



FOLLOWING JESUS: WHEN EMPIRES COLLIDE – September 2024

Perhaps the greatest challenge for a Christian is keeping Jesus Christ first. The first two commandments put Him front and center: You shall have no other gods or idols before Me. Gods (with a small 'g') and idols often confound us because we rarely recognize them as idols.

“One of the signs that an object is functioning as an idol is that fear becomes one of the chief characteristics of life. When we center our lives on the idol, we become dependent on it. If our counterfeit god is threatened in any way, our response is complete panic. We do not say, ‘What a shame, how difficult,’ but rather ‘This is the end! There’s no hope!’

This may be a reason why so many people now respond to U.S. political trends in such an extreme way. When either party wins an election, a certain percentage of the losing side talks openly about leaving the country. They become agitated and fearful for the future. They have put the kind of hope in their political leaders and policies that once was reserved for God and the work of the gospel. When their political leaders are out of power, they experience a death. They believe that if their policies and people are not in power, everything will fall apart. They refuse to admit how much agreement they actually have with the other party, and instead focus on the points of disagreement. The points of contention overshadow everything else, and a poisonous environment is created.”

Natural affections are not a problem in themselves and engaging in politics can be a way of showing love of neighbor or standing up for justice for those who are being denied it. The problem comes when those natural affections are given too much weight. The questions below are meant to put in right order what matters to God.

[Read Luke 20:20-26](#)

1. Jesus puts front and center the need to be very cautious when we amalgamate God and Caesar. Why warn of this? What are the dangers of combining government and God?
2. When Jesus says, “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and give to God what belongs to God.” Have you found yourself giving more to earthly Caesars than the God who created you?

What steps can you make to remedy this? Can you be critical of your own political party?
3. Do you spend more time listening to talk of politics—on social media, talk radio, cable news—than you spent in the Word of God or with gospel-oriented media?
4. Do my concerns about possible political outcomes show that I may not truly trust that God is sovereign over the nations?
5. Jesus doesn't allow us to drop out of politics all together (give to Caesar what belong to Caesar) or to give Caesar complete loyalty and obedience. What are steps you can take to be politically active while not selling your soul?

For further discussion and questions The Gospel Coalition wrote this very helpful article
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/how-know-if-made-an-idol-politics/>