

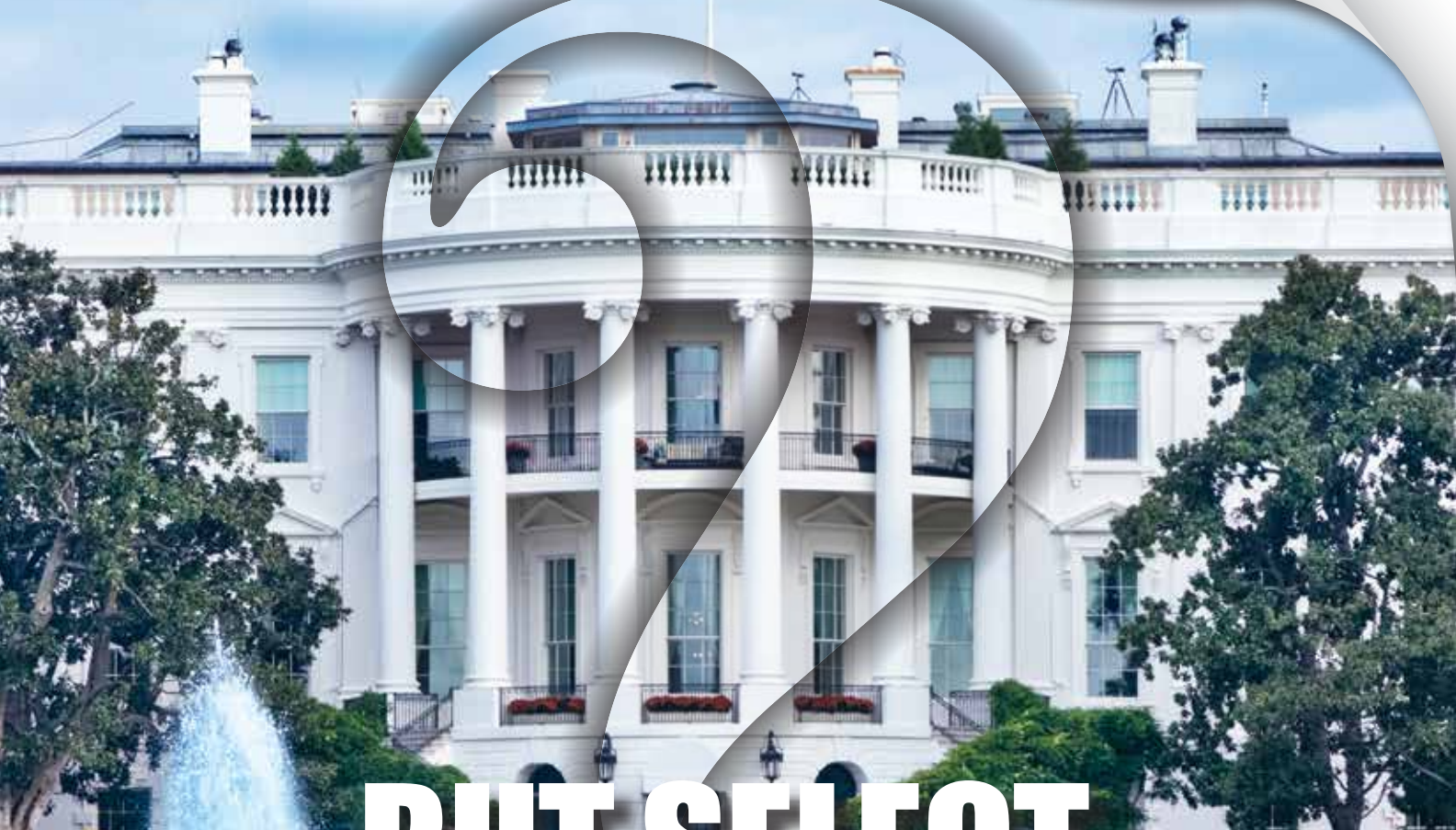
# think

OCTOBER 2016

**A LINE IN THE SAND:  
POLITICS AND FAITH**

Page 22

CURRENT ISSUES FROM A DISTINCTLY CHRISTIAN VIEW



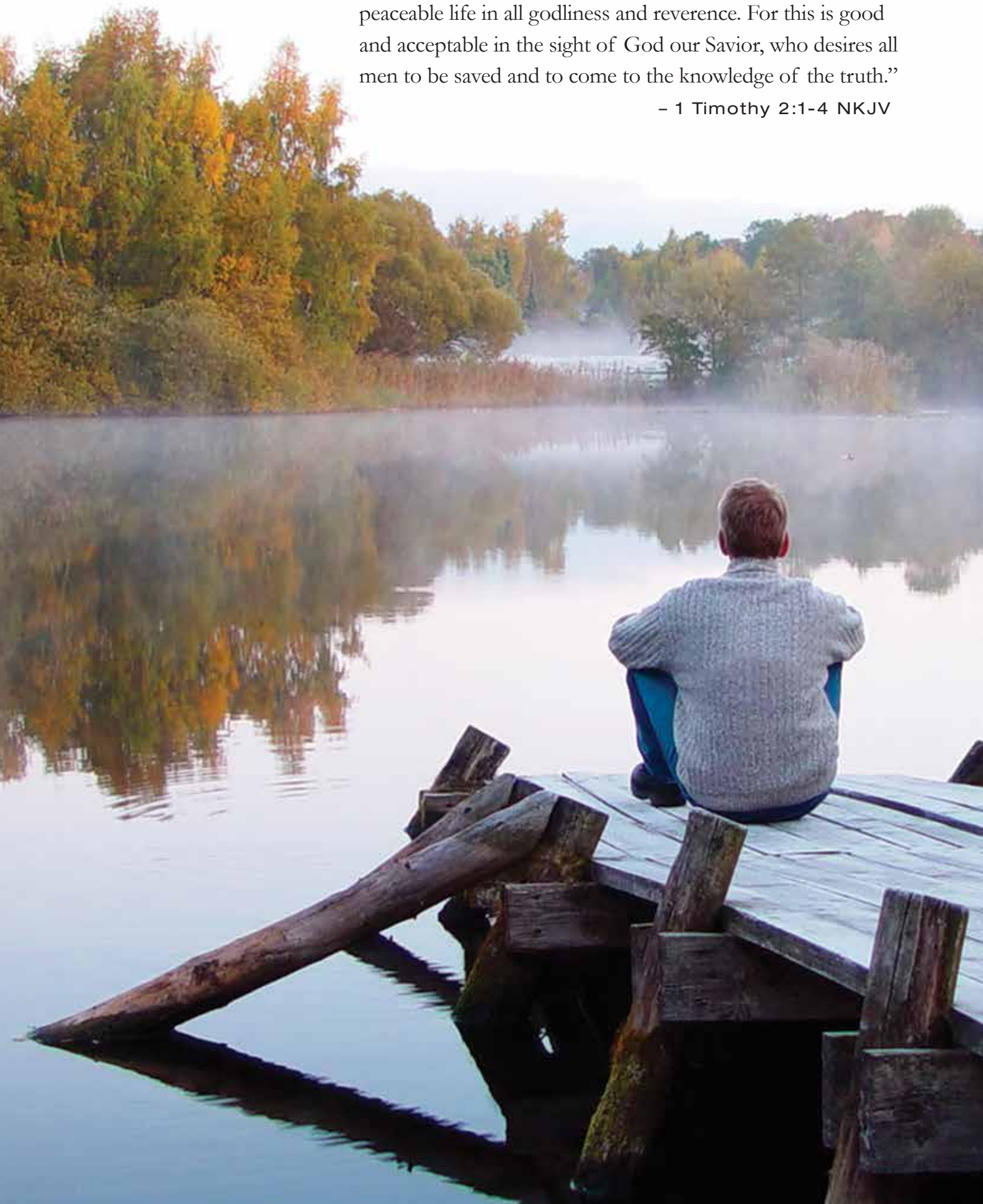
**BUT SELECT  
CAPABLE MEN FROM  
ALL THE PEOPLE**



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“Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

– 1 Timothy 2:1-4 NKJV





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A photograph of a man and a woman sitting at a desk, looking at documents together. The man is in the foreground, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, and is holding a pen over a document. The woman is behind him, wearing a red sweater, and has her hands on his shoulders. They are both smiling. The background is a bright, out-of-focus indoor setting with large windows.

# THANKS

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*Brad Harrub, Dan Cottrell, Billy Davis, Jerry Groves, Steve Hale, Jay Lockhart, Keith Parker, Jack Wilkie, Savannah Cottrell, and Annie Wilkinson*

## CONSIDERING THE ELECTION

November 2016 is going to be an interesting month indeed.

Depending on the time you're reading this, it's possible that you're still trying to figure out which candidate you'd like to vote for. It's also possible that by the time you're reading this issue, we may have already voted on and chosen our nation's President. Either way, this month is detrimental to our country, and I'm not hesitating to say that we're making history. This is not a month that we should take lightly, nor is it a month we should ignore. The election is too big a deal not to just sit idly by, even if we feel that we can't make a difference in any way.

But just because we're Christians in a world where controversy rules the day doesn't mean that we can't make a difference. Nor does it mean that we should hate the country we live in either or outright hate the people who run it. In fact, Jesus even loved the city He was from—Jerusalem—going so far as to weep over it because He knew the destruction it would face (Luke 19:41-44).

Beyond all of this, it goes without saying that when you log onto social media these days, it's nearly impossible not to see posts regarding the election and the Presidential candidates, whether the posts are meant to be sensational or not. But consider this: should we be so quick to jump on these posts—plus any conversations that come up—and join the chaos and fray? Or should we take a step back, look at each candidate objectively, and make our decision from there?

*But wait, Savannah,* you may be asking me, *do I have to vote at all? I don't think candidates seem like good people.* Sure, it's easy to believe that no vote is better than a vote for the "enemy" in this case. But here's the truth: any vote you don't place is going to be a vote for the person you disagree with the most. Even though this is a different situation than what Jesus faced during His time on earth, His advice would be the same: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21).

Also, please keep this in mind: nobody is perfect. People are going to make mistakes, even leaders of our country and those in positions of power. No candidate is truly the "enemy." As you remember that, please pray for our

leaders—including our current President, as he will still be around until inauguration day—that their decisions will be well-guided and that whatever they decide will be in accordance with His Will.

So, what are we to do?

Earlier in this note, I mentioned research. No matter your age, it is very, very important to do your research regarding each candidate. There are plenty of resources out there, online and off, and it is of the utmost importance that you check different sources out. Use a variety of sources because it is very easy to find outlets that are biased in favor of one candidate or the other. Rose-colored glasses will not help when it comes to truly objective research.

*But wait,* you ask me again, *How can I be a Christian voter? What resources are out there for that?*

Well, that's where we at *Think* come in.

In this issue, we are delighted to present a series of featured articles that will focus on this year's election and politics from a Christian perspective. Hearing from and being supported by fellow Christians will also be a big help when it comes to deciding on a candidate based on your shared worldview. These writers all have varying perspectives and backgrounds but share the same faith.

Not only are we here to present our views on politics from a Christian perspective, but we are also here to present the Truth, first and foremost. We want to share with you that God is in everything and is in control, and no matter what happens, we can anchor our hope in Him (Hebrews 6:19-20), and we can also be assured that He will take care of us (Romans 8:28).

And, as always, we hope you will *Think* on all of these things. ▲



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JACK WILKIE



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BILLY DAVIS



JERRY GROVES



SAVANNAH COTTRELL



ANNIE WILKINSON



JAY LOCKHART

# FEEDBACK

## Tyler B.

I just wanted to drop you a line to say “Thank You” for the recent article from Bill Davis. He has always written great articles, but this last one he outdid himself! I appreciate the fact that you all continue to find the very best talent in the church to help inform and educate us.

