

## THE VISION FOR LIFE PODCAST

Episode 165 | Politics, Part 1: The Purpose Of Politics

Featuring: Autumn Gardner and Hunter Beaumont



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**Autumn:** Welcome to the Vision for Life podcast, an ongoing conversation between the pastors of Fellowship Denver and the church at large. Each week we talk about life, faith, the Bible, and how to follow Jesus as we go about our daily lives. I'm Autumn, the host of the podcast, and Hunter is with me today. Hunter, thanks for joining me.

**Hunter:** Autumn, thanks for having me back. And happy spring. It is here. Spring is here. Spring is here.

**Autumn:** That doesn't mean we won't have any more snow.

**Hunter:** No, we might have plenty of snow, but we'll also have grass, and we'll have flowers blooming and we'll have longer days. And baseball is starting in a few weeks, which I know you're excited about. So, there're a lot of good things to celebrate. The resurrection of Jesus happens every spring.

**Autumn:** That's right. In the spring we celebrate the resurrection.

**Hunter:** It happened once, but we celebrate it every spring.

**Autumn:** Yes. Well, I'm glad that you're excited, apparently, about spring. Glad that you're on the podcast with me. And today we are going to talk about politics. So, just segue right from spring to politics. And there you have it. Would you set us up for this series of conversations, though?

**Hunter:** Well, I think the first set up our listeners should know is that you are reluctant to have this conversation about politics.

**Autumn:** And I mean, here's why. Because it's an election year. Because anything having to do with American politics at the moment is really contentious. And we are hearing about it all the time. So, you can't watch any news, read any news, listen to any sort of mainstream podcast without hearing about the elections and the American political scene. And then in Denver, where we live, where we're speaking from, our politics have been interesting lately as well in the city. Our new mayor has taken a lot of particular actions. And so, I feel like I am, you know, just weary because of all of those things.

**Hunter:** And your weariness with politics is exactly why I wanted to discuss it. And the fact that we're in an election year is also why I wanted to discuss it. I feel as a pastor, it's very important for me to teach people how to think politically and how a theology of politics.

And we'll talk more about that in a minute, because that's maybe something different than what people imagine. But it's important for me to teach people how to think politically. And I find that when I have their most attention it is in an election year. So, ideally, we would have had this conversation two years ago when maybe the political environment, well, the political environment is always tense, but when it's not an election year, maybe we would have this conversation. But no one's interested in it then. So, now that I've got your attention, and now that you're weary of politics, what a great time to talk about this from a Christian worldview.

**Autumn:** Great, let's do it. I obviously did agree. Here we are. We're going to talk about politics. What specifically you mentioned a moment ago, theology of politics. What specifically are we talking about today?

**Hunter:** The punchy way I would say it is your politics are too small. And I'm saying that to you directly, your politics are too small. I know you and I hear how you talk about politics, and I can just diagnose that your politics are too small and

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likely many of our politics are too small. That's the punchy way to say it. The more precise way to say it is when we think about politics in America, we tend to think about Republicans and Democrats. We tend to think about elections. We tend to think about our politicians and what they are doing and all the debates that happen at all levels of our society at the local level, at the state level, at the national level, about public policy. That's the stuff we tend to think about when we think about politics. And the point that I want us to wrestle with today is that politics is actually a much bigger category, biblically and theologically, than what we Americans commonly call politics. And I think when we say we get weary of politics, I know exactly what we mean. We mean the debates and the divisions and the controversies that happen in our lives and in the cities and the country in which we live. It can be tiring to keep up with all of that. And yet I think politics is such a huge reality that we can't escape it. And God made it actually. So, it's a reality that God created. We can't escape it. It is like the laws of physics in some sense. We can't escape the laws of physics.

We can only decide if we're going to try to understand them and cultivate them or we're going to live against them. And so, it sits in that space that we often talk about in our church life. It sits in that space of its reality, its reality God made. And so, when we become weary of it, the counterintuitive step is to actually ask, how do we think about this biblically and theologically and not just wrestle with all the debates in our day?

**Autumn:** In what way did God make politics, as you said a moment ago? What does that mean? Where does this sort of bigger picture of the reality in which politics exists? Where does that begin?

