have an example from Jesus as well as the Apostles to work hard for those who are "weak" among us
 - That weakness may be seen physically, spiritually, emotionally, mentally...whatever the weakness our responsibility is to work hard to help that person through their situation
 - Our motivation is to be inspired by the words of our Lord Jesus who said **it is** better to give than receive.
 - This was not a suggestion but rather a statement of truth. It Is BETTER...
- **9 Luke 6:35** - But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.
 - Jesus came to serve, not to be served
 - As a rule of thumb, if you're complaining about something, depressed or bitter, you are inwardly focused and NOT SERVING!
- **10 1Timothy 6:17-19** - As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. **They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share**, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

- Those among us who are financially better off you are charged to be rich in good works
 - Those among us who are financially better off are charge to generous and ready to share that is ready to help and promote the cause of the Gospel.
 - **11 Ephesians 2:10** - For we are his workmanship, **created in Christ Jesus for good works**, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
 - Bottom line is we have been created to do good.
 - We will always feel the best when we do good.
 - It is in our spiritual DNA to not sit on the sidelines talking about stuff but to get up and do some good.
 - **12 Isaiah 58:10** - If you pour yourself out for the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then shall your light rise in the darkness and your gloom be as the noonday.
- **13** In the words of Michael Jackson, “if we want to make the world a better place take a look in the mirror and make a change.”
 - “Your political post on FB convinced me to change my politics!”, said no one ever!
 - Things will change when you decide to change yourself.
 - Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.
 - Ask not what the church can do for you but what you can do for the church.
- **14- 15 Discussion Questions:**
 - Who in the group has volunteered before? What did you do? How did that experience impact you? How did it impact the people you were serving?
 - How do you think volunteering to help in your community or metropolitan area can help to promote the Gospel of Christ?
 - As Thanksgiving quickly approaches and then Christmas, what are some possible volunteer opportunities people can join?

Class #7: “Give To Caesar What is Caesar’s...”

- **1** *December 2nd, 2020*
- Continuation: The twelve apostles represent the splinter groups of the time, yet they were brought together by focusing on following Jesus
- Jesus and the right wing (Pharisees) vs Jesus and the left wing (Sadducees)

- **2 Matthew 22:15-16 (NIV)** Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. ¹⁶ They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians.
- **3 The Herodians** were a political group of Jews, with the majority of Herodians being Sadducees; they were involved in the government and very interested in how it ruled over the people of Palestine. Herodians received their name because they were vocal supporters of King Herod, and they wanted his dynasty (or family) to run the land of Israel for many years to come. These Herodians were small in number, yet they remained powerful and influential among the Jews.
- **4** The Pharisees and Sadducees were not just denominations, in the sense that we know of them today, they were also politically influential since in OT times there was no distinction between church and state.
- The Sadducees controlled the Temple in Jerusalem because they made up the priesthood. They were responsible for the activities that were held near and within the Temple.
- The reason that the Herodians, mostly Sadducees, did not like Jesus and supported His death was because they saw Him as a rival to King Herod. They thought, like many people at the time, that Jesus was going to create an earthly kingdom, which would ruin the Herodians' plans to keep King Herod and his family in power.
- Jesus lived during one of the more polarized and politically fired up times and places. The Pharisees and Sadducees tested him as much as they could to figure out what Jesus' politics was.
 - The Pharisees were a division of the Jews that did not like the way many Jews were practicing their religion. In the first century, the Pharisees bound rules and regulations upon people that God never wanted. They mistreated the Law of God and ignored important teachings like faith, love, and true obedience to God. They claimed to be experts on the Law of Moses, but they didn't follow it.
 - The Pharisees were not as involved in politics, but they were an influential group as teachers of the Law. They were part of the Sanhedrin, counselors to the high priest.
- **5 Matthew 22:16-17 (NIV)** "Teacher," they said, "we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren't swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. ¹⁷ Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?"
 - Both the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to trap Jesus. They wanted to oust him to the Zealots as a Roman loyalist or accuse Him as a traitor against Rome.

- In that age you were damned either way.
 - **6 Matthew 11:16-19 (NIV)** “To what can I compare this generation? They are like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling out to others:
 - ¹⁷ “We played the pipe for you, and you did not dance; we sang a dirge, and you did not mourn.’
 - ¹⁸ For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, ‘He has a demon.’ ¹⁹ The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, ‘Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.’ But wisdom is proved right by her deeds.”
 - When people are set to fault finding, they will do it either way.
 - Only sincere and truth-loving people will see past the lies, deceit, and fear mongering.
- Where does Jesus fit in the political arena? That’s what they were trying to determine. Of course, they couldn’t be sincere about it, so they used flattery.
- Jesus can see past such obvious flattery.
- **7 Matthew 22:18-21 (NIV)** But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? ¹⁹ Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, ²⁰ and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”
 - ²¹ “Caesar’s,” they replied.
 Then he said to them, “**So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.**”
 - What did they expect Him to say? “No, don’t pay that evil government anything! God does not approve!” Siding with the Zealots and perhaps the Herodians and nationalists who wanted Rome out of the picture.
 - Or did they expect Him to say, “Pay the taxes you owe”, siding with the Roman loyalists, like the tax collectors and others who benefitted from the Roman alliance?
 - To their surprise, Jesus said: “Pay your taxes”! He didn’t deny it! He affirmed it!
 - **Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s...** Jesus taught that we owe loyalty to two spheres: the worldly one we’re living in, and the one we’re permanently a part of if you pledge allegiance to Christ as Lord.
 - This speaks to the political responsibility of Kingdom Citizens I had shared weeks prior, and what we shared last week, being doers of good works, as Robert said Sunday from Matthew 25:35-36