## Pat G.

We had the opportunity to hear you speak and I wanted to share with you what happened afterwards. My family doesn't talk about religion much, but my two teenagers could not stop talking after hearing your seminar. All the way home and even at home they kept bringing up points. It was like they had received a voice and could not stop talking. My husband and I were amazed. I'm happy to report that things have changed at our house. We are talking about our faith more often, and I have seen a positive change in my children. Thanks for helping them find their voice. You are amazing at what you do!

## Debbie M.

I am a homeschooling mom—so I don't have a lot of free time to write letters. But I felt compelled to write a special note to let you know how much we appreciate your *Convicted Workbook*—and I especially love the answer key. This is excellent material and I don't have to worry at all about what my children are learning. I thank you from the bottom of my heart for taking the time to produce these resources.

## Martha G.

I was so excited to see Savannah Cottrell and Annie Wilkinson on your staff. I appreciate that your organization is giving these young ladies a chance to work in the area of Christian publications. Please share my appreciation to them! ▲

## FROM THE ROAD

The pendulum has swung. When we started the work of Focus Press over a decade ago one of the internal goals we had was to produce Biblically sound material that was very appealing to the eye. Much of the material that was being produced by the church was good material, but it looked like it was produced in the 1950s. There were tracts and Bible class materials that visitors (and members) disregarded primarily because of the appearance. Today, however, it appears the pendulum has swung to the other side—where we are now producing material that looks good, but sadly, the content is shallow. We've gotten really good at creating themes, slogans, and campaigns—but we are missing Biblical content. We are spending more time on branding, campaigns, and VBS material than we put into the actual content. Packaging is great, but we can't forget the reason we are producing this material! Encourage your congregation to find a good balance between producing good-looking material—but material that is well written and teaches God's Truth. BH ▲

# think

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# ARE YOU FAITHFUL OR FEARFUL?



On March 4, 1933, Franklin D. Roosevelt's first inaugural address contained a phrase that is timeless and worth contemplating. It is fitting and appropriate to review his remarks in their original context when he stated, in part:

I am certain that my fellow Americans expect that on my induction into the Presidency I will address them with a candor and a decision which the present situation of our people impel. This is preeminently the

time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly. Nor need we shrink from honestly facing conditions in our country today. This great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper. **So, first of all, let me assert my firm belief that the only thing we have to fear is fear itself—nameless, unreasoning, unjustified terror which paralyzes needed efforts to convert retreat into advance.** In every dark hour of our national life a leadership of frankness and vigor has met with that understanding and support of the people themselves which is essential to victory. I am convinced that you will again give that support to leadership in these critical days (Franklin D. Roosevelt, Inaugural Address, March 4, 1933, as published in Samuel Rosenman, ed., *The Public Papers of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Volume Two: The Year of Crisis, 1933* (New York: Random House, 1938), 11–16, emp. added).

The solemn, religious-centered address that President Roosevelt delivered during the Depression Era touched and lifted many hearts and lives. While his statement, “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself” may have buoyed the temporal hopes of the listeners, Jesus’ warning thousands of years earlier superseded it by calling attention to what we all should and must legitimately fear:

Do not fear those who kill the body but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matthew 10:28 NASB).

Reverential fear of Jehovah God helps us to stay grounded and focused on the truly important things in life. We ultimately live a life of faith as opposed to fear. Faith and fear are inversely proportional; the more you have of one, the less you have of the other. They cannot co-exist; we have to make a conscious decision as to where we will build our lives and our eternal destiny. If you want to fortify your faith, take a walk through the Gospel narratives and highlight the times that Jesus said “Do not fear,” “Do not be afraid,” and “Fear not.” He said those words to allay the fears and concerns of His disciples. The real issue is: are we going to believe Him and put our ultimate trust in what He says? The lynchpin for me emerged when I reviewed the individuals who will suffer the second death:

But the **fearful** (*emph. added*), and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Revelation 21:8 KJV).

We can thank God that even when we are faithless, He is faithful because He cannot deny Himself (2 Timothy 2:13). Let me bring this thought to closure by providing a meaningful strategy to stay faithful to God. We all must have the:

- **Right Direction**—Looking unto Jesus, Hebrews 12: 2
- **Right Determination**—Finish your course, 2 Timothy 4:7
- **Right Devotion**—Keep the faith, Revelation 2:10
- **Right Discipline**—Run to win, 1 Corinthians 9:24

The challenges and struggles that we face in this life certainly call for a Champion who can circumnavigate any and all issues that give us pause and concern. Jesus is The Way, The Truth, and The Life (John 14:6). He knows where all the potholes, icy roads, and washed out bridges are located. He knows what we need before we need it! The sacred challenge and opportunity before us is to trust Him implicitly with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength. I have decided to follow Jesus, how about you? ▲

**Bon appétit!**

# THE HARSHTEST CRITIC

Dear reader, I think I am my own harshest critic.

Ever since I was younger—and sometimes, even to this day—I’ve wished I had a time machine to go back and fix mistakes I made in the past or make different decisions that may or may not have been better based on my opinion and feelings. But as awesome as time machines may sound, they first of all don’t exist, but second of all, they aren’t truly necessary.

Because even if I could change the past, would I really?

This is why I consider myself to be my own harshest critic. I worry so much about what I have or haven’t done in the past that I forget how God has shaped me to be the person I am today, right now. And I forget that I’m not supposed to be so critical of myself that I forget about God strengthening me and being with me where I am ... with no perfection required on my part.

So ... what about you? Have you ever felt that you’re your own harshest critic?

## **Nine times out of ten, you’re more worried about your weaknesses than your strengths.**

Consider the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30 for a moment. There were three men entrusted with the same task: keep track of their master’s money while he was away. It was a simple task, and two of the men were successful. They didn’t worry about how they were going to accomplish the task assigned them; they just took action and actually gained profit for their efforts. However, one man buried his given money and did not use or bother with it. Once the master returned, he praised the two men who gained profits, but chastised the man who did not put forth effort. But note what the master says to that servant: “you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest” (Matthew 25:27).

Could we be at least investing in what we can do? Could we at least be praying and asking God to reveal to us what we can do, or reveal

to us what we’re already very good at? It’s so easy to get caught up in the fear of failure that we don’t take action at all. If I was afraid that I would fail at writing, this column wouldn’t exist, and I wouldn’t be talking to you. Think of how many people you could potentially be ministering to if you just took some action, no matter how small.

## **No one is perfect.**

God knows we are not perfect, or else He wouldn’t have sent His Son to save us (John 3:16). Jesus knows we aren’t perfect, or else He wouldn’t have loved us enough to give His life and minister to and intercede for us (Hebrews 7:25). The Holy Spirit knows we aren’t perfect, or else He wouldn’t have been instrumental in establishing the church (Acts 2:1-4).

Just because we aren’t perfect doesn’t mean that we cannot strive to follow and serve the God we love. All He wants is for us to love Him in return and obey Him. How cool is it that the God who created the entire universe loves us so much that He sees our faults as ultimately invisible if we choose Him?

## **God can use you exactly how you are.**

Consider the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah 6, in the year of the death of King Uzziah, Isaiah finds himself in the midst of a vision. Angels were praising Him, and Isaiah himself felt shame for not thinking to do so first (Isaiah 6:1-5). But when an angel tells him he’s forgiven, Isaiah could have just as easily let his shame keep him from speaking further (Isaiah 6:6-7). But when the Lord Himself asks, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Isaiah answers, “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

And guess what happens next? God sends for him.

God can send for us, too, exactly as we are, no matter whether we feel good enough or not.

At the end of the day, it’s easy for us to be our own harshest critics from time to time. If we’re seeking to do our best in everything we do, those feelings are going to occur, likely whether we want them to or not. But, dear readers, we cannot let these fears keep us from serving God to the fullest. We don’t need time machines to fix our mistakes or bad decisions; we just need to learn from them and move on Heavenward. After all, God loves us so much that He wants us to walk with Him to begin with; all we have to do is put aside our regrets and flaws and choose Him. ▲



# EPHESIANS

## ONE

In the midst of all of the articles and sermons about how we can be better Christians, how we can develop a deeper understanding of difficult Biblical verses, and how we can confront the culture, sometimes it's important to simply take a step back from it all and think about what it means to be a Christian. Paul affords us that opportunity in Ephesians 1, where he gives a reminder of just how great it is to be a Christian and how wonderful our God is.

The chapter divides pretty cleanly into three sections. The first section is the greeting in verses one and two, accompanied by Paul's standard "grace and peace." It's the two sections following the greeting that we'll be examining, as each make profound points about our faith.

In verses 3-14, Paul explains that we've been given every spiritual blessing in Christ. He discusses how we were chosen and adopted according to God's plan from before the beginning of the earth, and that this adoption gives us the inheritance that God has planned for His children. He reminds us that the Father redeemed us from our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ and His rich grace. Additionally, Paul points out that God shared the mystery of His will with us. This mystery is God's plan to redeem all people—Jews and Gentiles—through His Son. Those who preceded us didn't have the privilege of seeing how God would carry out His promise made to Abraham concerning the blessing of all people through Abraham's line in Genesis 12. Finally, we have the spiritual blessing of the seal of the Holy Spirit, the pledge of our inheritance.

Notice in these verses that the Father is at work in giving us these blessings and predestining the saved, the Son is at work in redeeming us with His blood, and the Spirit is at work in sealing us for the day of redemption. Rarely do we see all three members of the Godhead at work, but they are all playing a part in the salvation of all who believe. However, if you go through this section and count the "in Him" or "in Christ" references (nine times in the NASB), you'll see that it was in the supreme sacrifice of Christ that all of this was made possible. Why? For the praise of His glory (v. 6, 12, 14).

From verses 15-23, Paul shares his prayer for his audience, namely that he hopes they would have a spirit of wisdom in the knowledge of God. He wanted them to know the hope of God's calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward us. When you understand the hope God has for you, the riches of heaven both for us and for Christ (as He receives His inheritance—the redeemed church), and the power that He has given us to overcome, the Christian path suddenly becomes so much clearer and more worthwhile. Christ is over all things, and if we're found in Him, we can't lose.

You may not ever be rich in this world, but if you are a Christian, you are entitled to all of the riches of God's glory. Not because you're a wonderful person, not because you try really hard, but because the Father set out a plan to adopt you, the Son gave His blood to redeem you, and the Spirit has been given as a promise that you will receive the full inheritance set aside for those who are in Christ. It's the greatest blessing in the world to be a Christian.

As we dwell on these truths more and more, it will help us see God's goodness, it will make us appreciate and love Him more, and it will make it so much easier for us to trust and obey. ▲

# A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

Annie Wilkinson

**My stubborn will at last hath yielded; I would be Thine, and Thine alone,  
And this the prayer my lips are bringing, "Lord, let in me Thy will be done."**

— Lelia N. Morris

This past May would have been the sixth birthday of my youngest brother, William. When I first found out my mom was pregnant and going to have another baby, I was overjoyed and so excited to be a big sister again. I remember listening to my baby brother's heart beating and seeing him squirm around on the ultrasound screen during one of my mom's prenatal visits. There was no doubt that baby Will had captured his big sister's heart in a matter of seconds. Unfortunately, this was the only time I was privileged to meet my little brother alive, and it is definitely one of the moments of my life I will never forget. I will forever hold those images close because, you see, at six months gestation, my little brother, Will, drew his first breath in paradise. He never felt our arms around him. He never gazed up into our eyes. He was never able to learn our names, and he never knew how much we loved and wanted him.