**Hunter:** That's the perfect question. And I think there's two maybe themes that we should think about in order to develop what I would call a theology of politics, or you might say the purpose of politics for which God made and why it doesn't fulfill that purpose all the time and how we as Christians could advocate and work, live in a way that helps it to fulfill the purpose God made. And it and so the first paradigm we have to use is creation, fall, redemption. The story of history, creation, fall and redemption. And that gets us to where does it come from and where was it made?

The question you just asked, it was created by God when He made two people. Politics properly defined is how do human beings work together in order to get something done? How do human beings work together and live together in peace, and the biblical definition of peace is more than just not hostility. But it is the idea that Hebrew word is *shalom*, which means pictures, creation, God made like a fabric that's woven together of many different parts and all those parts work together for one holistic good purpose that that none of the parts could accomplish on their own, but which together they image and they glory and they display the beauty of God.

So, politics is just how do two or more people work together. And so, God created politics when He said, 'It's not good for the man to be alone. I'll make a helper suitable for him.' And he made the woman out of the man. The man said, this at last is bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. There's politics. And now we have two people, and they have to work together. And so, it's fundamental to the creation God made.

**Autumn:** OK, so I'm anticipating then where this where this is headed, Hunter. You said that where there are two people, two or more people who have to work together to accomplish something bigger than either of them individually, there is politics. Politics is a part of that context now that that exists. And you mentioned that the paradigm that we want to look at this through is creation, fall redemption. So, you explained where this began creation. So, are we headed to asking then how has the fall complicated or impacted the reality of people working together to accomplish something to fulfill God's good purpose?

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**Hunter:** Yes, that's where we're headed. And the question almost answers itself. How has the Fall complicated people's ability to work together? The if you go to the original creation, it was the man and the woman first in relationship to God and then in relationship to each other. So, there're two lines of relationship there. There's the vertical and there's the horizontal, the vertical looking up to God. And we see in Genesis chapter two, God walks with them in the garden and God wants to be their source of authority and their source of wisdom. He wants them to follow his word. And then they have their relationship with each other. When they fall, they hide themselves from each other and they hide themselves from God. And that is the beginning of the dissolution of politics. And you see that working itself out in Genesis. The conflict between Cain and Abel, right? Cain murders his brother Abel. And we see society beginning to unravel in the very first chapters of Genesis after the fall. We get the Tower of Babel in Genesis chapter 11, where they try to restore their political life, so to speak, by building a tower to the heavens and to make a name for themselves. And this is an idolatrous expression of politics and God comes down and he confuses their languages. And so, all of this is the curse that God puts on creation. And the fallout of the fall means that our politics are complicated and difficult and not peaceful. And that's where it comes from.

**Autumn:** There are a couple of dimensions to what you just mentioned. In the example of Cain and Abel, there's a lack of willingness to work together, a lack of cooperation that politics requires. In the example of the Tower of Babel, the people were cooperating and organizing.

But you said for an idolatrous purpose, so not to accomplish something that would bring about the flourishing of all people, but to accomplish something that was to selfish ends. So, it's interesting that both of those kind of come into play in the way that politics can be difficult because relationships between people are difficult. There's a lack of cooperation and organization, or it can become corrupted because the people can collude together to an end that actually doesn't bring about God's will.

**Hunter:** That's really well said. And we see that politics doesn't get totally redeemed until first people are restored to God. And then, in being restored to God, they learn to live righteously with each other. You see this foretold in the law of Moses. God redeems these people, Israel, out from under Egypt. It was a political move in that He literally overthrew their- or He released them from the slave master Pharaoh they were living under. He took them to be his people. And first they are His people. They are related to Him. And then He's teaching them to learn to live together as a new society. And He gives them the Ten Commandments and the Ten Commandments are about how do you relate to God and how do you relate to your neighbor. So, the Ten Commandments are political. And when Jesus says, the whole law is summarized with, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength. Love your neighbor as yourself. That's the whole law and prophets.' We should hear that as God wants to create a people with redeemed politics, which starts with Him and then goes to others. And that really gets to our third theme, redemption.

**Autumn:** Within this paradigm, creation, fall, redemption, you're saying this third aspect of that began with the unique people that God called to himself. And He established, He even gave them ways in which they could, should conduct themselves, organize their society. And that speaks to those two ways in which He was teaching them to relate rightly. So, to Him, to God, establishing, re-establishing that right relationship to God, and then creating a way, giving them laws and leaders who would teach them and show them how to rightly relate to each other as well. Where does that redemptive story go from there?

