



The Christian community has generally shied away from discussing politics, because our Christian worldview has not been particularly welcome in the public square. We've lacked the courage to share what we believe, wanting to avoid being called intolerant, judgmental, and other unpleasant labels. Instead, many Christians say we shouldn't be political; we should just stay in our lane and keep our discussions around the topics of faith and personal piety. Let's take the time to look at this a bit. Our awareness and response to our culture and the issues we're facing will determine what's next for our nation. If the people of God are awakened to the season we are in, understand what is happening around us, and choose to follow the Lord—even when it's difficult, or it makes us unpopular—it will bring a far more distinctive outcome than the impact of any election. We need to understand the implications of how we engage with realms of authority.

I. ESTABLISHING FIRST PRIORITY

Isaiah 5:20 *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.*

Luke 12:4-9 ⁴ "I tell you, my friends, **do not be afraid** of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. ⁵ But I will show you **whom you should fear: Fear him** who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into hell. **Yes, I tell you, fear him.** ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. ⁷ Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. **Don't be afraid**; you are worth more than many sparrows. ⁸ "I tell you, whoever acknowledges me before men, the Son of Man will also acknowledge him before the angels of God. ⁹ But he who disowns me before men will be disowned before the angels of God."

1. **Our feelings do not define truth. God's Word defines truth. What are some examples in our culture today where objective truth has been blurred by subjective feelings?**

II. JESUS & CIVIL AUTHORITY (POLITICAL POWER)

Luke 13:31-35 ³¹ At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. **Herod wants to kill you.**" ³² He replied, "**Go tell that fox**, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' ³³ In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!

³⁴ "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! ³⁵ Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Matthew 14:1-5 ¹ At that time **Herod the tetrarch heard the reports about Jesus**, ² and he said to his attendants, "This is John the Baptist; he has risen from the dead! That is why miraculous powers are at work in him."

³ Now Herod had arrested John and bound him and put him in prison because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, ⁴ for John had been saying to him: "It is not lawful for you to have her." ⁵ Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people, because they considered him a prophet.

Mark 8:14-21 ¹⁴ The disciples had forgotten to bring bread, except for one loaf they had with them in the boat. ¹⁵ "Be careful," Jesus warned them. "Watch out for the yeast of the Pharisees **and that of Herod.**" ¹⁶ They discussed this with one another and said, "It is because we have no bread."

¹⁷ Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened? ¹⁸ Do you have eyes but fail to see, and ears but fail to hear? And don't you remember? ¹⁹ When I broke the five loaves for the five thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" "Twelve," they replied. ²⁰ "And when I broke the seven loaves for the four thousand, how many basketfuls of pieces did you pick up?" They answered, "Seven." ²¹ He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

Luke 23:6-12 ⁶ On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. ⁷ **When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod**, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. ⁸ When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. ⁹ He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. ¹⁰ The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. ¹¹ **Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him.** Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. ¹² That day Herod and Pilate became friends—before this they had been enemies.

Acts 4:27–28²⁷ *Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed.* ²⁸ *They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen.*

Matthew 26:47–56⁴⁷ *While he was still speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, arrived. With him was a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests and the elders of the people.* ⁴⁸ *Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him.”* ⁴⁹ *Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Greetings, Rabbi!” and kissed him.* ⁵⁰ *Jesus replied, “Friend, do what you came for.”* *Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him.* ⁵¹ *With that, one of Jesus’ companions reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear.* ⁵² *“Put your sword back in its place,” Jesus said to him, “for all who draw the sword will die by the sword.”* ⁵³ **Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?**

⁵⁴ *But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?”* ⁵⁵ *At that time Jesus said to the crowd, “Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me.”* ⁵⁶ *But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled.”* *Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.*

2. **What comes to mind when you think of authority? Fear? Gratitude? Why? How would you describe both a healthy authority and an unhealthy authority?**
3. **How are you using your spiritual authority at work, in your family, in your small group, and with your friends?**

III. WHAT CAN WE DO?

A. **Grow Up in Faith**

2 Corinthians 6:4 *Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses.*

B. **Cooperate with the Holy Spirit**

John 16:7 *But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.*

C. **Take Your Place**

Acts 4:17–20¹⁷ *“But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn these men to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”* ¹⁸ *Then they called them in again and **commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.*** ¹⁹ *But Peter and John replied, “Judge for yourselves whether it is right in God’s sight to obey you rather than God.”* ²⁰ *For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”*

4. **Who has made a significant impact on your spiritual growth? What kinds of things did that person do to cause growth in your life?**
5. **How can you begin using your voice this week to stand against evil and invite others toward the Kingdom of God?**

PRAYER

Proclamation of God’s Faithfulness

I will not put my trust in leaders chosen by people,

I know that mere humans cannot solve my problems.

Apart from God’s Spirit I am only dust, I am blessed because the God of Jacob helps me,

My hope is secure in Almighty God—The One who made the heavens and the earth,

The sea, and everything in them—The Lord, who is always faithful and never fails.

He upholds my cause, even when I am overwhelmed, He sustains me, caring for all my needs.

The Lord brings freedom from every form of bondage, The Lord enables me to see,

The Lord promotes those who are humble, The Lord loves the upright.

The Lord watches over all, He sustains those with no advocate, But He resists the wicked.

The Lord reigns forever, God over His people—of all generations. Praise the Lord.

My God is faithful. Psalm 146:3–10 (NIV®)