There are those who say that at six months a "fetus" is just that, not a baby, not a soul, but a non-viable life, a life that doesn't matter. However, the Bible teaches very plainly that all children are a gift from God. It doesn't matter at what stage of life or development they are in, they are still **gifts** and valuable to God who makes each of us in His image.

**"Children are a gift from the Lord;  
they are a reward from him."**

— Psalm 127:3

When I viewed the body of my little brother for the first time after he had been delivered stillborn, my only thoughts were "how perfect;" every toe, every finger, his eyelids, and even his tiny nose were all formed to perfection. God had seen to every detail of this tiny creation, from the moment he was conceived in my mother's womb.

It was difficult to imagine how a physician could have ever suggested to my mom (due to her complications during pregnancy) to abort this precious child, but that is exactly what had happened. Thankfully, both of my parents immediately rejected the doctor's recommendation, both believing and being convicted that a parent's job is to protect the lives of their children at all costs, and not to kill them. If formed in a different woman's womb, Will could have very easily been done away with. Yes, he did die, but it was from natural causes and not because of a decision my parents made to end his life.

One outcome that was imprinted in the hearts of my entire family as we mourned my baby brother's passing was the preciousness of life, souls, and children. We didn't understand why Will had to be taken so early on in his life or at all, but we trusted that God loved Will even more than we did, and that Will had gone to a heavenly home where we would one day see him again. Still, our grief and feelings of loss were real and hard to cope with at first. We all felt a pain, a jolt to our senses that was not easily comforted. Nothing anyone could say or do took that pain away. We had to endure it, go to God with it, and come to terms with what had happened. It took a lot of time, especially for my mom, whose arms were left very empty of the baby she was anticipating getting to hold and care for.

I was a young girl of fourteen when all of this took place, though it seems like it was just yesterday. As I remember our little Will, I still wonder how anyone could intentionally bring harm to such a tiny precious child. My feelings for the lives of the unborn have understandably developed into a passion for wanting to do all I can to speak up for their right to live. This year will be my first year to vote in a presidential election. If there is one platform that is very near and dear to my heart, it is the stand taken by the nominees on this very issue



SWEET WILL OF GOD

... the unborn's right to life (this also involves the Supreme Court judges who will be appointed during the time of leadership who will or will not support legalized abortion). Of all the issues at stake in this upcoming election, for me, the Pro-life cause is at the top of the list. If our country elects a president who doesn't value human life, what have we accomplished?

According to statistics, 125,000 abortions are performed each and every day around the world. In our country alone, the numbers are over 3,000 per day, approximately 157 babies are aborted every hour. Since the Roe v. Wade decision in 1973, over 58 million unborn lives have been terminated. Personally, those statistics are overwhelming to me. Some of us have watched videos showing the horrors of abortion, and we've seen women who take the spotlight on TV as they rave about their rights concerning their bodies and their lives, while never considering the rights of their unborn child. We've seen the pro-choice bumper stickers and billboards, heard or read the words of candidates promoting the killing of innocents, and may even have friends or relatives who fully support a woman's "right to choose." Available online is the availability to view a "ticker" that numbers each baby killed by the abortion process. These numbers just tick by as if the lives of those innocent babies being aborted mean absolutely nothing. So, one of the questions that must be asked is how do we as Christians make a difference when it comes to this moral issue?

There is no doubt that we need to be emotionally and physically available to women who are faced with an unwanted pregnancy. Instead of approaching their situation with condemnation and disdain, it is important we show and exhibit the love of Christ in a caring and compassionate manner. We can be a positive influence to those whose lives have taken an unexpected turn if we retain the proper attitude toward them and their situation at hand. In doing so, our Godly counsel can help guide a woman's decision making process and hopefully dissuade her from choosing abortion. Also, our ears need to be open as we listen to the fears and concerns of women, and we need to be prepared with information and resources available to women, e.g. crisis pregnancy centers, adoption agencies, etc. As we educate ourselves in these matters, we will be better equipped to meet the needs of women who are hurting and reaching out for help. As a result, lives can be saved, both of mother and child.

As children of God, we can also promote the blessings of parenthood, in word and example. The raising and nurturing of children offers great rewards just as the Scriptures teach. I have yet to experience this life event myself, but I do look forward to the joys that having children will bring to my life. When raised for the Lord, children are like arrows in the hands of a warrior ... blessed is the man who has a quiver full (Psalm 127:4).

Another thing we can do is to use our voices in the voting booth. I know not everyone will agree with me on this one, but hear me out. At the university I attend, and many like it across the country, we, together, say a pledge in support of our flag and our country. Hopefully you are familiar with it. It goes like this:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for ALL."

Have we ever actually considered those words? What are we pledging?

The whole purpose of the voting system is so that Americans will have a say (a voice), so they will be able to keep up their end of the pledge, doing all they can so that liberty and justice remains for ALL. "Justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love." — Martin Luther King Jr.

This is how we can take a stand against evil and let our voices be heard when it comes to the Christian principles we value. When one doesn't vote, they throw away their say, which could be used to help in protecting the innocent and preserve the moral fabric by which this country was knit together. When Christians stay out of politics, the world around us is given into the hands of the wicked who will insure that the bloodshed of children continues and countless other abominations endure. So I plead with you ... don't give up your voice. When Christians choose to be uninvolved, the unborn have no champions. They are left defenseless. The helpless are left without help. The efforts are out there to try and silence our voices by people who would rather godless leaders and their policies reign. We should do our part to try and not let that happen.

Ultimately, God's will is going to be done. As my mom often reminds me, God is sovereign and He is in control, and she should know. When my brother was still in the womb, we didn't know if he was going to live or die, and there was even the possibility of my mom dying with him. We didn't know what the final outcome would be; however, my mom's deliverance rested in her "here and now" decision. Would she take matters into her own hands and kill her baby or trust fully in God and give her son a fighting chance? She chose the latter, and while Will still died, my mom gave birth to her son knowing she had done everything humanly possible to allow him to live. Such is true and committed love; sacrificial, even to the point of death. My mom made the right decision because of her convictions and her faith. It wasn't about her, her wants, her needs, her rights, or her body. No, this was about another human being, her child. What a world we would live in if we all loved each other so unselfishly, if we put everyone else's needs before our own, and if we fought so valiantly for the lives of the innocent.

In Proverbs 6:16-19, there are six things listed that our LORD hates. One of them is "the shedding of innocent blood." God is not pleased when people choose to reject the very "gifts" He has rewarded them. God can definitely forgive this sin, but it grieves His heart when humans choose death over life. Sin will always set us on a slippery slope; but, in reality, one sin does not have to lead to another. Regardless of our past sins, we can still choose to do the right thing. Jesus loves the little children, all the children of the world ... and so should we.

"Then he took a little child and set him in the midst of them. And when He had taken him in His arms, He said to them, "Whoever receives one of these little children in My name receives Me; and whoever receives Me, receives not Me but Him who sent me" (Mark 9:36-37).

It could be that the outcome of this upcoming election will leave us disappointed and asking "why?", but in the scope of eternity and our salvation, what is going to matter most are the choices we make here and now. We must keep honoring God and choosing the pathway of righteousness. Not our will, but Thine, oh Lord, be done. ▲

**"Sweet will of God, still fold me closer, till I am wholly lost in Thee."**



BURTON WALKER

# FROM FED UP TO FAITH

In his book *The Best of Will Rogers*, author Bryan Sterling records some sentiments you may share with the famous cowboy-actor: “Congress is so strange. A man gets up to speak and says nothing, nobody listens, and then everybody disagrees!” ... “The promising season ends on Election Day. That same night, the alibi season begins and lasts for the next four years.” ... “Last year we said: ‘things can’t go on like this!’ And they didn’t—they got worse.” Though I wouldn’t count on Will Rogers updating his Facebook status with these words, chances are high that you’ve either seen these kinds of sentiments splashed across social media or heatedly argued on the news. Just as the era of wealthy plantation owners and antebellum dances in the deep South has passed, it seems like the days of America as a stable, righteous country with honest leaders are gone with the wind.

Disclosure and honesty are good things, so let's acknowledge three important things with which I hope you'll agree: First, America is facing tremendous problems due to the presence of sin and our state as fallen creatures. Second, regardless of party affiliation, it seems like our government has veered off course over the past half-century and is now flying on autopilot toward the realm of dark times. And third, Satan is actively working to promote evil. But fear not, Christian! For, as Elisha reminded his servant when the wicked king of Syria surrounded his town to capture him in 2 Kings 6, "do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." In this article, I want to share with you two steps the Lord's people can take to make a needed difference in this country.

Perhaps Edmund Burke's name rings a bell in your head. An Irishman, Burke was only 36 when he was elected to the British Parliament in 1765. Burke is remembered as an outspoken supporter of the colonists' cause for freedom. Perhaps, though, he is better known for a quote which is said to come from one of his earlier writings: "All that is required for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing." Let's hold onto Burke's idea as we look at the first step, which is to **do good**. One of my favorite verses is in Galatians 6, a chapter in which Paul imparts his final instructions to the Christians in Galatia (and to us). He instructs them in verse 9: "And let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up." The idea of "doing good" in verse 9 means not just performing righteous acts, but being righteous in thought as well as in deed. Perhaps your translation reads "if we faint not" or "if we do not lose heart," but the promised result is the same. If we live and think righteously as Christians ought to, we won't be disappointed when harvest time arrives.

How do you do good, Christian? Do you pray for your country and her leaders? Do you pray for humility and love to be present in each home and for the nation to honor God? Prayer will always be the best gift you can give, and it's a tool Paul instructed Timothy to use in his first book to that young preacher (1 Timothy 2:1-2). How about your words—do you set an example in the way you talk? Do others hear you heaping verbal trash on America because things seem to be out of control, or do they hear you pray for America and express your faith in God's ability to heal it? Remember, there is always someone watching you—and it's probably someone you don't expect. Choose the right words when you speak (Ephesians 4:29).

We can also do good by subjecting ourselves to our leaders as the Holy Spirit instructed in Romans 13: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities . . . for there is no authority except from God" (13:1). Of course, we will occasionally be forced to choose between right and wrong as our consciences dictate, as Peter and John did in Acts 4 (on being instructed to stop preaching the name of Jesus: "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge, for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.") However, obeying our leaders to the extent our faith allows will help foster the peaceful, quiet, and dignified life God wants for us (2 Timothy 4:2). Finally, to do good, let me encourage you to participate in our democracy as your conscience permits. If it's been said before, it's been said a thousand times: this world needs more God-fearing leaders. Will you be like Noah (Genesis 6:9-22), Moses (Exodus 4:10-12), Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 17:1-6), and Paul (Acts 9:15-20)? Each of these men stepped forward and allowed God to use them as a leader to advance His cause. Will you step forward, too?

The second powerful step a Christian can take is to **keep faith**—not in our country's power (although patriotism is certainly a good thing to have)—not in the ability of one leader to wave a magic political wand and eliminate every big problem (although we all want leaders who will work to bring about good)—not even in the ability of our citizens to make the world right (although we all carry the responsibility to influence the world for good). Above all else, **keep faith** in *God's* ability to heal our country. He, and He alone, is the mighty one with all ability and power to make wrong things right again. Consider the words God spoke to Solomon when the king led the people of Israel in a massive spiritual revival in 2 Chronicles 7, which included fire from heaven and the dedication of the temple in Jerusalem: "I have heard your prayer and chosen this place for Myself as a house of sacrifice . . . if My people, who are called by My name, humble themselves, and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (7:12-14).