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**Hunter:** God's plan of redemption, if we go to the very end, is to create a new kingdom on earth. And this new kingdom is God's glory and God's presence being the very center of the earth. People have been reconciled to Him and are worshipers of Him. And they live in a creation that is marked by what the Hebrew Scriptures call *Shalom* or peace. And it is the interwovenness of every part of the creation working well together in a way that glorifies God. That's the kingdom of God. So, the kingdom of God is not just people being restored to relationship with God.

That's the first step. But it's the whole creation being put back to work and all the nations being put back to work together. And so, it's a redeemed politics. It gives us a picture of what a redeemed politics looks like. In the meantime, until the kingdom comes, God's main expression of redeemed politics today, until the kingdom comes in full, is in the Church of Jesus Christ and in the body of Christ. We could take that in a global sense, in the global body of Christ. Or we could take it in a local sense, a local church should be a redeemed politics. It is a political project. A local church is a political project. It is people who are learning to live and to work together for God's purposes of advancing His gospel in their part of the world and around the world and of worshiping Him and of being the body of Christ. It is people learning to live and work together to do that. And in order to work together well, they have to all be worshiping God. And so, one of the most political things we do is church. And church is politics. And church should be a better politics.

I realize that it's not always, but it should be if it's being governed by Scripture and being governed by renewed hearts. It should be a redeemed politics that shows off a different way of living together. And we should experience a different kind of political life in the church than we even do in our world. So, the redemption theme comes out ultimately in the kingdom of God and presently in an imperfect form in the church.

**Autumn:** In what way does this perspective of a redeemed politics take shape internally within the church and then externally in the way that the church relates to the world?

**Hunter:** Let's think about what governs the local church. What should govern any local church is the Word of God. And this is why worship has always been at the center of local church life. They gather to worship, and this has happened since the church started in Acts chapter two.

The church gathers in order to hear the Word of God, worship God, and to celebrate what joins them both to God and to each other, the centerpiece, which is the death and resurrection of Jesus depicted for us at the Lord's table at the Lord's Supper. That's why worship and the Word of God has always been the governing factor in the life of the church. This is why it's politically important that a church gather together and listen to God's Word explained and taught. It is in saying we have one common authority who is the Lord Jesus Christ, and we are governed by one thing, which is His Word. To say that and to work toward that is essential to the health of the church, because the biblical paradigm is you can't love each other if you're not in proper relationship to God, and if you're not all tuned into the one authority over us all who is the Lord Jesus, and if you're not listening to the one Word that governs us all, which is God's Word.

So, God's people should be like people who are all tuned into the same radio station, and they're all listening to the same thing, and they're not listening to private things on their AirPods, but they're listening to the one radio station that's blasting the same tune, and we're all listening to the same thing, because we're all listening to the same thing, we're all processing the same thing, it's our authority that flows down into our life together.

**Autumn:** And then what way does that shape or form the Church? So, those practices internally as the gathered family of God, which is a theme that's consistent from its inception, so when God called together Israel, he gave them laws and to

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set up a system of governance that made them distinct. They were within the nations around them, but distinct from them, and this theme continues into the way in which the Church gathers and worships and submits itself to the authority of God, and rightly relates to God, and then to each other. How does that impact our understanding then of the church in its interactions with greater society?

**Hunter:** Well, first let's talk about how it interacts with each other. Think about how much in the Word of God teaches us how to relate to each other. So, if we're tuned in to that radio tower, which is broadcasting that one signal, and if we're listening to the Word of God every week, week in, week out, and our life together as a church, and if we're doing kind of like what we do here where we're going through books of the Bible, we are going to inevitably, God's going to broadcast a lot from that radio tower about how we love each other, and what love requires of us, and what the fact that we're reconciled to Him requires of us in love with each other, just like his law is about worshiping, right worship of Him and right relationship to neighbor.

And so, He's going to broadcast a lot of that. And then we're going to learn that from his broadcast, and we're going to go live that out, and we're going to create ways in our church, we're going to create some structures where people can get together in relationship, and they can practice and learn to live this out, and we're going to expect there's going to be some problems. And when some problems arise, we're going to come back to God's Word, and we're going to ask, what does God's Word tell us to do with this problem right here? And then we're going to navigate the problems that we encounter together according to the Word of God and by building a communal life in the church that is directed by and shaped by the Word of God. Then we begin to exhibit a different politics.

