

Title:

Christian Living - Part 1: Is Voting Optional

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Summary:

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The lifestyle more in vogue today is to coast along and go with the flow. Goals are considered quaint. Consequences aren't considered at all. And neither is duty.

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Article Body:

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The lifestyle more in vogue today is to coast along and go with the flow. Goals are considered quaint. Consequences aren't considered at all. And neither is duty.

This currently popular approach of slip-sliding through life directly opposes the Christian standard. Christianity calls us to maximize the gifts and talents God gave us so we can fulfill the reason we're alive, the reason God created us.

To achieve this requirement, the Bible calls Christians to obey God. Once we make God the boss of our lives, we must do what he tells us to do. And tell us, he does. This isn't about hearing voices or receiving notes from God, although that would be nice. How we hear from God is another topic for another day. For now, just know that we can and will hear from God.

What does God talk to us about? Love, for one thing. Not mushy, anything-goes love, but get-it-together love that makes life work. Gratitude, for another thing. If we don't have gratitude for God's blessings, we're not paying

attention.

Which brings me to my topic: One of the many blessings for which we should be profoundly grateful is this wonderful country, The United States of America, that God gave us. Please don't bother me with the folderol that God had nothing to do with the wonder that is this country. That kind of talk just shows you don't know your history.

We show our gratitude to God for this amazing gift by being model citizens. As our example, Jesus followed the laws of his day, the tyranny of the Roman Empire. And he paid his taxes. Does that mean Jesus gave his stamp of approval to what was going on? No, it just means Christians take the long view and change society by doing the right thing, opposing wrong things, being people of excellence and using whatever tools we have to promote good.

One tool we have is the vote. Christians have a duty to vote; it is not optional.

Additionally, as citizens of excellence, we'll vote knowledgeably, not willy-nilly. We'll vote for people who will protect and defend the country God gave us, uphold the law, protect the vulnerable and free all citizens to be everything that God calls them to be.

And we won't vote out of ignoble reasons, such as envy or greed.

Well, those are high standards. What if we can't agree with any of the candidates on all the issues? We still must vote, and we must choose the candidate closest to Constitutional mandates. To neglect this duty is to desert the battlefield while the battle rages.

We may not be able to see how God can work through any of the candidates, but we still have a duty to vote. As an example, think about the time the disciples of Jesus decided to fill the place left by Judas. They set high standards for the candidates. Only two men measured up. Of them, Mathias was selected, but we never hear about him again—because God had other plans.

God wanted Paul. Now we call him Saint Paul. We read his writings. We laud and revere him. But at the time, Paul was out persecuting Christians and putting as many in jail as he could. It never occurred to the disciples that Paul was God's man.

Like the disciples, we never know the whole mind of God. He's used all sorts of people—both good and bad—to move things along. What we know is he calls us to be

model citizens and to show our gratitude for his blessings, including our country.

Here's how it goes: We study the issues. We study the candidates. We ask: Who will protect and defend our country? Who will uphold the law, protect the vulnerable and allow, even encourage, the freedom to pursue our dreams? Who doesn't promote envy or greed? Who doesn't seek power for power's sake? Who isn't all talk, but has a proven track record of accomplishment? Once we've found the best fit-and it's never a perfect fit-we vote.

Then we pray. That's not optional, either. Christ commands us to pray for our leaders-whether we like them or not.

And thus we participate in God's will on earth.

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