

Christianity / Politics / Unity

Introduction: *This is a statement prepared by a diverse group of Pastors affiliated with the Baptist Resource Network of PA/SJ and members of our local churches. These statements are not entirely comprehensive, but they do include much that we believe needs to be communicated and affirmed within the church at this time, given the current political climate in our country and the impact that it has on people both inside and outside of the Church.. It is our hope that these statements will provide a useful framework in which we can have God honoring discussion and debate that leads to greater unity, peace and love in His church and beyond. In these political matters, as in all things, it is our desire to see God's will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*

1) Identity

- a) As followers of Jesus, our primary identity is in Christ, as citizens of His Kingdom
- b) That identity leads to unity, love and humility between brothers & sisters in Christ
- c) If politics or race can divide us then our identity in Christ is not primary
- d) Our ethnicity, family history, place of residence, and experiences all shape our political viewpoints. It is not helpful or God honoring for any person or group to presume that their political viewpoint is the only proper Christian position to hold. That shows a lack of love and respect towards those brothers and sisters in Christ who hold a different view.
- e) Our identity in Christ should also impact the way that we interact with those who are not yet followers of Jesus. We are ambassadors for Jesus and the things that we say and do should be a reflection of His heart, character and mission to the world around us.

2) Idolatry

- a) We must be on guard against making an idol out of politics and looking to a candidate or party as our primary source of identity, hope, and joy.
- b) If our peace and fulfillment are based on a candidate or party then that has become our functional savior and has taken the place in our heart that only Jesus deserves.

3) Involvement

- a) We are called to seek the good of the city in which we are exiles
- b) We are called to pray for our leaders, knowing that their power and position come from God
- c) Working to help the marginalized, pursue justice, and maintain liberty requires that we work with our government and elected officials where our goals and values are in alignment
- d) As individual Christians, we should vote for candidates and advocate for ideas and policies that we believe are best, based upon our conscience and guided by our Christian beliefs and values.
- e) We will rightly give greater weight and consideration to some issues over others, but our final position should reflect a wise evaluation of all of the relevant issues before us.
- f) Denominations and churches should not endorse one specific candidate or political party since each candidate and each party has some positions that are in line with a Christian worldview and some that are not.

- g) Leaders in our churches should exercise the individual freedom that they have to support a candidate or party with great humility and care since other Christians within their congregation will hold opposing viewpoints.

4) **Interaction**

- a) Christians who engage in political discussion should do so with the intentional goal of understanding a brother or sister who holds an opposing viewpoint
- b) We can disagree on ideas and policies without being judgemental or calling someone's faith or character into question for holding an opposing viewpoint.
- c) If we believe someone is in error concerning Biblical doctrine, we are called to speak the truth in love and to earnestly pursue peace.
- d) We should seek to build unity and cooperation, not division and disorder
- e) We should model and advocate for civility, respect, and discussions that focus on policy...particularly how that policy relates to our understanding of Biblical values and principles.
- f) Politics should not divide the bride of Christ...if they do (and they do) then we are failing to honor Jesus and we need to repent and seek to regain the unity that Jesus died to secure for His Church.

*The key themes of love, humility, unity, peace and prayer that form the foundation for these statements are reinforced throughout scripture, but the following passages were particularly helpful in addressing these issues: **Jeremiah 29, Micah 6, Matthew 22, John 7 & 17, Romans 13 & 14, 1 Corinthians 12, 2 Corinthians 5, Ephesians 2 & 4, Philippians 2 & 3, 1 Timothy 1 & 2, James 1 & 3, 1 Peter 3.***

Philippians 2:1-18 is a particularly convicting and instructive passage in regards to these matters:

[1] So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, [2] complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. [3] Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. [4] Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. [5] Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, [6] who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, [7] but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. [8] And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. [9] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, [10] so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, [11] and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

[12] Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

[14] Do all things without grumbling or disputing, [15] that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, [16] holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. [17] Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. [18] Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me. (ESV)