

Voices: How does the Christian vote? Part 4

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This is Part 4 in a series written by Ellis Orozco regarding Christian civic engagement. Part 1 is available [here](#), Part 2 is [here](#) and Part 3 is [here](#).

“But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him” ([Luke 10:33](#)).

An expert in the Mosaic law asked Jesus what a person needed to do to be saved. Jesus said: “You’re the expert. What does the Law say?”

There were dozens of ways the man could have responded, but he went straight to the one-two-punch combination of [Deuteronomy 6:5](#)—“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind,” and [Leviticus 19:18](#)—“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

Jesus nodded in agreement. Good answer.

But the lawyer wasn’t finished. Luke reports the man, “wanting to justify himself,” pressed Jesus a little further. Why did he feel the need to justify himself?

He must have heard through the grapevine Jesus preached a sermon in which he said, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” ([Matthew 5:44](#)).

Through that same grapevine, he might have heard Jesus healed the servant of a Roman centurion ([Matthew 8:5-13](#)), the daughter of a pagan

Syro-Phoenecian woman ([Mark 7:24-30](#)) and a crazed Gentile named Legion ([Luke 8:26-39](#)).

He might also have heard Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman at Jacob's well and offered her the living water that should've been reserved for Israel ([John 4:1-26](#)).

And he almost certainly heard the reports of what Jesus had just finished saying (in this same chapter of Luke) when he condemned the cities of Galilee and implied if the word of God had come to the Gentiles they would have responded better than the nation of Israel ([Luke 10:10-15](#)).

Jesus went as far as to say the judgment of God would be more tolerable for Sodom ([Luke 10:12](#)).

Wow. That's harsh.

Jesus' words in the lawyer's ears

It had to sound like heresy to the lawyer's ears. How could Jesus critique his people that way? When Americans do today what Jesus did in his day, they often are accused of hating their own country.

This lawyer felt the need to justify himself because he was a part of the majority political party in first-century Israel whose slogan was, "Make Israel Great Again!" And the only logical way to make Israel great again was to put Israel first and cast all non-Israelites as non-neighbors and, therefore, the enemy.

The expert in the Law knew good and well "love your enemy" is nowhere to be found in the Old Testament.

So, the lawyer had some parsing to do. His political ideology demanded a hard, thick dividing line. He had to justify himself.

“Who is my neighbor?” he asked Jesus.

Jesus answered with what we now call “[The Parable of The Good Samaritan](#).” It’s a killer story that pushes the boundaries of neighbors to the breaking point. The parable exploded in the lawyer’s face, decimating his myopic worldview and leaving his petty political slogans in tatters on the ground.

Perhaps it never had crossed the lawyer’s mind God might be bigger than Israel and God regularly abolishes the dividing lines we love to draw.

The third and final Christian-based principle that should guide your vote and serve as a critical pillar in a framework for political engagement is the eternal power of love. See [Part 2](#) and [Part 3](#) for principles No. 1 and No. 2.

3. The Christian must choose love above all things.

“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love” ([1 Corinthians 13:13](#)).

It isn’t political power that changes the world. It’s love.

That’s why the marginalized Samaritan was the hero of the story instead of the politically powerful priest or Levite.

It’s love. Love for God. And love for your neighbor. As [World Relief](#) executive, Lanre Williams-Ayedun, reminds us, 80 percent of our neighbors are not in North America or Europe.

We serve a Savior whose life was characterized by a radical love ethic that extended to the ends of the earth ([Acts 1:8](#); [Matthew 28:19-20](#)).

Jesus said to his disciples, “As I have loved you, so you must love one

another” ([John 13:34](#)). That command would have rung hollow if Jesus had not shown already an intense love for his disciples.

Jesus said, “Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends” ([John 15:13](#)). And then he did it. But not just for his friends. For his enemies too. Jesus asked God to forgive the very ones who were crucifying him ([Luke 23:34](#)).

The Apostle John tells us Jesus’ sacrificial love for us is the basis for our unconditional love for others ([1 John 4:19](#)). The way we love others is reflected in our actions ([James 2:20](#)) and our words ([James 3:8](#)).

Back to politics

The tenor and content of the current national conversation is abysmal. We will survive our differences. We always have. What we may not survive is the level of animosity, rage and violence simmering under the surface of our national rhetoric.

Are some politicians hard to love? Yes.

Is there systemic corruption? Yes, I’m sure there is.

Do some bureaucrats lie? Yes.

But many good men and women go into public service and political life because they genuinely care about their communities.

My mother was one of them. She served on the Pasadena Independent School District school board for 30 years. She did it because she cared about the students. She wanted to help make things better for the public school system. There are many more like her.

Our faith in Jesus demands we show respect to every person, no matter

how much we may disagree with them. We do this because every person is made in the image of God and is loved by God. Christians, of all people, should be the peacemakers ([Matthew 5:9](#)).

We desperately need peacemakers.

Take someone to lunch who is at the opposite end of the political spectrum from you. Don't speak unless it's to ask sincere questions. Just listen. Don't formulate a response. Just listen. Don't try to convince them. Just listen. Don't try to squeeze in your perspective. Just listen, pay for lunch and thank them for sharing.

Praying for the 'better angels of our nature'

We live in a great country. We will survive this crazy election year. We have survived worse.

Abraham Lincoln's first inaugural address was delivered on March 4, 1861. Even as he was being sworn in as the 16th president of the United States, seven Southern states were seceding from the Union. Before he took his hand off the Bible, the nation was disintegrating.

The closing words of his address were directed to the Southern states who hated him. He said:

"We are not enemies but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection.

"The mystic chords of memory stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land will yet swell the chorus of the Union when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

Christians are those who get on their knees every day and pray for “the better angels of our nature.”

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