Then what about relating to the World, or how much of what's broadcast from that radio tower also tells us how we relate to our neighbors outside the Church? Lots.

So, there's lots broadcast from that tower that doesn't just tell us, "Here's how you worship God," and doesn't just tell us, "Here's how you love each other inside the body of Christ," but also tells us, "Here's how you relate to your neighbor and the society around you." And so, we're going to learn that too, and we're going to learn to love our world in the way that God tells us to, according to what His Word says, but it's all shaped by His Word, which is why I'm putting the Bible and putting worship at the center of the church's life, not meaning that the church just becomes a Bible study. We don't just sit around and study the Bible and listen to sermons all the time, but by making that a central habit of the church's life, it then shapes all of our other living out, and gives us a way to navigate all the questions and problems that we inevitably run into as we try to do that.

**Autumn:** Well, let's go that direction, then, that it helps us navigate the questions and problems we inevitably run into, because I started by saying, I'm weary of hearing about all of these issues and problems, and so how do we get from this vision for politics of people rightly relating to God and to each other, and bringing about a way in which the whole of creation—all of God's good life that He created and gave to us, to steward—how do we get from this vision of politics to asking, now, how do we interact in the type of politics that I was talking about? So, what's the government's role, and then how do we begin to engage that?

**Hunter:** What this macro understanding of politics helps us see is that everything we do is political, because we live in a world where we inevitably touch and are shaped by and interact with other people. Even the things we do "privately"—we use that term "privately," which means other people don't see it—even the things we do privately are really political in that you can't be disengaged from other people.

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Let's just say, for example, that I get sick, and I spend a whole week in my house by myself and I don't interact with another human being because I'm sick, and I don't see another person because I'm sick. I still am connected to the society around me, and I'll see that as soon as I want to get a can of soup from the grocery store because someone had to make that soup and someone had to stock it, and someone has to be running this project called Whole Foods, which I go and buy the soup. Even when I'm by myself doing something by myself, it still has effects on other people. The kind of person I become inevitably affects other people as well. We'll sometimes say things like, well, that's just a private thing. It doesn't affect anyone else. It doesn't hurt anyone else. We'll even ask that when we're asking public moral questions. Why does it matter if you do that and it doesn't hurt anybody. But how it shapes you inevitably does shape other people. Let's say for example I have a habit of privately, without anyone knowing, watching pornography, and pretend that maybe this is a—now, that pornography has already involved other people in producing it and generating it, so I'm in some way by participating in that I'm enabling that system to continue—but let's say I go, well it's just a thing I do in private, and it doesn't affect anybody else. I live alone; what does it matter? Well, it shapes who I become. It shapes my heart. It shapes my ways of looking at people. It shapes my worship of God with my body, and all of those things will inevitably impact other people. So, I can't watch pornography in private and then show up at work the next day and be a person who is worshiping God and loving other people. Even if you don't know I'm watching pornography, you will experience the effects of my sin because I will be ruled and governed by my flesh, and you will experience that.

So, there's really nothing I do as private in, it may be private in the sense that only God knows, but it's not private in the sense that it only affects me. So, everything we do is political, everything. And that's, that's kind of the first thing we need to have in mind. And there's some biblical categories that I think help us think about this in all the details of our lives. And there's some terms that show up over and over in the Bible, both in the Old and New Testament. Some of those terms are peace in Hebrew. That's the word *shalom*. And then that shows up as a Greek word in the New Testament. There's the word justice. There's the word righteousness. These words originate in the Old Testament, and they really describe for us how everything we do is political, has political implications. And I think they very practically help us think through the, the political dimensions of how we live and everything we do.

**Autumn:** As I was listening to you explain that Hunter, nothing that you actually do is ultimately private. There's a sense in which even in your illustration of being sick, meeting some soup, we are interconnected. And earlier in our episode, you talked about this idea of *shalom* as a, as a cloth or a tapestry that's woven together. And I really appreciate that image because it speaks to our interconnectedness. We sometimes do as modern people who have a lot of modern conveniences and rely on technology to be on the medium through which we connect to other people. So, even in your illustration of getting some soup, you might log into Amazon and go on to, what is it, Prime Fresh and, and order Amazon Fresh and order something from Whole Foods. So, technology is the medium by which you're accessing that. And it gives us the illusion of independence and the illusion that we can exist in a way that is disconnected from others. But the reality of God's created order is that we don't actually, and we can't actually. And so, that image of *shalom* I think speaks to this, to the intentional way that we are interconnected. It's by design. Is there anything else about that word that we should consider that helps us understand this conversation?

