



PART FIVE: ENGAGING IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

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1 Timothy 2:1-2; Ephesians 6:10-13; Luke 10:29-37

For the last month or so, we've been coming back to this response that Jesus gives when some of His critics try to trap Him with a question about paying taxes to the Roman government:

“Give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s and to God what is God’s.”

Mark 12:17b

For many people, there's like an aura of grumpiness around conversations about the government and taxes. Ranging anywhere from, 'what do these guys even do' and, 'we pay these guys too much' to frothy-mouthed rants about our least favourite party or politician.

Intro: How Do We Engage?

It's challenging to strike a balance between staying informed and engaged vs. being propagandized and sucked into a frenzy. We want to influence the world around us without giving it undue influence on us. Paul talks about the sort of fruit that comes out of our lives when we are living lives guided by the Holy Spirit:

“... love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”

Galatians 5:22b-23a

So what does our fruit look like?

Such a simple question, but it says a lot about whether or not God is actively shaping our lives. I think it's so important to ask: is the way I'm engaging in the political arena, as a participant or a spectator, making me more

kind? Am I showing more love? Do I have more peace?
Do I have more joy?

How do we do engage politically in a way that doesn't compromise the work God is doing in our lives through His Spirit?

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I. Engage Prayerfully

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We start with by engaging prayerfully.

Look at Paul's urgent call in 1 Timothy 2:

"I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness."

1 Timothy 2:1-2

a. Pray for leaders because their decisions affect everyone

We pray for our leaders because their decisions affect everyone. Notice 'all people,' then for kings and all those in authority. 'All people' definitely includes kings and all those in authority under its umbrella, but Paul is probably also recognizing the reality that praying for our leaders is ultimately praying for things that affect all people.

Every year, the federal government puts a budget together. Our most recent budget, which you can access on the internet is almost 500 pages (see Endnote 1). The Provincial government budget documents are also easy to access, and you quickly see how complex and important these budgets are (see Endnote 2).

Not all of us can jump in the thick of things and tinker with the budget; but all of us can pray for those in charge.

Pray, God, give our leaders in Ottawa, Victoria and City Hall wisdom. Help them to make good decisions that bring life to our communities, that benefit our neighbours, friends and families. Help them to pursue justice and to flee from pressures that would corrupt. Would your will be done in our seats of government, would your Kingdom, with its Shalom – the harmony you desire for creation – be established here on earth, as it is in Heaven.

b. Pray for Leaders Because They're People

We pray for our leaders' well-being because they're people – for their mental and emotional health, for clear minds. We pray not only because they lead us, but because God loves politicians.

Pray for them even when you disagree with them. When Paul writes 1 Timothy, Nero is the head of the government. The same Nero who eventually beheads Paul. Not exactly a politician you'd want kissing your babies.; but pray for them anyways.

c. Prayer for leaders because prayer does stuff

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God chooses to mysteriously interact with the world along with our prayers. As James says,

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

James 5:16b

Prayer also changes us. I’ve found, time and time again, that praying for people affects my overall disposition toward them. Christ is formed when the Spirit of God works on us in our prayer time. We grow in our love for others, even our enemies.

II. Engage Carefully

It’s dangerous in there, so we need to engage carefully.

If you’ve got your bibles out, turn to Ephesians 6, and we’ll start reading at verse 10:

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Ephesians 6:10-12

Sometimes, ‘struggle’ is interpreted as some sort of hubristic offensive struggle, where we attack strongholds in the seats of power. Let’s continue to read:

“Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.”

Ephesians 6:13

Stand your ground...to stand. Not charge. To stand. Do you see how this is defensive language? If we read the following verses, we have these armor analogies that Paul gives us – belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith and helmet of salvation. Then, finally, the only thing in this list that has any offensive capability is the sword of the Spirit. Which should then be accompanied by fruit of the Spirit.

This passage is not marked by triumphalism. It’s a recognition of our deep vulnerability.

Peter writes:

Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

1 Peter 5:8

Is an Algorithm a “Power”?

How much power does an algorithm have over our thought life? Meta, Google, TikTok and/or X. These companies are not concerned whether or not you're happy, better informed, healthier or wiser. They care that you watch. Often, that means that news feeds, for your pages, often have a bias toward the things that make you anxious or outraged. The most important battle for anyone wanting to engage in places of power is the one between your ears.

