

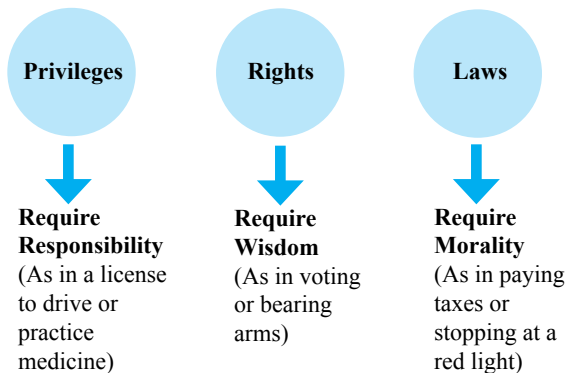
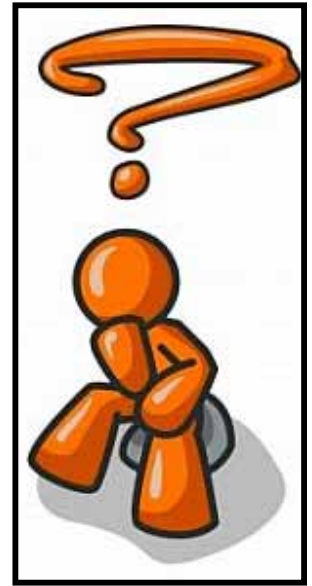
What About... Voting in an Election?

BY DR. DAVID A. DEWITT AND R J REGAN

Free societies allow their citizens to vote for their leaders. Although ancient Athens had a selective democracy, this is a relatively recent development in history and occupies a place in government called a citizen's "rights." What does it mean that we have "the right to vote"? Every free democracy or republic presents its citizens with at least three things: Privileges, Rights, and Laws.

Privileges would include things like driving a car, flying an airplane, being a home builder, practicing law or medicine. In order to participate in the privileges of a society, you must demonstrate the responsibilities required to perform that privilege. After this, you will receive some sort of license saying you have met those responsibilities.

Laws include all the mandatory regulations of a society, written in its constitution and passed by its legislative bodies. Laws of a society require the morality of its citizens. It is morally right to keep them and morally wrong not to.



Rights sort of fit in between Laws and Privileges. They do not require citizens to demonstrate responsibility. You don't need a license to do it. They do not require a morality resulting in keeping the law. You don't have to do it. But they do require wisdom. Foolishness is possible in all areas where a free society gives rights to its citizens. Since there are no laws or licenses to govern rights, the only way rights can be valuable is when the populace uses them with wisdom.

One right of a free society is voting. That means voting is not governed by laws or licenses. And since voting is not a directive in the Bible, it is not a law or command and cannot be governed by moral requirements. So we would like to offer some suggestions about wise voting for believers in Jesus Christ. Since these are not biblical directives, feel free to question our wisdom. However, even though the Bible does not talk about voting, it does talk about government. And all Scripture is applicable (2 Timothy 3:16-17). So we will attempt to apply biblical ideas to the wisdom required for an effective voting process.

Here are six thoughts:

1. When you vote, you are part of the government.

Voting is one of the few things we do where citizens of a free nation might participate in the government (the only other one is being on a jury). There seems to be three responsibilities of governments:

- 1) To protect its citizens from enemies, both foreign and domestic, and enforce the laws of the land—1 Peter 2:14 *...governors...[are] sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right.*
- 2) To distinguish between what is actually *good* and *evil*—Romans 13:4 [Government] *is a minister of God to you for good.*
- 3) To initiate capital punishment and war against violent aggressors—Romans 13:4 [to] *bear the sword [and be the one] who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.*

As individuals, Jesus told us to love our neighbors and our enemies, show compassion, and leave vengeance up to the Lord (Romans 12:14-19). But that's not the role of government. And when we vote, we are part of the government. As individuals, we are to be merciful, forgiving, compassionate, and love our neighbors and our enemies. But we are to vote for those who will protect, know good and evil, bear the sword, and enforce the law.

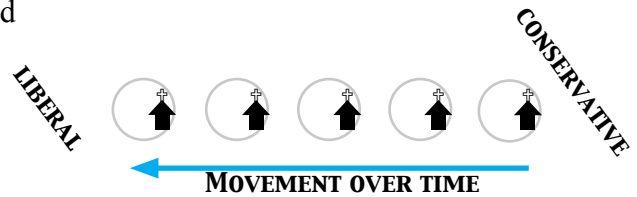
2. God is sovereign over who is elected.

God is the one who *removes kings and establishes kings* (Daniel 2:21). Never get the idea that you can elect someone outside of God's plan. And you may be voting against God's plan. God set up evil governments to punish Israel. God set up a Roman government that persecuted the church. God will also set up the antichrist. That does not mean we should vote for him. Vote for the best person.

3. Don't think the cause you vote for will change the course of history.

Societies tend to move from some sort of conservative principles to a liberalizing of those principles until they fall apart. And the religion of the society moves in the same direction, at the same speed, but on the conservative edge of it.

The movement is not steady. When people get annoyed by their liberal officials, they may vote for the other guys, but when they get annoyed with them, they will vote even more liberal the next time. The better the initial idea, the longer it lasts, but all societies liberalize themselves into extinction. Don't think your vote (or anything else you do) will stop that.



4. All candidates are a compromise.

No candidate will represent everything you like. You may have a watershed deal breaker issue that you will not accept (like abortion or gay marriage), but you will have to accept things you don't like. All politics is compromise and voting is no exception. The main question is, "Does the candidate tell the truth and promote the government responsibilities listed above?"

- Proverbs 20:28—*Loyalty and truth preserve the king, and he upholds his throne by righteousness.*

5. Only vote if you know what the candidates stand for.

Because voting is a right, uninformed people may vote for inconsequential reasons, like a candidate's race, gender, or appearance. But wisdom says, if you don't know the candidate's basic positions on the key issues, don't vote. There is no wisdom whatsoever in just "getting out the vote." When uninformed people vote, democracy becomes defined as "the lunatics are running the asylum."

- Proverbs 30:21-22—*...the earth...cannot bear up under a slave when he becomes king.*
- Ecclesiastes 10:16—*Woe to you, O land, whose king is a lad and whose princes feast in the morning.*

6. Don't vote according to religion, except for watershed deal-breaker issues.

If a candidate represents a cult, an anti-Christian religion, an idolatrous or demonic religion, you might consider those watershed issues that cannot be tolerated. But just because a candidate claims Christianity or gives a "born again" testimony does not automatically qualify him or her for leadership. Many of Israel's leaders were of the right religion and the wrong standards. For example, King Saul didn't change religions. He always believed in the God of Israel. *But Samuel said to Saul, "I will not return with you; for you have rejected the word of the LORD, and the LORD has rejected you from being king over Israel (1 Samuel 15:26).*

- *Although the Israelites were keeping the sacrifices of the Mosaic Law, God said, What are your multiplied sacrifices to Me? ...Cease to do evil, learn to do good (Isaiah 1:11, 16-17).*