How can we keep faith when everything in our country seems to be going awry? First, let me suggest that we must trust in God's abilities, not our own. We may read the constant "**Breaking News**" alerts on our televisions. We may get sick of the constant arguing and dishonesty that seems to make up politics nowadays. But may we never believe, not even

for one minute, that reality and possibilities are confined to what we can physically see. May we never let our sight blind us to the faith we have in the power and ability of the supreme God of heaven who is also our Father—for we are a people who "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5). No matter how discouraged you may get, dear Christian, have faith that our Lord can heal our country, just like He promised healing to Israel if they turned back to Him. Do you have faith?

And second, we can keep faith by controlling worry. Remember when the twelve spies returned from scouting out the Promised Land? In Numbers 13, God commanded Moses to "send men to explore . . . Canaan . . . **which I am giving to the Israelites**" (13:2). When the spies returned, ten of them painted a sorry picture for the entire Israelite camp: "We can't attack those people; they are stronger than we are!" (13:31). The people then "raised their voices and wept aloud" (14:1). What was the problem with Israel that day? Those ten spies allowed their worry to control them. They let their worry control their emotions, they let their emotions control their thinking, and in the end, it clouded Israel's faith in God. Let us be not like the ten spies, but like Caleb, who didn't allow worry to overcome him: "Caleb silenced the people . . . and said, 'We should go up and take possession of the land, for we can certainly do it'" (13:30).

O Christian, when you get fed up with our politics, our country, and our world, please remember before you despair: 1) Do good. 2) Keep faith and remember God. ▲

**Step  
forward  
and  
allow  
God  
to use  
you.**

# CULTURE VS. THE CHURCH

During voting season, billboards, commercials, and newscasts advocate differing opinions as to what is “best for America”. As Christians, we try to examine our presidential candidates to see which one will do what is best from a Biblical perspective. Should we really expect a man or woman in position of power to lead us to God? I am not saying that Christians shouldn’t vote or take an interest in politics. In fact, I think it’s very important that Christians be involved in politics. My point is that we shouldn’t expect one individual to change the culture of our country. Instead, Christians should look to the Church to lead the American culture to righteousness. Churches are increasingly struggling to remain doctrinally sound. This is because God’s church is not impacting the culture; instead, the culture is impacting the church. In this period of change, Christians must examine ways that the church is weak. Today, I would like to consider four of these weaknesses and what Paul has to say about them in Colossians 3:1-17.

## 1. Pure-Mindedness

We are constantly bombarded with ungodliness in this world. It often comes in the form of media and entertainment. Our society is so worldly that it’s becoming difficult to go to the grocery store without being exposed to sin. Even if you don’t allow anything inappropriate in your household, your family will still be introduced to sinfulness by the world around them. Exposure to sin was a problem the early church experienced. By looking at Colossians 3:2, we see how the first century Christians combatted worldliness, “Set your mind on things that are above.” This verse emphasizes that pure-mindedness can be attained by immersing ourselves in God’s

Word. Being a pure-hearted Christian is not just avoiding evil; it’s taking the evil out of your life and filling that void with holiness. If we want the church to change the world, then it must be built on the foundation of God’s word.

## 2. Humility

Humans have always struggled with arrogance, and social media has heightened our sense of self importance. In our narcissistic society, the church must seek to mirror Christ’s example of humility. G. K. Chesterton once said, “It’s always the secure who are humble.” I would like to add to Mr. Chesterton’s comment that it is the secure in God who are humble. In Colossians 3:3-4, Paul tells us that our lives are to be hidden in Christ. When a Christian’s identity is focused on themselves, they will become prideful, wrapped up in their own accomplishments rather than God’s glory. According to God’s Word, a Christian must put their identity in Christ. Only then can godly humility be attained.

## 3. Harmony in the Church

How much time do we actually spend with our brothers and sisters in Christ? Do we as a Christian family truly bear one another’s burdens? The truth is many Christians attend the services of the Lord’s church and leave without making any connection to their church family. The purpose of the church is to glorify God; one of the ways it fulfills this is by showing the world an example of Christ’s love, “By this all people shall know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another,” (John 13:35). Paul addresses this in Colossians 3:14, “And above all these

put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” How can we do this if we don’t know our church family? In order to show Christ’s love to the world, Christians must learn to love and support each other.

## 4. Gratitude in Trials.

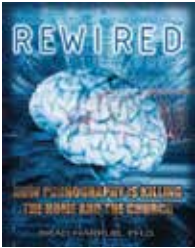
We do our best to avoid difficult or uncomfortable situations, and when bad things do happen, we tend to complain. In James 1:2-4, we read, “My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.” The early church used gratitude as a way to pull together and withstand trials. In today’s culture, when a church encounters difficulty, it often splits, or many members just leave. We as Christians forget that God’s grace and mercy is a gift that we should share with others. Instead, we focus on worldly gain, which can never make us happy. Because of this, we become upset or frustrated when our life is not making us happy. Paul told the Colossians to always be giving thanks (Colossians 3:16-17). The church is called to be a shining light to the world. Unfortunately, we are often too busy complaining. This hurts the church because when the world sees us dissatisfied with our lives, they see no reason to change their lives. If Christians can learn to be grateful in the midst of trials, the lost will see that light.

2016 will be a year of change. I hope and pray that Christians will do what they can to ensure that a godly candidate is in office. I believe if Christians want to inspire change we need to stop allowing modern culture to influence the church and live our lives so that the church impacts our culture. ▲

# Holiday Gift Ideas

## DVDs

SALE PRICES GOOD THROUGH JANUARY 15TH



### **Rewired: How pornography is altering your brain and killing the church. - \$15 New!**

Pornography has reached epidemic levels. It is affecting individuals, marriages, and even the church. Dr. Brad Harrub demonstrates the size of the problem and then discusses what it is actually doing to the brain. He provides help for those who may currently be struggling, and he offers strong suggestions to parents/grandparents of how to better protect (and prepare) their children/grandchildren. This DVD can be used in a Bible class setting, youth group, or for home Bible study.



### **Invasion: The Effect of Worldliness When Blind Access Is Given - \$5 New!**

There is this sense in America that you can be a true Christian and have a deep burning for the world. Scripture says the exact opposite. Join Dr. Brad Harrub as he examines this epidemic of worldliness that has invaded many Christian homes.



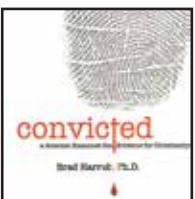
### **Are You Convicted? - \$5 New!**

Many are convinced God is real. But are you convicted enough to actually do something about it? Are you really willing to pick up your hammer and do what God commands, or are you still offering up excuses? This eye-opening lesson is one you will not soon forget. Join Dr. Brad Harrub as he challenges modern Christians to pick up their hammer and be convicted for Him!



### **Broken: A Study of Meekness - \$5**

Many Christians know that in Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount He declared, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." But sadly, few comprehend what this word "meek" truly means to the Christian. Far too often we equate meekness with weakness. In this new DVD, Dr. Brad Harrub shares what it means to be broken for God and allow His hand to rule your life. This is a powerful and much-needed message for Christians today!



### **Convicted Series - \$75 | Sale Price - \$65**

This foundational series by Brad Harrub, Ph.D. includes 13 lessons with up-to-date information. This is a comprehensive video series on Christian evidences that provides the evidence for "why we believe what we believe." It makes a great companion to Dr. Harrub's book. Not only does this resource cover the foundational principles like the existence of God, inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the dinosaur dilemma, and creation vs. evolution, but this series also covers topics that have received very little attention in the past.



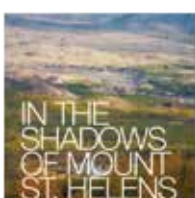
### **Ethics Set - \$50 | Sale Price - \$40**

Sometimes life and death decisions must be made in just a few short critical minutes. Are you informed enough to make the correct decision? Join Dr. Brad Harrub as he uses God's Word to cut through the cloud of confusion and helps Christians answer some serious ethical questions. This box set is a valuable tool. Box Set topics include: Ethical Standards, Value of Human Life, Abortion, Fertility Practices, Cloning, Stem Cell Research, Euthanasia, and The End of Life.



### **In the Footsteps of Darwin - \$20 | Sale Price - \$12**

Brad Harrub, Ph.D. traveled to the Galapagos Islands to produce an informative DVD that uncovers the truth about the very place upon which Charles Darwin based his theory of evolution. Dr. Harrub serves as your personal guide and will help you distinguish between the facts and the myths about the origin of species.



### **In the Shadows of Mount St. Helens - \$20 | Sale Price - \$12**

For many individuals, the field of geology remains a hurdle in harmonizing a young earth with scientific data. The May 18, 1980 eruption of Mount St. Helens changed all of that. Rather than basing geology around long-age "assumptions," scientists discovered a living laboratory that provided some startling information. We invite you to enter the blast zone with Dr. Brad Harrub and his son Will as they discover the truth regarding geological processes and the age of the earth.

**Islam: Behind the Veil - \$10 | Sale Price - \$8**

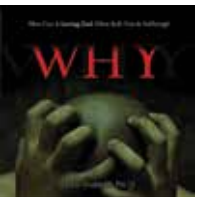
Oftentimes the sight of a burqa—the traditional cloak worn by Muslim women—causes individuals to pause and stare. This vision, and the world it represents, is so foreign to most Christians, that for many, it floods us with questions and maybe even fear. What really lies behind that veil? If those eyes could speak, what exactly would they say? In this DVD, Dr. Brad Harrub shares how Islam really started, who Mohammad really was, what the pillars of Islam are, how this religion treats women, and how to approach them with the Truth.

**One Nation Under Who? - \$2 | Sale Price - 50 or more \$1.50 each**

Our nation is suffering from critical heart disease. Her citizens have become so indoctrinated with humanism, materialism, and atheism that we can no longer honestly call ourselves “one nation under God.” An honest evaluation reveals that God has been crowded out of our hearts and replaced with immoral media, insatiable greed, foolish wisdom, and instant self-gratification. In this DVD, Dr. Brad Harrub takes an intense look at where our nation is and how we got here.

**The Flood - \$25 | Sale Price - \$20**

A Scientist examines the Global Flood. The Noahic Flood was responsible for the death of every land-dwelling creature that was not aboard the ark. That single event changed the topography of the Earth and also was a major chapter in the history of mankind. Join Dr. Brad Harrub as he reveals the Truth about God's punishment on sin. Lessons included in this Series: 1. Noah Faces a Global Catastrophe, 2. Global Flood: Fact or Fiction, 3. Ripples from the Flood: The Ice Age and Origin of Races.

**Why? - \$3 | Sale Price - 50 or more \$1.50 each**

How can a loving God allow evil, pain and suffering? Dr. Brad Harrub takes us on a quick but powerful journey of how much our God really does care. He explains why God allows evil, pain, and suffering, and then he reflects on a true case of evil, pain, and suffering—the death of Jesus Christ.

**Exposed: The Truth About Man and Dinosaurs - \$20 | Sale Price - \$18**

These DVDs take viewers on a firsthand look at the real evidence! Join Dr. Brad Harrub and his son Reese on location at an archaeological dig site at Hillcreek Formation in Montana as they expose the truth! 2 DVDs

## Additional DVD Titles

**Truth Trumps Tolerance - \$20 | Sale Price - \$15**

Is the school system promoting something that is reducing the lifespan of our children?

**Where's Your Heart? - \$10 | Sale Price - \$8**

Are you ready to cast aside the worldly roles and expectations that society has placed on your family? Are you bold enough to look at things from a totally different—totally Biblical—perspective?

**The Value of Human Life - \$15 | Sale Price - \$10**

As science rapidly pursues human cloning and stem cell research, what should a Christian's response be to these ethical situations?