Be aware of the danger, clothe yourself in the way of Jesus.

III. Engage in Our Proximity

It doesn't make sense to compartmentalize our call to love our neighbour to merely legislating hot-button moral issues. The economy also matters. Peoples' access to jobs, schools, health care and housing...all of it matters deeply; but we also can't do it all. We can't carry every burden of every person or fix every social ill. Where do we start?

a. Who is My Neighbour?

But he [a legal scholar] wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?”

In reply Jesus said: “*A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he was attacked by robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’*”

“Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.”

Jesus told him, “*Go and do likewise.*”

Luke 10:29-37

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Look at how Jesus changes the question. Not, 'who is my neighbour,' but, 'who am I a neighbour to?' I think this shift in focus is so significant, because Jesus is pulling us out of some kind of pie-in-the-sky, theoretical category of personhood or citizenship.

Proximity matters. Not, 'hypothetically, who should I treat the best;' but, 'who is around me? Who can I impact with my decisions? What's in my hands?'

b. Be Where Your Feet Are

As Canadians, we are exposed to a lot of American political media. There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but there is a danger of obsessing over US politics to such a degree that we lose touch with the people and needs around us as Canadians. Most of us can't vote in the States, but many of us can vote in our municipal, provincial and federal elections.

If we can name US Senators, bills, Supreme Court decisions, cabinet members, ongoing drama, primary favourites...and we don't know the names of our city councilors^[3] - maybe we have a problem.

What would it look like to become an informed voter? If you pay attention to the news, pay attention to local news as well.

c. Don't Fall for a Policy Gospel

Politics as a topic is much bigger than just voting and legislating in central seats of power. Paul Cairney, Professor of Politics and Public Policy at the University of Stirling, writes:

"I define 'political' in a wider sense, to describe what happens when:

1. multiple people are involved,
2. they have different interests, beliefs, and policy preferences, and
3. there is some means to manage those differences when making decisions."^[4]

In Acts 6, we find this story where the early church was distributing resources to widows, and there was a dispute that came up - where the Greek speaking widows felt like they were getting the short end of the stick.

The early church didn't ask for permission, or funding, or legislation to start feeding widows. They saw a need in front of them and responded.

IV. Engage Where You're Called

The Holy Spirit is doing a lot of things in our world through a lot of people. You don't have to fix it all. You can't; but you're probably called to fix something.

Not all of us are called to run for public office. But some of us are. Not all of us are called to start a non-profit to deal with some specific social issue, but some of us are. Some of us are called to work in these spaces, some of us are called into activism, and some of us will have the greatest impact by just trucking along with what we're doing now.

What is God calling you to do? How can you be the neighbour who brings life and healing to whoever is in front of you?

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ENDNOTES

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- [1] Government of Canada. (Nov 2025). Canada Strong Budget 2025. Department of Finance Canada. ISSN 1719-7740. Cat No.: F1-23/3E-PDF.
<https://budget.canada.ca/2025/report-rapport/pdf/budget-2025.pdf>
- [2] Government of BC. BC Budget: Budget 2026: Securing BC's Future.
<https://www.bcbudget.gov.bc.ca/2026/>
- [3] City of Kamloops: Council Access Portal.
<https://kamloops.civicweb.net/portal/members.aspx?id=26>
- [4] Cairney, Paul. (26 March 2025). Paul Cairney: Politics & Public Policy. <https://paulcairney.wordpress.com/2025/03/26/what-is-politics-it-involves-much-more-than-governments-and-elections/>



Open Up

Who do you rub shoulders with most often?

What are the spaces (work, church, neighbourhood, school, online), where you tend to meet and interact with the most people?

Discuss:

1. **Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6.** What do you notice? What does it look like to pray for our leaders? What things prevent us from keeping our leaders in our prayers?
2. **Read Ephesians 6:10-20.** How do you think we 'put on' these different pieces of spiritual armor?
3. **Read Luke 10:29-37.** What stands out to you in this passage?
4. Where do you actually have the most power right now? How are you using that power to influence change?
5. Where might God be calling you to deeper engagement in your community?

Pray

Take some time to pray for our leaders. Pray that God would give them wisdom, and help them to lead justly and with integrity. Pray for each other, that God would transform us and make us salt and light in our world. Ask that God would make us into instruments of healing and life in the lives of our neighbours.