**Hunter:** Yeah, the word peace or *shalom*, saying we're interconnected, I think one of the things it encourages us to do is to simply think or imagine the ways that everything we do is interconnected, perhaps in ways we don't initially see or realize. So, I just, I just gave an example of like, if I'm doing something in private, and I'm saying, well, this is just a private thing. It actually does affect other people because it shapes me. And then as soon as I go out and interact with other people, I am a different kind of person as a result. And so, therefore it is political. And I would encourage all of us to think

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about everything we do in that sense, the kind of person I'm becoming because of what I do when no one else sees inevitably has- it either brings *shalom* or it brings destruction. It's going to do one of those two things. What I choose to do tonight when I go home at the end of my workday and how I choose to spend that time is going to bring *shalom* into the world that I interact with, or it's going to bring destruction because it's going to shape who I am and the kind of presence I bring. And so, that is everything we do. We, we should just put through the lens of, of how does this shape who I am and the kind of presence or the things that I bring into the world.

**Autumn:** You mentioned a couple of other terms, justice, and righteousness. And the word justice in particular is, is a little beleaguered. I think in our context, we typically hear about it as directly applied to certain social causes. But what is the biblical understanding of this word that helps us process the purpose of politics?

**Hunter:** In the Old Testament, there're a couple of senses in which justice is used. One of them just means fairness or equity. And it means that everybody gets their due rights as an image bearer of God. That's the first emphasis of, of justice or equity. So, for example, God will tell Israel, you're to have the same standard for the native, the native Israelite as you do for the sojourner, the foreigner who is living in your midst. Israel had lots of people in their society who were not Jewish. They had come from other lands and other peoples, and they were now settled in the area that was governed by Israel. And God wanted them to have the same standard of justice or of righteousness. He wanted them to have the same standards in their laws and in their life for those people as they did for the native Jewish people who have been born into that society.

So, it just means give everyone their due rights, equity. And it doesn't take too much imagination to see God's reasoning for that is, those are people I created in my image. They, they are equal. This is really well expressed in the American Declaration of Independence. All people are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights. That says that our rights, what is due to us, is not just a result of what we have decided among ourselves. We're going to make or create as rights. It's not just a contract that we've kind of arbitrarily decided. Rather, these rights are given to us by our Creator. And what we have done is we've looked to our Creator, and we've asked, what does our Creator's creation give us? And what does it mean that we're all image bearers of God? That's woven into the, to the U.S. Constitution. I think that is a very- that's a kind of understanding of justice that sits very much within a biblical framework, biblical worldview.

Okay. So, that's one emphasis of justice. Give everyone what's their due. A second emphasis of justice will often show up in the Old Testament when God tells Israel to do justice. And to do justice is often with the emphasis of go to the most vulnerable members of society where it's very likely they're not receiving everything that's due them because of their vulnerability, perhaps their poverty, perhaps their status as outsiders, and move to where the fabric of *shalom* is broken and help to heal that fabric. So, justice kind of has this- doing justice has this fixing or redeeming or mending what is broken emphasis to it. You mentioned earlier that's often how it's used in our vernacular. To do justice is to advocate for the poor, or it is to advocate for the public policy that lifts up the poor. And that idea comes from this biblical definition of doing justice, which is to go to where the fabric of *shalom* is broken.

**Autumn:** Okay. So, *shalom* is one of these words that means peace, justice. And what's a biblical understanding of righteousness?

**Hunter:** Righteousness is living a life of right relationships. And it's first a relationship to God, and then it's a relationship to others. It's loving God and loving neighbor as yourself. That is biblical righteousness. In the New Testament, the term "righteousness" in Greek is the same Greek root Greek term that gets translated as God justifies sinners or the doctrine

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of justification by faith. It literally in Greek sounds more like the righteous justification by faith. And what the gospel is teaching is that God puts people in right relationship with Him by forgiving their sin and removing their judgment. And He does that as a gift of grace through Christ to be accessed by faith. And so, when you put your faith in Christ, you are justified, you are righteous-ified, which means you are put back in right relationship with God. And God does that while you are a sinner. So, He does that not by you having to restore that relationship with God, but by Him taking the initiative to restore the relationship with you. So, that's what it means in the New Testament.