**One Foot in the Grave - \$7 | Sale Price - \$5**

Just because the world has forgotten about Hell, that does not change the reality of it.

**Parenthood Unplanned - \$12 | Sale Price - \$8**

What do Christians need to know regarding modern birth-control practices?

**Plugging the Leak - \$7 | Sale Price - \$5**

Young people have been abandoning their faith in droves. We are all conscious of the problem—but the time has come to do something about it.

**Real Men - \$10 | Sale Price - \$8**

Society doesn't think much of fathers, and sadly that has been reflected in both the media and real life. As a result the bar has been lowered for what it means to be a good dad.

**Consequences - \$2.50 | Sale Price - 50 or more \$2.00 each**

What are the consequences of a nation that abandons God and His precepts? We want to get this message out to Christians and non-Christians.

**A Christian Worldview - \$10 | Sale Price - \$8**

What does it really mean to be a Christian?

**Faith For Life - \$5 | Sale Price - \$4**

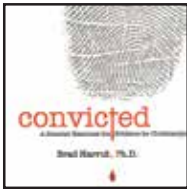
To win the culture war, parents need to be focused on helping their children know how to become faithful servants of God.





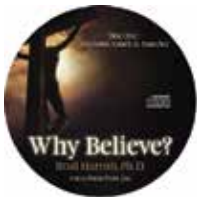
## The Lost Generation - \$20 New!

Most people are aware that a large number of young people leave the church as they grow older, but exactly how big of a problem are we dealing with? What can we do to bring them back, and how can we stem the tide with future generations? Jack Wilkie answers these questions in the 5-lesson “The Lost Generation” audio series, discussing the truth about how many young Christians are leaving, what is drawing them away from God, and what we can do about it.



## Convicted Series - \$35 | Sale Price - \$25

This foundational series by Brad Harrub, Ph.D. includes 13 lessons with up-to-date information. This is a comprehensive audio series on Christian evidences that provides the evidence for “why we believe what we believe.” It makes a great companion to Dr. Harrub’s book. Not only does this resource cover the foundational principles like the existence of God, inspiration of the Bible, the deity of Christ, the dinosaur dilemma, and creation vs. evolution, but this series also covers topics that have received very little attention in the past.



## Why Believe? - \$25 | Sale Price - \$20

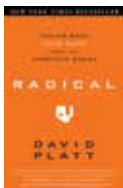
With this 8 CD collection, you’ll enjoy learning how science and Scripture are actually in harmony, not contradictory, as media leads society to believe. You’ll listen to the truth about how God created us and the wonderful world in which we live! 1. Atheism’s Attack in America 2. Proving the Existence of God 3. Exploding Evidence from Mount St. Helens and The Age of the Earth 4. The Dinosaur Dilemma 5. Evolutionary Hoaxes 6. Scientific Accuracy of the Bible 7. Reasons We Are Losing Our Children 8. Are You Convicted?

# BOOKS



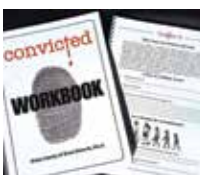
## Failure - \$14 | Sale Price - \$12 Failure Audio Book - \$10 New! (As Download – \$8)

What is the truth about curriculum, sex, violence, and the Common Core? What are children learning about today’s hotly debated topics like religion, evolution, and how does government involvement affect public education? Are schools safe, physically and spiritually? What role does education play in the development of a child’s relationship with God? Is the public education model a viable idea? *Failure* answers these questions with an in-depth look at what Christian parents need to know before making an informed decision.



## Radical - Taking Back Your Faith from the American Dream by David Platt - \$15 New!

It’s easy for American Christians to forget how Jesus said his followers would actually live, what their new lifestyle would actually look like. In *Radical*, David Platt challenges you to consider with an open heart how we have manipulated the gospel to fit our cultural preferences. He shows what Jesus actually said about being His disciple—then invites you to believe and obey what you have heard. *(Not Produced by Focus Press)*



## Convicted Workbook - \$28 | Sale Price - \$26

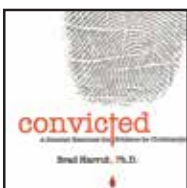
The Convicted Workbook follows chapter-by-chapter with the Convicted book. It can be used for home-school, teen Sunday school classes, or adult classes.

## Convicted Workbook Answer Key - \$8

Convicted Workbook Answer Key, which answers the questions in the Workbook for a teacher’s convenience, is sold separately or combined with the Workbook.

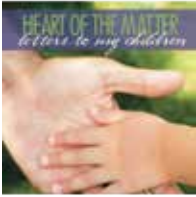
**Workbook & Answer Key Combo - \$35; Book, Workbook & Answer Key Combo - \$50;**

**Book, DVD Set, Workbook & Answer Key Combo - \$115**



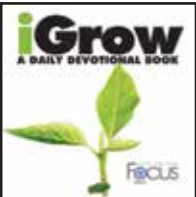
## Convicted- \$21 | Sale Price - \$18

There is no question of greater importance than whether or not God exists. If there is a Supreme Being, then life has purpose and some form of meaning. If not, then our very presence on this Earth is simply the result of a cosmologic explosion, and we are the beneficiaries of climbing our way to the top of the evolutionary tree of life. The way in which we answer the question about the existence of God greatly determines how we conduct ourselves while on this Earth. After years of careful and deliberate study and research, there is one thing I know for certain. Not only am I convinced, I’m convicted.



## **Heart of the Matter - \$14 | Sale Price - \$10**

Join Dr. Brad Harrub as he peels back the curtain to his own home and shares with readers the advice he is trying to instill in his own children regarding life, the church, and family.



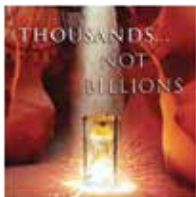
## **iGrow Devotional - \$14 | Sale Price - \$13**

iGrow is meant to not only fit into your busy life, but also grow your faith. Each day, we are challenging you to pick up your Bible and relax, read, reflect, record, and request. Our prayer is that this daily study will help you to transform your mind, and unleash the shackles the world has placed on you.



## **Engage: Rethinking How We Walk Down the Aisle - \$15 | Sale Price - \$13**

In this book, authors Rob Whitacre and Brad Harrub encourage parents and single Christians to take a critical look at the modern dating system and consider a more Biblical approach to marriage.



## **Thousands ... Not Billions - \$14 | Sale Price - \$12**

This non-technical book is the layman's guide to the radioisotopes and the Age of the Earth (RATE) project. *Note: This material was not produced or published by the Christians at Focus Press and may not be representative of the New Testament church. We appreciated much of the material contained and are recommending it to you with this caveat. It has been written to equip the layperson to defend scientific six-day creation and refute dating techniques.*



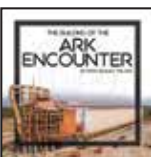
## **Dinosaurs for Kids - \$15 | Sale Price - \$12**

This book shares the unique world of dinosaurs and their true history like never before as you meet the most unusual creatures to ever walk the earth, stalk the seas, or soar across the sky! Discover how dinosaur bonebeds are made—and other kinds of fossils beyond just bones! Learn the truth behind museum exhibits and flawed evolutionary timelines! Kids will uncover the facts about dinosaur history from the Creation to recent discoveries.



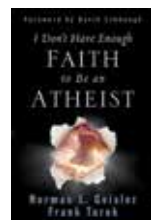
## **Crazy Love Overwhelmed by a Relentless God By Francis Chan - \$17 New!**

God is love. Crazy, relentless, all-powerful love. Have you ever wondered if we're missing it? It's crazy, if you think about it. The God of the universe—the Creator of nitrogen and pine needles, galaxies and E-minor—loves us with a radical, unconditional, self-sacrificing love. And what is our typical response? We go to church, sing songs, and try not to cuss. Whether you've verbalized it yet or not, we all know something's wrong. *(Not Produced by Focus Press)*



## **Building of the Ark Encounter By Ken Ham - \$18 New!**

See the vision of this full-sized, all-wood ark come together, dream by beam. Located in Williamstown, Kentucky, the Ark Encounter is a one-of-a-kind historically themed attraction. In an entertaining, educational, and immersive way, it presents a number of historical events centered on the Ark and the Flood as presented in the Book of Genesis. *(Not Produced by Focus Press)*



## **I Don't Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist By Norman Geisler - \$18 New!**

To some, the concept of having faith in a higher power or a set of religious beliefs is nonsensical. Indeed, many view religion in general, and Christianity in particular, as unfounded and unreasonable. Norman Geisler and Frank Turek argue, however, that Christianity is not only more reasonable than all other belief systems, but is indeed more rational than unbelief itself. With conviction and clear thinking, Geisler and Turek guide readers through some of the traditional, tested arguments for the existence of a creator God. *(Not Produced by Focus Press)*



## **Our Created Moon - \$16 (Ages 11-13) New!**

For eons the moon has intrigued humanity. From its creation through the current issues of space exploration, the moon has been both a light in the night and a protective shield of earth placed perfectly by God, regulating our seasons and keeping our atmosphere purified. Billions of dollars have been spent to reach its surface and discover its secrets; open these pages and discover those secrets for yourself. *(Not Produced by Focus Press)*



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The books in this series are designed to heighten children's awareness of the truth of God's creation. Combination coloring and sticker books, they also contain information that will help children understand the chronology of creation, and the reasons we are to care for what He has entrusted us with. The center of each book contains 32 full-color stickers that match the drawings. Children can place the sticker with the drawing, giving young artists a color guide. *(Not Produced by Focus Press)*



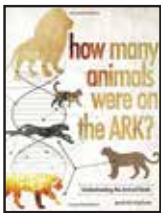
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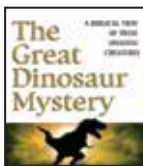
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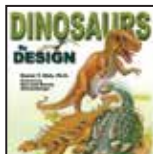
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We have all heard the old adage, “There are two things one should never discuss in public—politics and religion.” Yet the Bible commands us, “but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”<sup>1</sup> We should keep Christ first both in our Christian outreach and in our political activity. In fact, we can view political involvement as a form of ministry.

### **Government is not Evil**

One of the most common statements I have heard in recent years goes something like this: God tells us to stay away from evil things. This government is evil. Therefore, we should not be involved at all in government or politics because it is evil. Certainly, God does call us to avoid evil things, but government, as an institution, is not evil. God put governments in place just as He also established the church and the family.<sup>2</sup> However, we can all think of churches and families that have deviated from the Biblical model Christ has laid out.<sup>3</sup> Government is no different. While governments are ordained by God, they do not always follow the Biblical model laid out in Romans 13. Government is established to be the tool of law and order so that we do not live in chaos and we, as individuals, are free to exhibit grace and mercy to those around us. Therefore, just as we should not avoid church and family, neither should we avoid government. Instead, we can use voting and other forms of political involvement as a means to further the kingdom of God, especially in the American context.

### **Political Involvement as a Ministry**

Political involvement allows us to protect the rights of ourselves and other people against evil. Through our vote we can speak for unborn children who cannot speak for themselves. We can work to improve the lives of the poor and needy among us.<sup>4</sup> We can protect our freedom to homeschool or send our children to private school. Even more importantly, we can protect our freedom to openly and easily share the Gospel with those around us. While not all of these freedoms are inalienable rights, they are certainly worth actively protecting. Founding Father John Quincy Adams wrote that we have a responsibility to resist tyranny.

# CHRISTIANS AND POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

MELISSA STEWART, PH.D.



