

1. Navigating the Culture of Political Divide (If you are paying even half attention to the political climate in America now--you realize how polarized it is. Deep division exists that creates all kinds of drama, chaos, tension, and sometimes even violence. All kinds of research backs up the divide--even chronicling how it has become personal to many--adversely affecting relationships, families, jobs, and our collective overall state of mind. I know if I watch national news for more than a few minutes my head starts to hurt! It is not good--and if we are not careful it can even affect our spiritual health--and our churches. So learning to navigate all of this in a healthy way--in a godly way, I think is more urgent than ever. So let's consider it together)
2. (First let's think about this) Is God Political? (I answer that with both a yes and a no. Yes, in that historically God worked through nation Israel and in and among other nations to bring about his will. Ideally Israel--technically a theocracy--was supposed to be a nation reflecting their God--as Isaiah called them, "a light to the nations." --49:6. Their law was to guide them to be just and righteous--producing a people and a nation that would lead all other nations to their God ultimately delivering the Messiah who would redeem all people from every nation and tribe. So in this sense, yes, God worked through human governments and politics to advance his kingdom, but we all know how that turned out. But no--God is not political in all of the ways we understand it now, three quick points from history)
 - a. No form of government will ever reflect God's will completely--Deuteronomy 16:18-20
 - b. God has and can use governments to further his will--Proverbs 8:15
 - c. One day all human governments will end and Christ will reign--Isaiah 9:6-7 (and it was and is Christ who changes everything)
3. John 18:36 (must include this context in this discussion--it forms the basis for navigating the political divide now IMO. As Christians our primary allegiance, our first citizenship is not here in any earthly kingdom--it is in another place--citizenship in heaven as **Philippians 3:20** states. This then should bring a major perspective change. Instead of grabbing our swords and fighting as the world--we put them away--we operate differently in this world based on kingdom values, not on earthly ones--so how does this look as we live out our lives in this our political climate?)
4. Three Texts
 - a. Romans 13:1-7
 - b. 1 Timothy 2:1-4
 - c. 1 Peter 2:13-17
5. How to Navigate
 - a. Do our best to live in peace
 - b. Do not slander Christ by our actions (pay taxes and debts)
 - c. Honor the king (obey the laws--do not participate in civil unrest)
 - d. Pray for our government leaders
 - e. Wisely participate in government (and do so for kingdom purposes like Paul did--Acts 22:9)
 - f. Always lives as strangers in this world (1 Peter 2:14--politics is corruptive--let's make sure we always understand that and know where our real citizenship is)
6. (It is the only way for us to be) Salt and Light (no mistake this is in the SOM context--the only way we can really change the world is through Christ and living out what he shares here --it is what the 1st church did and they changed an empire--**Ortberg quote**. So let's shift our passion and attention away from endless political debate and show our world--sick of such BTW--and alternative where peace, mercy and justice rule!)