

Skills for Political Peace

Part 2

Three Distinctions that Help Turn Down the Heat

Discussion Handout for Part 2

Available on the website:

“Charlie Drew’s Class Resources”

<http://gracepasadena.org/livestreammedia>

Three Distinctions

- Callings: the church and the individual Christian
- Theocracy and influence
- Moral principles and political strategies

1) Callings: the church and the individual Christian

The church

- Praying down the kingdom (Matthew 6)
- Discipling the nations (Matthew 28)

The church must:

Individuals

Quite varied.

Some, but not all, include focused political engagement.

The church must:

2) Theocracy and influence

The theocrat in us...

Identifies a particular group/strategy with God...

Forgets Rev. 1:16...

Aims to win.

MO is...

Results

At stake:

The influencer in us...

Seeks patiently to nudge by persuasion, example, and law

Aims to serve.

MO is...

Faithfulness

Faithfulness and trust

Theocracy and influence (cont.)

Learning from the Founders.

Democracy is messy and inefficient.

(Federalist Papers).

- People are passionate
- Passions protected but not absolutized—
“ordered liberty”
- Constitutional (agreed upon) structures
and checks.
- Agreeing not to have to win all the time,
or ever win completely.

Theocracy and influence (cont.)

The theocrat in us is right re...

The theocrat in us is mistaken re...

Theocracy and influence (cont.)

Alabama Supreme Court Ruling on
IVF

Two issues:

- The ethics of IVF
- The theological vision for America

Theocracy and influence (cont.)

Edmund Clowney:

“No state, no freedom fighter today can lay claim to Israel’s theocratic calling as warriors of God’s covenant. The new Israel is the church of Jesus Christ, and he has forbidden the sword to the church.

Under the lordship of Christ the Kingdom of God does take form in the church, but through mightier weapons

than the sword: weapons, as Paul affirms, that can reduce every towering imagination of the rebellious human heart. No other weapons can advance Christ's Kingdom. The political renovation of the world awaits his return, for he is the sole monarch of the universe." (*Commentary on 1 Peter*)

Theocracy and influence (cont.)

Ervin Duggan:

“Only years after leaving this place did I realize that the religious tradition honored by those starchy old Calvinists [Davidson’s founders] was what brought into being many of the things I treasured most. The teaching that all persons were created in the image of God, for example: that religious idea

gives the only transcendent depth and meaning to our notions of human rights, of human beings as sacred. The ancient doctrine of original Sin, for example: it led James Madison and John Adams to insist upon limitations of power, upon a system of checks and balances. The Judeo-Christian idea of covenantal laws and relationships, for example: this led, in time, to modern

democratic constitutions and the Bill of Rights. Indeed, our modern ideas of tolerance and pluralism owe much to great assertions of human universality like that of St. Paul: “I am persuaded that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek.” (*Pluralism that Makes a Difference, First Things*, April 1995, p. 58)

3) Moral principles and political strategies

Issue	Moral principles	Political strategies
	High commands of God:	Fallible human efforts to move society towards greater conformity to moral principles.
	Church must...	Church must...
At stake	Fidelity to Scripture where Scripture is clear	Wisdom and freedom of conscience where Scripture is not clear

Two reflections on principles and strategies.

1) When we confuse principles with strategies...

- Negotiables become non-negotiable.
- Opposition becomes the enemy of God.
- Recipe for...
- Total depravity and common grace.

Two reflections (cont.)

2) Not a cure all.

- Which moral principles apply?
- Conflicting moral principles
- Which moral principles should be more decisive (see FAQs)
- Interpretation
- Little interest in engaging the Scriptures

An illustration: Abortion

Moral Principles

The pregnant woman is indisputably a person:

So God created man in his own image... male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27).

The unborn child from its earliest moments is God's loving workmanship:

Psalms 139: unbroken continuity from earliest gestation to end of life.

Abortion: Moral Principles (cont.)

Does **not** prove personhood.

Does lay burden of proof on those who would arbitrarily end an embryo's life.

The *weakest* “pro-life” argument...

There *might* be legitimate grounds for intervening violently to end the process, but we had better be very sure of them.

Abortion: Moral Principles (cont.)

Biblical case law seems to prioritize concern for the woman over concern for the unborn when both are at risk.