He [Jesus] spoke as one having authority . . . He said to His disciples: “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart,” but where did He ever say to them, “Learn of Me, for I am tame and abject”? There is certainly nothing more strongly marked in the precepts and examples of Christ than the principle of stubborn and inflexible resistance against the impulses of others to evil.<sup>5</sup>

When we disengage from the political process, we do nothing to resist the evil of tyrannical elected officials who wish to enact policies that will cause us to violate God’s Word. If we are willing, as we should be, to invest our time, energy, and finances traveling around the world to carry out the Great Commission, we should be equally willing to expend relatively less time and energy to research our political candidates and vote for those who will respect God’s commandments and allow us to continue to spread the Gospel here at home.

## Citizens are the Authority in the United States

Our Constitution puts the ultimate power of our government in the hands of the people, mainly through elections.<sup>6</sup> This power makes the American people sovereign. Paul tells us in Romans 13:1, “For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.”<sup>7</sup> Therefore, “to the extent that God places sovereigns in their offices and American citizens are the sovereigns of the United States, the question of whether Christian citizens should engage in governing the nation is logically moot; indeed, they have been charged with the task.”<sup>8</sup>

Once we do engage in the political process, the teachings of Jesus and our Christian worldview should certainly follow us into the voting booth. As Paul tells us in Colossians, “Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”<sup>9</sup> Our Christian worldview should be reflected in every vote we cast and every dollar we send to a campaign or interest group. While Christian candidates do not exist in every election, where and when they do exist we should support them. This highlights the need for Christians to be involved in the recruitment of candidates and the primary process as well, not just in general elections.

## More Than the Presidency

In presidential election years, we tend to focus most of our attention on the presidential race. However, there are many other important national, state, and local races that are just as worthy of our attention. In fact, the Founding Fathers intentionally spent the most time in the Constitution developing the institution of Congress. They intended for Congress to be the real powerhouse of American politics at the national level. The founders meant the Presidency to be a relatively weak office, and they gave very little attention to the Supreme Court.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than focusing all of our attention and resources on the Presidency, we should spend time researching and learning about those people running for the House and Senate. Electing conservative, principled people to those offices will limit the power of the Presidency. There is very little that a President can do without congressional approval. Not only does Congress write legislation and vote on policy issues, they control all of the government’s money and where that money is allocated. No matter how much a president says he wants to enact a policy, he cannot do so unless Congress passes a law and allocates the necessary funding.

Local and state races are equally important. It is easier to be involved on a deeper level in local politics than it is to be involved in national politics. Most of the time, our local politicians live near us. My own town councilman lives in my neighborhood. The issues he considers seem more relevant to me than what is happening in Washington, D.C. Local and state leaders can (and do) stand up against the federal government’s actions when they overstep their bounds. Often, local politics is the breeding ground for national politics. So, electing solid, principled candidates to local office is also a way to affect change for the better in our communities and to further the Gospel of Christ.

## Our Hope is in the Lord

Our Constitution and our unique political process make each of us the sovereigns of the United States. As political sovereigns and as Christians, we have a responsibility and a unique opportunity to be informed and involved in our political process. However, we should not place politics, politicians, or political parties above God and our love for Him. Everything we

do, including political participation and political debate, should be done to glorify God.<sup>11</sup> This may mean that, in some cases, we cannot vote for a particular office because none of the candidates for that office are sympathetic to our worldview.

The love we should have for our neighbor does not stop at the threshold of political debate. Our love for one another and our desire to be good witnesses for Christ and save souls supersedes any vote, candidate, or election. While we do have responsibilities as Christian citizens that we must account for,<sup>12</sup> our eternal hope does not rest in the outcome of the 2016 Presidential election. Our hope is much bigger than any one candidate, party, or election. So, be active Christian citizens. Vote. Engage in our political process, but remember the words of Edward Mote, who wrote:

My hope is built on nothing less  
Than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.  
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,  
But wholly lean on Jesus’ name.

On Christ the solid rock I stand,  
All other ground is sinking sand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.<sup>13</sup> ▲

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- 2 | See Genesis 2:20-24, Ephesians 5:23, I Corinthians 12:27, and Romans 13:1-2.
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- 6 | See the Constitution, Article 1 Sections 2, 3, and 4, Article 2 Section 1, and Amendments X and XVII.
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- 9 | Colossians 3:17, ESV
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KENDRA RODGERS

A LINE IN  
THE SAND:

**POLITICS AND FAITH**

The 2016 election has proved to be one of the most confusing and disenchanting in recent history. As blessed as we are as Christians today to have a choice, it is a difficult one nonetheless. The options are not ideal, on many levels, and we find ourselves trying to find one or two golden nuggets in a pile of fools gold to substantiate our choice. How different and unsettling this is from our approach to defending our faith with the confidence we have from the firm foundation established in God's Word. How can we have confidence in our decisions when it comes to politics and find peace and comfort in the outcome?

In John 8, we read of the adulterous woman being brought by the Pharisees before Christ. After the Pharisees asked Him their "trick" question, Christ drew on the ground with His finger (John 8:6). No one knows what He wrote on the ground, Scripture doesn't tell us. But Scripture does take the time to tell us that He did this TWICE during this discussion. Regardless of what He actually wrote, this action signifies Christ establishing a line in the sand between God's desires—a life of love, worship, and service and the world's desires—a life of selfishness, vanity, and pride.

From the beginning of Christ's ministry when He preached the Sermon on the Mount, He called His followers to a life of purpose guided by a heart for God. As His ministry continued, He was challenged with "current events" of the day to determine if His teachings could be applied in all aspects of life, including politics.

In Matthew 22:21, Christ instructs, "Render unto Caesar's that which is Caesar's and to God, that which is God's." Notice the response of the audience. They marveled and went on their way. They didn't ask, "How do I know what is Caesar's?" Say what you will about the Pharisees' stubbornness and legalistic ways, they knew when they were beaten—every single time. Christ's line in the sand was clear and powerful. A heart for God clears the clutter and makes the righteous choice obvious. The line in the sand was clear to the Pharisees, and it should be clear to us. God's will should always supersede any power here on earth.

Our allegiance is to God and Him alone. God's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). We are here to be prepared for the kingdom of heaven—a place of constant worship to God. John 19:11 assures us that no power on earth is given except what is given by God. Heaven reigns supreme over earth's governments, which is why we must obey God rather than man (Acts 5:29).

Do we really trust God? There is no authority on earth except that which God has established (Romans 13:1-7). These challenging words were written at the height of some of the most unprincipled rulers of all time—a time when Christians were put in arenas with wild animals so that audiences could watch them be torn apart for entertainment. While we have our "battles" today, they are nothing compared to what first century Christians endured.

Just like the first century Christians and Christians during other difficult times in history, our hope is not grounded or limited by what our government does or does not do. We serve a higher power who has the wisdom, power, desire, and ability to deliver what is truly best for us, which is infinitely better than trusting the imperfect people who make up our government. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 8:28). We can't expect imperfect people to create a perfect government, but we can trust God and His perfect plan.

According to Romans 13:1, we are subject to the governing authorities, which means we have a responsibility to the laws of the land as long as they don't violate the laws of God. As

Christians, we must balance our citizenship on earth and our citizenship in heaven with the right perspective. We can't let Satan use the drama and opinions of the upcoming election to distract us from our true purpose here on earth.

No matter what is going on during our time here on earth, our mantra should be the same as Paul's—"I die daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). This is the line in the sand. If we are not dying to ourselves and living in Christ every single day, we are moving away from Him and away from everything He offers. Exercise your civic responsibility through God's lens. Make your choice and move on. Don't let it be a distraction from our true purpose here on earth. Regardless of what happens, good or bad, our purpose is to continue to live with a heart for God.

In C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters*, Wormwood's tutor instructs him, "The thing to do is to get a man at first to value social justice as a thing which the Enemy [God] demands, and then work him on to the stage at which he values Christianity because it may produce social justice." Instead of giving Satan

## Do we really trust God?

this foothold in our hearts, take confidence that in reality, we've already won the election. What happens on earth is insignificant to the victory we already have.

Satan continues to fight battles in a war he has already lost in an attempt to take as many souls with him as possible. If we allow ourselves to be dragged into these meaningless battles, we're "beating our fists in the air." God has a more effective and purposeful plan and desire for us here on earth. Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:16-17). ▲

# WEATHERED LEVERS

## AND THE LORD

Go into the booth, pull the lever, and let your voice be heard. This is the understandable plea of many in our nation regarding the privilege and responsibility of its citizens. While this mantra doesn't appear to receive much questioning or debate for the general population, things can be quite different when it comes to Christians and politics. Throughout history, the level of involvement for the Christian in the political arena is varied. There are those that cannot imagine not voting and even taking an active role in supporting candidates or referendums. There are also those that have and will take a position that their faith is best understood and practiced completely removed from such. How is it that those that openly and equally state their love for the Lord can come to such different views or desired involvements in issues that potentially affect life so directly? What does our God desire for us? The following are potential considerations of God's people as we make personal choices but also live with others making theirs.

First, we should be reminded that our God and his Son Jesus transcend politics and political parties or figures. There is nothing in scripture that suggests that the authenticity of our faith is directly tied to any particular level of involvement in politics. In addition, one's belief that Jesus is the only way to salvation is unaffected by his position on free trade agreements. Throughout history, Christians have personally claimed the Lordship of Jesus in a variety of political climates and norms.

Secondly, my responsibility as a Christian citizen does not change depending on the one in office, nor by the outcome of a city or county vote by the school board. It was God that ordained civil government, and Jesus himself reminded us to "render unto Caesar the things

that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's (Matthew 22:21). Likewise, when Jesus said "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36), He was not asking his followers to have no involvement with societal concerns, but simply marking the distinctive difference between that which is temporal and that which was eternal, and the different response that the eternal should bring. With that truth, the follower of Christ should remember that he is potentially spiritually endangered when he forgets the kingdom due to either overwhelming allegiance or debilitating concern over who sits in an office over the next four years.

In addition, we might do well to consider that Jesus, in prayer to His Father, offered some words possibly not used or considered often in this area of concern. Remember that Jesus, as He prayed for his disciples in John 17, said "I do not ask that you would take them out of the world." Why would he not ask for this? He went on to say that they had already been subjected to hate for who they would be (17:14). Would it not be for their protection from a coming persecution? The next statements are meaningful for considerations like that of this article, as Jesus went on to ask simply "that they be protected from the evil one" (17:15). Why is this the right recognition instead of something different? Because of what Jesus reminded his disciples in Matthew 5:13-16 in saying that they were to be "the salt of the earth" and the "light of the world." The idea that believers should be removed from all societal involvements, discussions, and concerns is surely not the case made in scripture. Rather, it may occasionally be that our opportunities for being "salt" and "light" come from **how** we handle those involvements.

In the consideration of such a "hot button" issue for some, there are some things simply not stated in scripture. What I have attempted to do is give some of the things we can and should consider as Christians in this intersection of culture and Christianity. As for summary, I have said that our God and His Son, as well as Their purposes, are bigger and more important than politics. Secondly, my responsibility to my God and His purposes do not change with who is in the Oval Office or the Governor's Mansion. Additionally, scripture seems to demand neither a full involvement in political function or complete removal from it. Finally, we may even find opportunity to be salt and light by our various conscientious involvements.