- Notice Jesus' reference to ***image***, in verse 20. Whose image is this?
 - Those who control worldly things have their image stamped on them: Samsung, Apple, FB, Google, Beats, Nike, etc.
 - Whose image do you bear? If you bear the image of God, why are you giving allegiance to the things of the world? Give to them what is due them, but you give yourself to God if you believe you are made in His image.
 - In part Jesus is alluding to the second commandment here: You shall not make an image for yourself in the form of anything in heaven, earth or in the waters and bow down and worship them.
 - Don't confuse the worldly images stamped on material things and whose image you bear - one that is not reproducible - the invisible God.
- Obviously our loyalty to God is a higher loyalty, but we dare not shirk our responsibility to Caesar.
- It was perhaps this saying of Jesus that initiated that idea of separation between church and state that our founders ascribed to.
- The idea was already being practiced and Jesus highlighted it instead of rejecting it.
- **8 Separation of Church and State:**
 - Another thing you won't learn in college or high school.
 - The separation of church and state is a philosophic and jurisprudential concept for defining political distance in the relationship between religious organizations and the state. Conceptually, the term refers to the creation of a secular state and to disestablishment, the changing of an existing, formal relationship between the church and the state. Although the concept is older, the exact phrase "separation of church and state" is derived from "wall of separation between church and state", a term coined by Thomas Jefferson. - *Wikipedia*
 - Beginning in the late 18th century, two fundamental attitudes developed in matters related to the separation of church and state. The first, as implied in the Constitution of the United States, was supported by a tendency to leave to the church, set free from state supervision, a maximum freedom in the realization of its spiritual, moral, and educational tasks. In the United States, for example, a comprehensive church school and educational system has been created by the churches on the basis of this freedom, and numerous colleges and universities have been founded by churches.
 - Jesus didn't allow himself to be pigeon-holed by others. In the discussion about MDRM he also avoided that. - *Encyclopedia Britannica*

- **9** "Separation of church and state" is paraphrased from Thomas Jefferson and used by others in expressing an understanding of the intent and function of the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment to the United States Constitution which reads: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof..."
- Focusing on Jesus' view of leadership: Mathew 18:4, Mat 23:11
 - In the next chapter in Matthew, CH 23, Jesus expands upon this separation of loyalties and what it means for the disciple of Jesus:
 - **10 Matthew 23:11-12 (NIV)** The greatest among you will be your servant. ¹² For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.
 - **Matthew 18:4-5 (NIV)** Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵ And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.
- As opposed to worldly leadership:
 - **Matthew 20:25-28 (NIV)** Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
 - He had said this in response to the mother of James and John telling Jesus she wanted her sons to sit at his right and left in his kingdom.
 - **Luke 11 - Deadly Woes for Those Drunk with Power**
 - Live By Appearances - Not genuine.
 - Clean the Inside of the Cup - vs 39-41
 - Neglecting Justice and the Love of God - vs 42
 - Love to be seen in positions of power - vs 43
 - Load people down legalistic requirements (red tape and bureaucracy) - vs 46
 - Don't respect those who speak the truth from God's Word but instead persecute them - vs 47
 - Take Away the Keys to Knowledge - vs 52
 - By deception and approval of what is wrong and ungodly
 - **Romans 1:21-23 (NIV)** For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became

fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

- Shepherds who Honor God:
 - **11 1 Peter 5:2-3 (NIV)** Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, watching over them—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not pursuing dishonest gain, but eager to serve; ³ not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.
 - Willing sacrifice and leadership, as opposed to feeling obligated or coerced (pressured)
 - Eager to serve instead of pursuing dishonest gain
 - Being examples of service and humility as opposed to lording over
- **12 Discussion Questions**
 - **13** How do your emotions tend to trap you into false allegiances instead of focusing on your allegiance to God and His Kingdom?
 - Do you feel your loyalties to “Caesar” sometimes get blurred with your loyalties to God? Give some examples, like when you have to pay taxes, or maybe you've looked the other way to benefit yourself or someone else.
 - Which loyalties pressure you to be fake instead of a genuine person, worldly loyalties, or kingdom loyalties?