Exodus 21:22-25:

Possibly relevant in cases where continuing a pregnancy threatens to harm the mother.
Hesitancy re “abortion absolutism”.

Abortion: Moral Principles (cont.)

The additional complication
Who decides?

Abortion: Political Strategies

- Vote for “prolife” candidates
- Pass state laws severely restricting abortions.
- Vote for candidates whose approach will decrease the need for abortion.

Abortion: Strategies (cont.)

- Act so as to be alert to backlash that enshrines extreme pro-abortion policies.
- Engage all parties in solutions that both reduce abortions and preserve the dignity, safety, and agency of the women involved.

Q and A

Closing thought

We follow Jesus not simply by promoting what he says but by embracing his way of doing things— his *modus operandi*... He let go of his glory, rights, privileges, and freedoms as the eternal Son in order to join us fully in our human condition and to serve us there. But he did so without taking on our values [or methods]...

“Jesus’ manner of engaging the world gives us a mandate for involvement. But it also reins in the foolish triumphalism that makes us impatient with our neighbors and with one another. To choose Jesus’ M.O. is to choose faithfulness and service over outcomes, leaving the latter in God’s hands. We can expect to be resisted,

we can even expect to suffer— for to love the world as Jesus did means, at heart, taking up a cross— not winning an argument or an election. Nevertheless, our efforts have value and lasting effect: insofar as we are obedient, wise, and loving in our public lives, God notes our efforts, rejoices over them, and values them

as tokens of what is to be when his Son returns to make all things right. What is more, in some mysterious way, he causes them to last, promising that our *labor in the Lord is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).*” (*Surprised by Community*, Charles Drew, pp. 127-129)

Home Work—Part 1

Have a cup of coffee with a Christian whose politics you don't like.

- Say that you really want to listen and understand.
- Ask questions: what they believe and why.
- Listen: no need to win.

- Determine that love and trust will drive your tone.
- Seek common ground in shared moral principles.
- Pray together.
- Agree to disagree.
- Have the Lord's Supper together soon.

Homework—Part 2

(see handout)

- Plan with 2-3 friends a large group (church-wide?) discussion on the issue of immigration.
- Give attention to both design and content, bearing in mind relevant Scripture and data (see handout).
- Pray together for wisdom on whether and how to conduct such a discussion.

Resources

FAQs on politics and faith.

Movements, courses, and books

“Charlie Drew’s Class Resources”

<http://gracepasadena.org/livestreammedia>

Movements, courses, and books

(Some Highlights)

Movements and courses

- *Braver Angels*: <https://braverangels.org/>
- *Christian Civics-Foundations Course*. A ten-week free video course.
<https://www.christiancivics.org/foundations>

Highlighted Resources (cont.)

Books

- Charles Drew, *Surprised by Community: Republicans and Democrats in the Same Pew.*
- David French, *Divided We Fall.*
- Paul D. Miller, *The Religion of American Greatness: What's Wrong with Christian Nationalism.*

Highlighted Resources (cont.)

- Kaitlyn Schiess, *The Ballot and the Bible: How Scripture Has Been Used and Abused in American Politics and Where We Go from Here* (2023).
- John Stott, *Issues Facing Christians Today--4th edition* (Zondervan 2006).
- N. T. Wright and Michael Bird, *Jesus and the Powers*.

Q and A

Closing Prayer

Speak, O Lord

Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

Closing Prayer: Speak, Oh Lord

www.youtube.com/watch?v=my90e3a_nlM

Speak O Lord as we come to You
To receive the food of Your holy word
Take Your truth plant it deep in us
Shape and fashion us in Your likeness
That the light of Christ might be seen today
In our acts of love and our deeds of faith
Speak O Lord and fulfill in us
All Your purposes for Your glory

Teach us Lord full obedience
Holy reverence true humility
Test our thoughts and our attitudes
In the radiance of Your purity
Cause our faith to rise Cause our eyes to see
Your majestic love and authority
Words of power that can never fail
Let their truth prevail over unbelief

Speak O Lord and renew our minds
Help us grasp the heights of Your plans for us
Truths unchanged from the dawn of time
That will echo down through eternity
And by grace we'll stand on Your promises
And by faith we'll walk as You walk with us
Speak O Lord till Your church is built
And the earth is filled with Your glory.

