

## Maintaining Our Witness

Now, it is true that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). It is also true that if we confess our sins, God is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9); however, it is also true that one who has repented of his sin should bear the fruit of that repentance. Does George W. Bush bear such fruit? The Bible says that “he who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion” (Proverbs 28:13). Yet, when asked about his pre-Christian days, Bush conceals his transgressions – he neither confesses nor repents, and he says nothing about his actions being sinful or wrong. George W. Bush’s response to questions about his pre-Christian days was, “When I was young and irresponsible, I was young and irresponsible.” This is not the kind of character that a Christian should display – least of all a Christian in the highest office in America whose witness bears extra weight due to his visibility and role on the world stage.

Not only is George W. Bush’s personal character contrary to the Word of God, but his policies fly in the face of what Jesus claims to be important. Bush has cut funding to programs that clothe the needy, programs that feed the hungry, programs that help the imprisoned and the immigrants, yet these are the very priorities that differentiate between the heaven-bound and the hell-bound (Matt. 25:31-46). George W. Bush’s policies directly oppose Jesus Christ’s priorities.

## Choose This Day

This leads us to the obvious question, “Is John Kerry any better?” The honest answer is, “No” – but the difference is that John Kerry does not self-identify as a Christian, thus John Kerry does not reflect on the Body of Christ. John Kerry’s Catholicism is like his skiing – just something that he does. It is not who he is. Kerry does not define himself as Catholic, but George W. Bush defines himself as a Christian, so Bush’s antichristian actions and character reflect on the beliefs, character, and actions of all Christians, which adversely affects evangelism. People who reject Christianity rarely reject Jesus Christ Himself – they reject association with the people who call themselves Jesus’ followers. Jesus’ command to “Let [our] light shine before men in such a way that they may see [our] good works, and glorify [our] Father who is in heaven” cuts both ways. If our works are good then men will glorify God, but if our works are wicked, evil, or self-centered then men will curse God and die in their sin. Like Paul said, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg the world on behalf of Christ to be reconciled to God. But our character – the lives we lead, the actions we take, and the integrity we display – will affect their willingness to hear the good news of Jesus Christ. George W. Bush’s presidency makes our task of global reconciliation to God much more difficult, so John Kerry – whose actions do not reflect on Christianity – is the lesser of the two evils.

He that has an ear let him hear...

# Christian Politics



## A n Oxymoron?

## Introduction

How should Christians engage in politics? That is a question with which Christians have wrestled since Jesus walked the earth. Jesus' response is well-known to Christians and non-Christians alike in the western world: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21). But beyond paying taxes, do we owe anything else to "Caesar"? We must render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's (Matt. 22:15-22), and in our cultural context Caesar's share comprises both political involvement and paying taxes. The failure to be involved in politics is similar to the failure to pay taxes – the effective operation of our government, as it was designed, is dependent upon both our participation as well as our tax dollars.

As we ponder public policy we must remember to keep our mission of global reconciliation to God as the main thing. Our mission is to facilitate people coming into relationship with God through Christ in the power of the Spirit. Our mission is not to get people to live moral lives, although that should be an outworking of people coming into a relationship with God (Matt. 5:16, Gal. 5:22-23). God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their sins against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg the nations on behalf of Christ, "Be reconciled to God" (2 Cor. 5:19-20). This is our mission. This is the main thing.

## The Christian Mission

So, how do we apply this perspective to presidential politics in 2004 here in America? We must first ask ourselves, "Which candidate would help facilitate the spread of the Gospel?" Or, to put it another way, "Which candidate would harm the spread of the Gospel least?" As president, neither candidate could overtly preach the Gospel – they are running for president, not pastor of the United States. However, America has projected itself to the world as a "Christian nation" – even though America has never officially confessed Jesus Christ as Lord – and America is often referred to as a Christian nation. That is especially the case when the president of the United States self-identifies as a Christian. As such, the behavior and policies of such a president not only reflect on himself and America, they reflect on Christianity. That is the perception, and perception is reality.

If the main thing is to convert non-believers into believers, then we must ask ourselves, "Would either of these candidates make nonbelievers less receptive to the Gospel?" While John Kerry is Catholic, he does not self-identify as a Catholic. John Kerry does not self-identify at all – he presents himself as different things to different audiences. While he certainly deserves criticism for that, he is not identified specifically as a Christian, thus his actions do not reflect on Christianity as a whole. Therefore, John Kerry cannot adversely affect the spread of the Gospel by his personal example to the world.

## George W. Bush

George W. Bush strongly identifies himself as a Christian, and an Evangelical Christian at that. As such, his actions reflect upon Christianity as a whole. All professing Christians are implored to be careful of our witness – the way we live, the decisions we make, and the way we treat our neighbors from the greatest to the least of these our brethren reflects on Christianity as a whole. Has George W. Bush maintained his witness? Do people see Bush's works and glorify God in heaven (Matthew 5:16)? It is said that you can see the true character of a man in how he behaves when nobody is paying attention. When he thought nobody was listening, when he thought the microphones were turned off, George W. Bush leaned over to Dick Cheney four years ago, pointed out a reporter and called him a "major-league @sshole" – Bush's words. When a reporter from *The Hartford Courant* once asked what he and his father talked about when they were not talking politics, born-again George W. Bush replied, "P\*ssy." Bush's words. That kind of conversation may be what the Bush family values, but it certainly does not respect the sanctity of marriage. George W. Bush has shown that he will not be called a girlie-man, such that when Condoleezza Rice was meeting with selected Senators in 2002 about Iraq, Bush poked his head into her office and quipped, "F\*ck Saddam. We're taking him out." Bush's words. George W. Bush has displayed character that is unbecoming of a Christian, and that adversely affects the spread of the Gospel.