Before leaving this completely to the reader, let me say that our God did say some things which can and should impact us on this or any other "hot button" issue. These things he made clear. First and foremost, God loves His church. I must be careful to love what He loves, and any passions I have that impact my ability to love what He loves should be better managed or even avoided. In loving the church, His people, we should remember our call to seek their best interest above our own (Philippians 2). In our many congregations are genuine people of authentic faith with differing views politically. Since it was written in a different context, I offer these words only as analogy, remembering the words offered by Paul to the Romans when he said, "Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food" (14:20). May our informed consciences and prayerful hearts lead us to making proper decisions, that God alone is eventually honored. ▲



# NEED A SPEAKER WHO WILL **IMPACT** YOUR CONGREGATION?

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RENEW YOUR MIND  
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SAVANNAH COTTRELL

# Dear Millennials: **WHAT ARE WE DOING?**

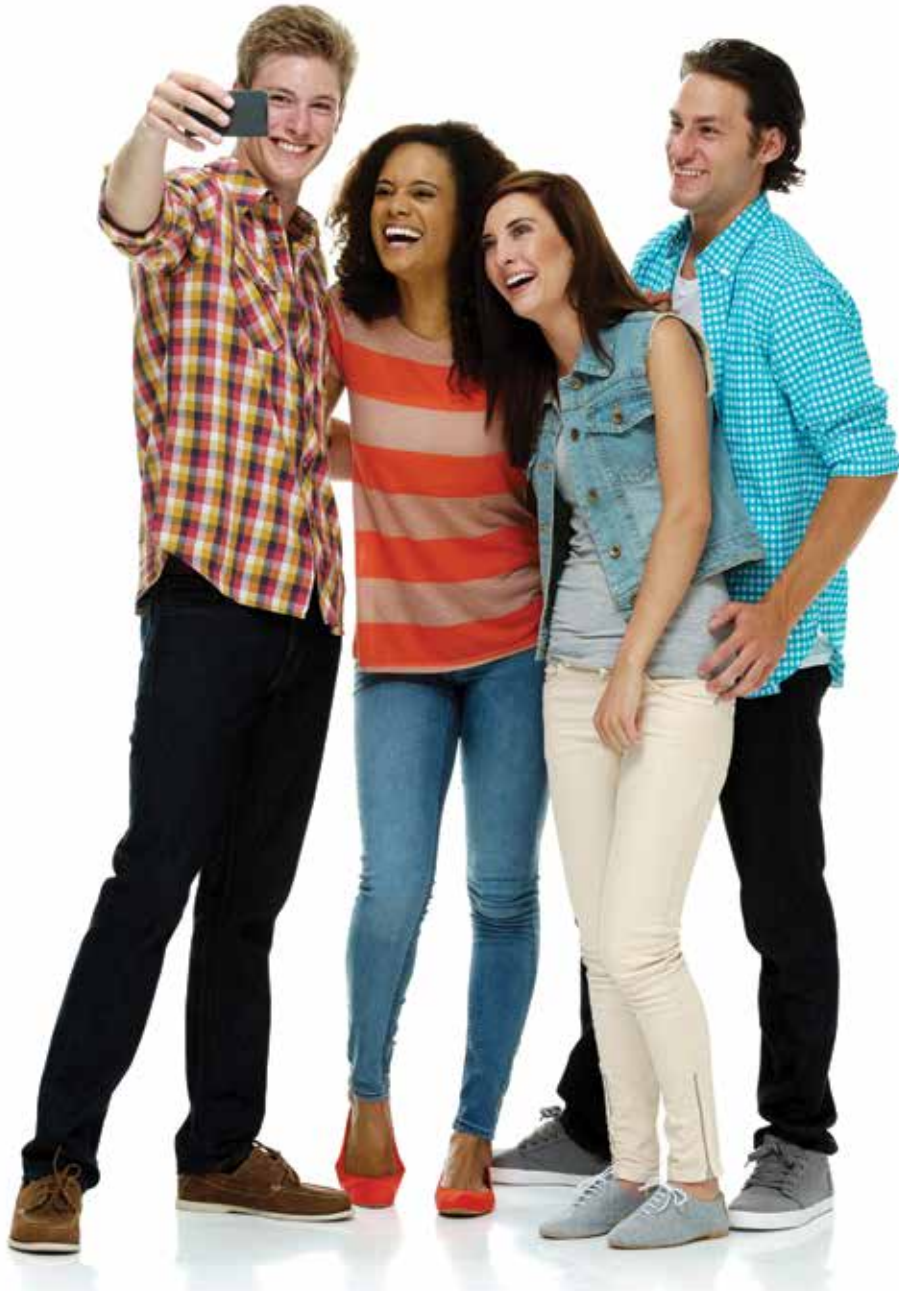
Dear Millennials—as well as anyone else who happens to turn the page to this article—do you know what you'll be doing on November 8th (or a week or so before)?

Hopefully, you will (or will have already) cast your vote for the candidate of your choice for the presidency of the United States. Like it or not, your vote does matter—as does your voting at all—so it's best to do your research, not be swayed by opinion or bias (whether that comes from angry Facebook rants or your favorite celebrity), and plan on registering and being present at your polling place.

But before you can do any research, before you can cast that vote . . . you have to realize that it all starts with *you*.

Yes, you. You in school, you with the degree, you with a job, you with a spouse and family . . . regardless of your station in life, you have a responsibility for yourself; particularly, your actions and behavior.

*But wait, Savannah, what do my actions and behavior have to do with politics?* Well, that's a good question.



I can't speak for absolutely everyone my age, but I can speak from my own personal experience in that your actions and behavior are dictated by your worldview, and what—or, specifically, Who—your worldview is based on matters. Your worldview does in fact affect major decisions, including who you'll be voting for this Presidential election.

So, what are we doing in the meantime? Or, what aren't we doing? And what does this have to do with the election coming up?

Let's talk about that.

### **We aren't stepping up.**

Men are called to be leaders, both spiritually and within their homes (Ephesians 5:23, 25-26). Women are called to be supporters and nurturers (Ephesians 5:22-24). And regardless of gender, everyone is called to serve others and spread the Gospel (Matthew 28:16-20). So, as such, we need to step up, and as a generation, I personally feel as though that hasn't really been happening like it should.

### **We're not serving.**

Speaking of serving others, I feel that as a generation, we're trying to come out on top as far as jobs and success goes. We're looking out for number one, so to speak, and we're racing to our own personal finish lines in order to achieve our personal goals. But it seems that in doing so, we're so inwardly focused that we're forgetting to look out for the well-being of others and forgetting to see to their needs. Our "races" need to be less about ourselves and more about actually getting to Heaven (1 Corinthians 9:24; Hebrews 12:1).

### **We're silent**

It's very easy for us to be silent in a world that's so loud. And even if we do decide to speak, we're afraid to come across as crazy or even hateful to those who disagree with us. Inaction is just as bad as a bad action, especially if it means that someone will wind up lost. We're afraid of escaping what comforts we know, not unlike the rich young ruler in Matthew 19:15-26.

*Savannah, now you're just being negative. I wanted to read something positive.*

Dear reader, I know. But honestly, self-examination in this regard is healthy just because of the fact that we're striving Heavenward. We can't do that if we're not evaluating ourselves and where we are in our relationship with God, and sometimes, that

evaluation is hard. I know it's hard for me.

So, let's shift gears. What can we do?

### **We can step up.**

It's never too late to take on your God-given role. Nor is it too late to live faithfully, period. Remember, God will meet you where you are, just as He came to Moses, Isaiah, and others.

We're also called to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. If we have chosen God, the absolute least we can do is obey His commandments, including those to serve. In fact, the two greatest commands God asks of us are simple: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37, 39 NASB). And He says to us in His Word, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments" (John 14:15 NASB). That's all He wants from us: love and obedience. And in return—no matter how we act or how we feel—He loves us far more than we can imagine.

### **We can serve.**

It's also never too late to start serving. If you're not sure where to start, prayer is an excellent way to begin your journey of outward service. Ask God to reveal to you what the best ways to serve are. It's better to ask God for help than to not act or serve at all.

Also, look to Jesus' example as to how to serve. In fact, take a look at what He says to His disciples after washing their feet in John 13:12-17 (NASB):

Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them.

### **We can speak.**

Regardless of our fear, and regardless of our worry that we won't be heard, we do in fact have a voice.

Also, do you know what the coolest part is? You don't even have to use your vocal chords. Your actions as a Christian are the greatest sermon you can preach, the greatest article you can write, the greatest speech you can

give, and the greatest lesson you can teach. Jesus not only spoke to others, but He also took action, from healing the sick to even physically tearing apart the shop stalls in the temple that disregarded His Father (Matthew 4:23; 21:12).

So, finally, what does all of this have to do with politics?

As mentioned earlier, your actions and behavior are determined by your worldview, and what or Who your worldview is based on is critical to those actions and behavior. Are you basing what you're doing—or what you *aren't* doing—on your own desires, your fears, and/or the world around you? Or, are you basing your actions—and, in turn, your confidence—upon your belief in the God you serve?

Choosing not to vote can be, in essence, compared to choosing not to stand up for what you believe in. Sure, it's on a much larger scale, and we ourselves have no control over the candidates and the opinions and press surrounding them.

However, we must remember that all it takes is making the decision to vote *based on our worldview*. Therefore, if our worldview is based on God, the vote we place should be in line with what we believe in.

That's why I can't stress enough that we need to research each candidate thoroughly without bias before we vote. That's why we can't totally depend on what the media tells us about each candidate. We need to base our decision to vote based on our faith and our own discernment based on that faith, which we can ask God's help for. And no matter what, we need to pray for not just the candidates, but also our current President and anyone else involved (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

All in all, our worldview dictates everything we do, no matter our age. However, it's high time that we ourselves step up, serve others, and speak up about our faith in the meantime. After all, it starts with us. ▲

**STEP  
UP AND  
SERVE!**



## Brooms and Spells

For many years, sitcoms have been written, rewritten, cancelled, and or moved to such networks as TV LAND, where they become reruns. One such sitcom, *Bewitched*, ran from 1964 to 1972 before making its move to the rerun status. Samantha had many women daydreaming about being able to twinkle their noses to get things done exactly the way they wanted; cleaning house, cooking dinner, ridding themselves of unwanted circumstances.

Just in case any missed the era of *Bewitched* the sitcom, *Bewitched* the movie was written and produced for our viewing pleasure, again having many wonder what it would be like to be a witch. However, the Bible is clear on the subject.

The Egyptians may have introduced the descendants of Abraham to several different gods so that they were not only physically enslaved, but also spiritually. We learn about 10 of these gods when we do in depth study of Exodus 5-12. One we don't read about in the Bible is the Egyptian god Thoth. Mythology holds that he was the author of "The Book of the Dead." He invented the magical and hermetic arts and is given credit for the Tarot cards that are used today. These were also known as "The Book of Thoth." Tarot cards have changed over the course of time, but their purpose has always been to guide the user's decision making process.

When God brought judgement upon the Egyptians He showed them and the children of Israel that He alone is God. "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike down all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against **all the gods** of Egypt I will execute judgement" (Exodus 12:12). Sources place the number of gods at that time between 80 and 120+.

The Israelites were used to seeing magic performed by Pharaoh's magicians and sorcerers. The magic arts permeated every aspect of Egyptian life. According the Geraldine Pinch, author of *Handbook of Egyptian Mythology*, spells were cast on the living, the dead, and even inanimate objects, including furniture and other household items for protection from evil.

Did the Israelites practice these things? Some perhaps did. Throughout Scripture, God reminds His people to get rid of all sorcerers, mediums, and anyone who practiced witchcraft. Exodus 22:18 records the first command dealing with sorcerers. Here, Moses was on Mt. Sinai receiving the law from God. What's interesting is that God had just told them they were not to have any other gods. He alone was their God. This was important for the people to realize. God had

called them to a higher purpose. They were not to be defiled by the mediums (Leviticus 19:31). Disobedience meant they were cut off from His people (Leviticus 20:6).