And then that what we would call the ethical teaching of the New Testament is God teaching the people whom He has justified how to do two things: how to worship Him and how to live righteously as it pertains to others, both in the body of Christ and in the world. This is why you cannot divorce the doctrine of justification by faith from living righteously with other people and loving your loving the body of Christ and loving your neighbor. So, sometimes people will process the gospel like, oh, yeah, I believed in Jesus. I've gotten my sin forgiven. I'm going to heaven when I die. And then there's really no interest in really further worship of God or no interest in learning to love others as themselves. And so, what they've done is they've taken righteousness and they've said righteousness is an excuse to live unrighteously. And that's just way outside the biblical framework. And so, there's this understanding in the New Testament that if God gives us this gift of righteousness and right relationship with him, we are then going to receive that by faith and grace. And that's going to transform us and cause us to want to live righteously, to learn to live righteously with our neighbors.

**Autumn:** This idea is captured so well in the passage that you mentioned earlier in which there's an exchange between Jesus, and it calls him a rich young ruler, a young professional, and the discussion is of the greatest commandment, and it's summarized there. Jesus quotes that it's to love God and then says that it's to love others as yourself. And that is the depiction of righteousness that when we are justified or made righteous, that we delight to do that. We realize that we've received forgiveness. We are made right with God. And then we are able to extend that sort of love and grace to others to repair, to mend, to bring about justice because we've been made righteous.

I have one question, Hunter, about the idea of justice, to return to something that I mentioned a moment ago. I say that that term is beleaguered because the way it is applied has some- I hear the resonance in what you were explaining, but in the way that we experience it, I think it seems shallow. And as I'm listening to you explain these concepts, these terms within the Bible, it seems that sometimes to me, it seems shallow because the idea of justice has been divorced from that individual aspect of righteousness that you also described. And you said that nothing we do is private. What you choose to do if you give into your flesh in certain ways individually, then you're not living righteously. And then your attempt to bring about justice, I think, can, will ultimately fall short.

**Hunter:** You're really picking up on something important. And there's really two ways the biblical vision gets shallowed out to use your term. One is to say, God justifies, He makes people righteous. And then to kind of let the gospel in there and to not think out the dimensions of how it teaches us to live righteously with each other. So, this shallowing out looks like people who are only interested in receiving the gospel in order to get in right relationship with God, and then they don't particularly have any interest in being part of the body of Christ, for example, where we learn to live righteously with each other. They don't have any interest in the journey of discipleship, which would teach that kind of righteousness.

So, that's one way it gets shout out. A second way it gets shout out is what you're putting your finger on here. That first shallowing out tends to be, we—I hate to overuse this dichotomy—but it tends to be a more conservative in our culture



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disposition. It's a conservative mistake to emphasize only the gospel as a personal relationship with God. The second shallowing out tends to sit more on the left end of our cultural spectrum. And that is to emphasize the social dimensions of righteousness, primarily by advocating for what's often called social justice or social righteousness. But that social justice is then divorced from the kind of righteousness that would be right relationship with God. And it's also divorced from the kind of righteousness that would require me to live according to God's word in all dimensions of my life. And eventually, if a vision of justice or righteousness is not holistic, if it doesn't have all these ingredients in it, it won't hold together. It will lack integrity. It won't hold together, and it won't lead to justice and flourishing. So, if we just take one example of how that's happening on the left, the tendency you just mentioned, I noticed that a lot of people who advocate for social justice in our culture have also bought into the sexual and gender ideology, which biblically, the secular sexual and gender ideology, which biblically is unrighteous, meaning it has an understanding of the human person that allows the human person to just decide how they want to live irrespective of God's Word or to decide who they are irrespective of God's Word or God's creation, and so it says, for example, we should endorse same-sex marriage and we want to advocate for justice for the poor. Well, same sex marriage is unrighteous. It's unjust. It doesn't honor the way God has made creation to work. So, it is inherently destabilizing politically. And so, you can't on the one hand advocate for something that is destabilizing to the political environment of the world, and then on the other hand say you want to turn around and do justice for the poor. Those things lack integrity. They don't hold together. So, it lacks integrity. And what we need is Christians who advocate for justice and righteousness in all its dimensions and forms. And that's what we need in our world.