Class #8: Paul's interactions with political figures and ideas

- **1** *December 9th, 2020*
- At the Areopagus
 - **2 Acts 17:16-17 (NIV)** While Paul was waiting for them in Athens, he was greatly distressed to see that the city was full of idols. ¹⁷ So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there.
 - The idolatry we see in our society should distress us to the point of wanting to reason with people who fear God.
 - A disciple is well aware of the idolatry all around them
 - **Paul was motivated not to judge but to reason with people about why they should turn to God!**
 - **3 Acts 17:18-21 (NIV)** A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him. Some of them asked, “What is this babbling trying to say?” Others remarked, “He seems to be advocating foreign gods.” They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection. ¹⁹ Then they took him and brought him to a

meeting of the Areopagus, where they said to him, “May we know what this new teaching is that you are presenting? ²⁰ You are bringing some strange ideas to our ears, and we would like to know what they mean.” ²¹ (All the Athenians and the foreigners who lived there spent their time doing nothing but talking about and listening to the latest ideas.)

- The world’s ideas are in constant flux
 - We’re very focused on individualistic sensibilities and opinions
 - On gender alone many are abandoning the binary definitions God placed on people: man and woman. Now we ask, what do you prefer? He, she, it, they? What’s your assigned gender? What’s your preferred gender?
 - Our heart wants to blur the natural and logical - that’s where individualism leads us - political correctness - which is a form of passive-aggressive bullying
 - Whereas people are interested in the next scientific, political, or philosophical breakthrough, Christians are interested in getting people to trust God and His way. Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and forever!
 - Interesting that those on the scene here were always on the lookout for the next “big thing” not caring about truth but for intrigue.
- **4 Acts 17:22-23 (NIV)** Paul then stood up in the meeting of the Areopagus and said: “People of Athens! I see that in every way you are very religious. ²³ For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD. So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship —and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.
- Paul’s approach was not patronizing or derogatory - he commended their devotion to their false religion
 - He was bold about pointing out their ignorance
 - He made no apology in proclaiming the One True God - verses 24-28
 - He made the world and everything in it
 - He controls the times and how things are distributed (providence)
 - God does this that we may seek Him and find Him - verse 27
 - Paul even uses their writings/poetry to relate to them - verse 28
- **5 Acts 17:29-31 (NIV)** “Therefore since we are God’s offspring, we should not think that the divine being is like gold or silver or stone—an image made by human design and skill. ³⁰ In the past God overlooked such

ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. ³¹ For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead.”

- Context: don't be so focused on temporary and passing issues that won't get to really define you as a person - idolatry
- Focusing on the world will have you miss out on God
- God overlooks your ignorance, but commands you to repent
- He has given the proof you need to focus on to define who you really are: the empty grave
- Jesus is coming soon to judge
- Yes. Our focus needs to be on what is coming
 - God will judge that is hold the whole world accountable to His Standard of good
 - The only way we can be found right is if we are clothed with Christ
- Paul before the Sanhedrin
 - **6 Acts 23:1-2 (NIV)** Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, “My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day.”² At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth.
 - Paul declares his good conscience
 - **7 Acts 23:6-7 (NIV)** Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, “My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead.”⁷ When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided.
 - Paul capitalizes on knowing what divides the parties accusing him in order to get to talk about the truth.
 - We see hear that Paul uses whatever he can to “make the most of every opportunity”
- Paul before Governor Felix
 - **8 Acts 24:10-16 (NIV)** Paul replied: “I know that for a number of years you have been a judge over this nation; so I gladly make my defense. ¹¹ You can easily verify that no more than twelve days ago I went up to Jerusalem to worship. ¹² My accusers did not find me arguing with anyone at the temple, or stirring up a crowd in the synagogues or anywhere else in the city. ¹³ And they cannot prove to you the charges they are now making against me. ¹⁴ However, I admit that I worship the God of our

ancestors as a follower of the Way, which they call a sect. I believe everything that is in accordance with the Law and that is written in the Prophets, ¹⁵ and I have the same hope in God as these men themselves have, that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. ¹⁶ So I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

- **9 Acts 24:24-25 (NIV)** Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. ²⁵ As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, “That’s enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you.”
- Paul before Governor Porcius Festus
 - **10 Acts 25:8 (NIV)** Then Paul made his defense: “I have done nothing wrong against the Jewish law or against the temple or against Caesar.”
 - **11 Acts 25:9-11 (NIV)** Festus, wishing to do the Jews a favor, said to Paul, “Are you willing to go up to Jerusalem and stand trial before me there on these charges?” ¹⁰ Paul answered: “I am now standing before Caesar’s court, where I ought to be tried. I have not done any wrong to the Jews, as you yourself know very well. ¹¹ If, however, I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!”
- **12** Look at The Book
 - **13** You can download the program and we will go over it next Bible Class
 - Read Me
 - Member Manual
 - Weekly Handouts
 - Test of Wisdom and Folly
 - **14** You can request to get the lessons monthly (4 lessons at a time for easier printing)
- **15- 16** Discussion Questions
 - It is important to identify idolatry. What do you perceive in your environment as possible idolatry trying to steal your devotion and faithfulness to the Lord?
 - How have you reacted when your faith is challenged? How have you stood up to challenges to your faith?
 - How has this class helped you deal with the political noise?

Class #9: Intro to Look at the Book

- *December 16th, 2020*
- Look At the Book Intro
- Reading Schedule
- Member Manual
- Discussion Questions