Later, in 1 Samuel 15 Samuel told King Saul, "rebellion against the Lord is as the sin of divination." Saul had just defeated the Amalekites but spared the king, even though God had told him to utterly destroy them. For his disobedience, Saul was cut off from being king. To make matters worse, Saul actually sought out a medium to bring Samuel up from the dead when God wouldn't answer him concerning his battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 28).

Continuing, Isaiah prophesied during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah. The southern tribes were targeted by Assyria as the northern were. The kings sought help from other nations, including Egypt, disregarding God completely. Isaiah warned them of God's wrath and told them to repent. The nation apparently also turned to mediums and spiritists. "When they say to you, 'Consult the mediums and the spiritists who whisper and mutter,' should not a people consult their God? Should they consult the dead on behalf of the living" (Isaiah 8:18-19).

During Paul's missionary journeys he too encountered some who believed in sorcery, mediums, and spiritists. Acts 19 gives a small example of this. One author believes that Ephesians may have been written for this very reason. Paul reminds the church in Ephesus of God's great power and the strength of His might. (Ephesians 1:19) Again in 1:21, Christ is above all rule, authority, power and dominion. The church didn't need any other protection. Based on this assumption, is it possible that Paul wrote of the armor of God to remind the Christians there to depend on God's divine protection above all else including the casting of spells to ward off Satan?

Many people believe and practice the occult today. It is yet another work of the flesh that the church must be aware of and stand against. Those who practice do not receive their gift from God, which means it can come only from Satan. Paul warns in 1 Timothy 4:1, "But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons."

How tempting it can be to want to have the future read, to follow the stars, to call upon the dead when answers are needed. Just remember, turning to God and His Word is the only safe and reliable way to seek guidance. ▲



# MINDS AND PARACHUTES

This week, I saw a bumper sticker that said, “Minds are like parachutes. They only work when they are open.” I suppose that’s true about many things, but especially so about God’s word and man’s use of it.

Do you know how many homes in the U.S. have a Bible? Nine out of ten.<sup>1</sup> However, despite having a Bible in the home, only 37% report reading it once a week or more. Of those who read their Bible, only 57% say that it made them think about how to apply it each day. Many people are simply not opening their Bibles and allowing God to speak to them. Additionally, the number one reason people gave for lack of reading the Bible was busyness. People often let daily duties and responsibilities hinder them from opening their Bibles and their hearts to listen to God.

The sad fact is that some members of the Lord’s body fall into the same pattern of neglecting Bible reading, not applying scripture to daily living, and allowing their busy lifestyles to supersede reading and studying the Bible. Someone once said B.U.S.Y. means “Being Under Satan’s Yoke.” If we let our busy schedules, activities, work, or play interfere with getting to know God through His word, shame on us.

The Psalmist, David, had much to say about God’s word and his love for it. “Oh, how I love Your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97). “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). “Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them. The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple” (Psalm 119:129-130). The apostle Paul reminds us of the important role the word of God plays in building our faith, “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). He told Timothy that God’s word is sufficient for every need, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for re-proof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

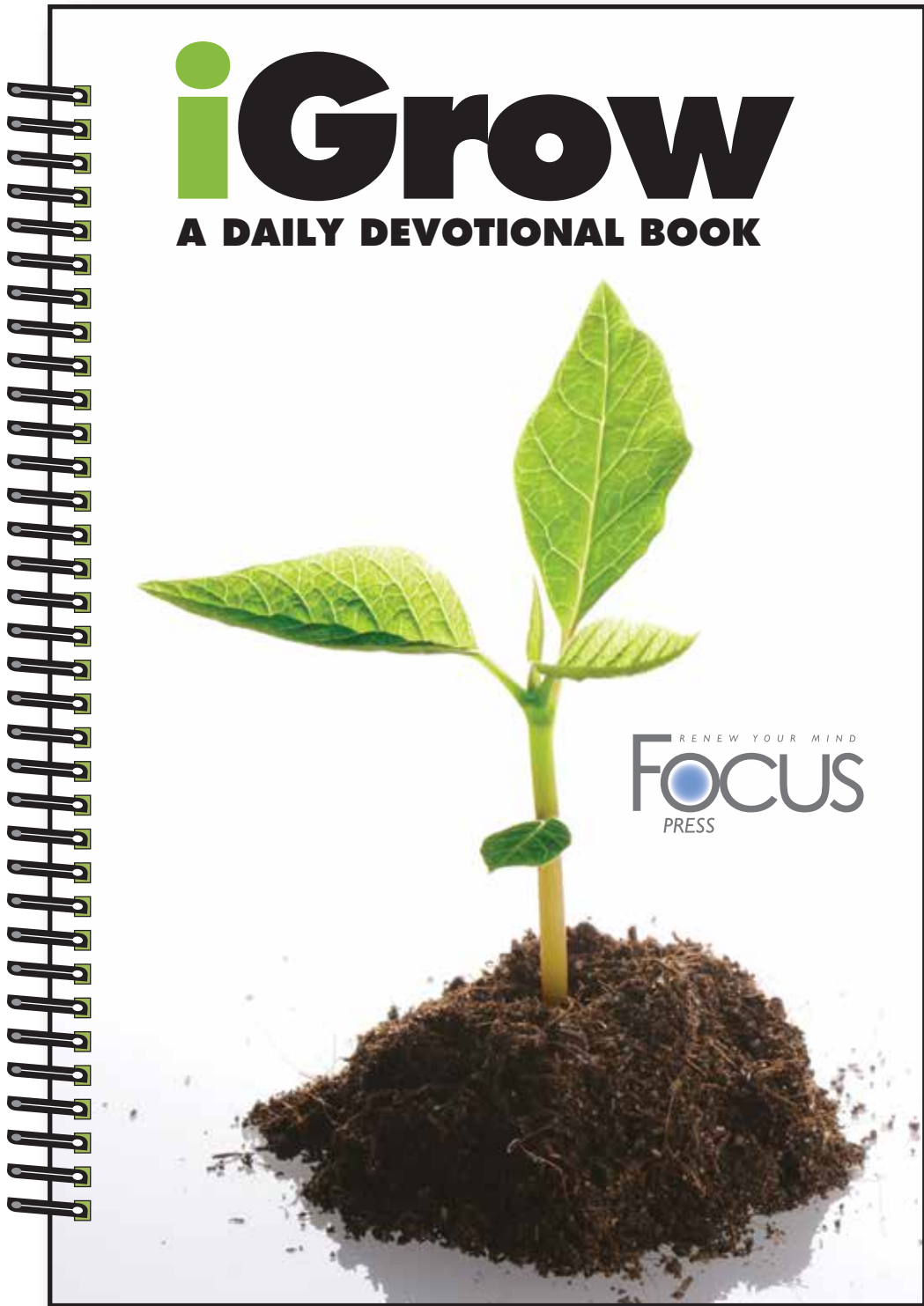
If we ever find ourselves in a lull reading scripture, let us explore creative ways to reignite our passion. A few months ago I read in Deuteronomy that God commanded every newly appointed king to, “Write for himself a copy of the law in a book . . . and it shall be with

him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all the words of the law” (17:18-19). Since reading this, beginning with Matthew, I am copying the entire New Testament. It is truly an enlightening way to read God’s word. I call it “God’s reading plan.”

As a sobering side note, minds and parachutes have a second thing in common. When the parachute is not opened, the diver perishes. Likewise, if a person is unwilling to open the Bible and open their heart to know God through His word, he or she will perish! ▲

**Today’s Verse:** “Oh, How I love your law! It is my meditation all the day” (Psalm 119:97).

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/664-the-state-of-the-bible-6-trends-for-2014#.VZHk\\_-](https://www.barna.org/barna-update/culture/664-the-state-of-the-bible-6-trends-for-2014#.VZHk_-)



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# VOTING

*Having looked into the tearful eyes of parents whose children have abandoned the Faith, I have learned there are a million miles between our children “going through the motions” in reference to their spiritual lives versus our children possessing hearts that dictate their actions. In this column, I plan to share with you what I hope to instill in the hearts of my own children and those whom I love.*

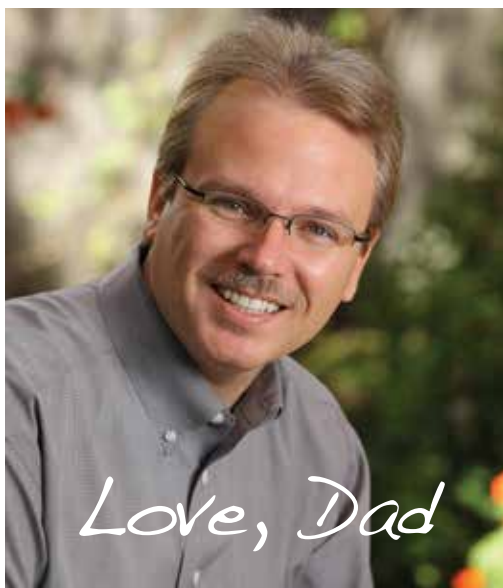
Elections have been taking place since the inception of our nation. There have been good candidates and horrible candidates. There have been fair elections and stolen elections. And, I suspect, this will continue to go on well into the future.

During the founding of this nation preachers played a vital role in informing citizens. Our nation’s capital has statues of several preachers—part of the black robe regiment—who helped tackle serious issues like freedom, independence, and rights. In several cases, it was the preachers who lead the fight for freedom.

Today, many pulpits have been silenced. We know longer discuss politics—because after all, it might “offend” someone. Words like “Republican,” “Democrat,” and “Libertarian” cause many to bristle when said from the pulpit. Sadly, the pendulum has swung from preachers informing and leading the way, to now we avoid discussing politics for fear we might lose our 501(c)3 status or cause someone to leave.

## **Here’s what I intend to teach my children regarding politics and voting:**

There will never be a perfect political candidate. Let me repeat that to make sure you hear what I’m saying—there will never be a perfect politician. The reason is because we have all sinned (Romans 3:23)—the only perfect, sinless man died roughly 2,000 years ago. So please do not look to some politician to be perfect and fix everything. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can fix everything.



So what do I want you to know about politics and voting? Number one, please vote—it is your civic duty. You have been born into a country that allows the people to elect its leaders. And yes, there may be flaws in the system, but it is the one we have been entrusted with. Take some time to actually read the words of the Constitution.

Second, set aside the candidate’s gender, skin color, or personality. Focus instead on what the candidate stands for and how it aligns with God’s Word. I have told many people it is not my job to tell them who to vote for. It is my job to point out what God loves and hates. It’s my job to point out what are abominations to Him. And if something is an abomination to God, it had better be an abomination to me. It’s my job to remind people to vote in such a way that they defend God and His Truths! After all, we will all give an account to God—even for how we vote.

So what are some things I look for?

1. Does the candidate support human life, even in the womb?
2. Does the candidate support traditional marriage as God instituted?
3. Does the candidate support the Christian religion?
4. Does the candidate want to allow same-sex marriage?
5. Does the candidate want to stop research on human embryos?
6. Does the candidate support moral teaching in the classroom?
7. Does the candidate stand for prayer?
8. Does the candidate have a moral compass aligned with God’s will?

This is not a comprehensive list, but hopefully it gives you an idea of issues that I believe are vital to defending God and His Word. I try to select individuals who most closely align to Biblical principles and then I select accordingly. Some years, it may be easier than others. But let me remind you again, there will never be a perfect candidate. The world rejected Christ, and they would reject that candidate as well!

Voting has become a sport of “who will help my wallet the most.” Or “who can provide me the most benefits.” At the end of the day none of that stuff matters. What really matters is whether we have a leader that believes “righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34).

Don’t elect people to change the world—that’s your job. Select leaders that will help point people back toward God. That’s how you should vote. Think about it. ▲

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