**Autumn:** So, I'm going to recap a couple of big ideas. You can, you can tell me if I've missed anything or gone astray. You're saying everything is political wherever two people exist who have to work stuff out. There exists politics in the middle of them. So, everything is political. And then you said we're, we're examining this from a macro perspective. But what you and I were just processing is that justice and righteousness start small. They start with each of us, rightly relating to God, and then rightly really relating to each other. And within the Church, then within the context of the Church, we can see how that's even a bigger context, a bigger dimension. So, if we're saying it starts with us, and wherever two people exist, we can see how politics exists in a marriage or in a family. It exists within a church and then within a society. So, it starts small. And we can see how these kinds of circles, these concentric circles go like grow from there. But unless a person is beginning in that space in which they're experiencing right relationship with God, then ultimately their ability to bring about the sort of justice that is reflective of the Kingdom is going to fall short. It's not that it doesn't make any impact at all, but it can't accomplish the sort of redeemed politic that we were talking about earlier.

**Hunter:** So, I like the image of integrity, because integrity doesn't just mean doing the right thing, it means all parts hold together. Integrity is actually related to this concept of *shalom*. And so, we can use it if we use the personal example, if I have some "private" sin that I'm indulging, that does infect my integrity. Meaning, there's a part of me that's not integrated to the rest of me. And eventually, if I don't bring those- if I don't get integrity, I will personally unravel and it'll become a public problem, right?

The same thing can happen at a macro scale. If a church or if a group has a vision of justice, and they're doing something really good, they want to advocate for the poor, they want to serve the poor in some way, and they want to heal the fabric of *shalom*. So, they want to do that, and that's good. And yet they're also advocating for something or they're tolerating ideas or they're propagating ideas that are opposed to God's Word and then they are unrighteous, eventually that lack of integrity, they don't have integrity. I mean, in the sense that they haven't integrated the fullness of the biblical worldview into their understanding of justice. And eventually that lack of integrity will unravel even the good that

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Episode 165 | Politics, Part 1: The Purpose Of Politics

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they're doing. And so, this is really important for us to think about when we think politically, because what we want to do is bring as integrated political righteousness vision into our lives and into the world as we can.

**Autumn:** So, how does all of this help us then think about the type of political action that typically comes to mind when we use the word politics? So, elections and our local government, our school board are, you know, the ways in which we experience this kind of prototypical understanding of politics day to day.

**Hunter:** Well, I think that's our next episode. So, you're teasing it just by asking the question. But maybe we could just give the listeners a little taste. God ordained a specific role of government in a broken world. And so, in a world where there is political dissolution after the Fall, before the Kingdom of God comes in full, God has ordained a purpose for the government in the maintenance of justice, in the upholding of justice, in the maintaining of peace, not perfect peace, but some form of *shalom* where all the parts live and work together. And good government accomplishes that purpose.

And the Church has a long tradition, like a 2000-year tradition, of thinking through, what is the role of the government, and what is the role of the Church in order to pursue justice and pursue *shalom* in a world in between or not with, it's not yet the Kingdom of God in full. And so, there's a specific role for government, and a lot of our little politics debates that we talk about when we have elections and when we're reading on the news really revolve around, what should the government be doing? who should be empowering the government? who should we endorse or elect to put into positions of governmental authority? And then, what should the government's policies be? And those are very important questions because government has a role to play in this macro political environment. But I do think that seeing the big purpose of politics and that everything is politics and what these big words justice and righteousness and peace mean and all of that and, and to see that the Church is a redeemed politics and has a role to play in the society, all of that helps us think about the kinds of political questions that we tend to be wrestling with and debating day-in, day-out, which is really about government.

**Autumn:** To that point, for those of you listening, if you have questions that you want to hear us take on, as we think about politics together, if we get some of those questions regarding this discussion today or what you're processing as we're in a particular sort of political season in the United States, you can send those questions to us. And if we get some, we will do a question and response episode at the conclusion of our politics series, which is our hope.

So, we hope to construct a few conversations around these themes to help us think through politics at a macro level, understand the theological perspective on politics and the purpose of politics and political action, the role of government, and then to wrestle with some of these specific questions that we're encountering now. So, if you have some of those questions, send them our way. You can send those questions and any suggestions to [podcast@fellowshipdenver.org](mailto:podcast@fellowshipdenver.org). Thanks for joining us on the Vision for Life podcast. Special thanks to Adam Anglin for our theme music, to Jesse Cowan, our producer, and to Judd Connell, who provides transcription for these episodes.