

A Guiding Star: Voting Your Conscience and Beliefs

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We are supposed to have a government of the people, by the people and for the people. At least that is what Abraham Lincoln thought.

Those words are part of the Gettysburg Address, a very short, very powerful speech delivered by Lincoln at the inauguration of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. It was during a very trying time in our nation's history — a time when the Civil War could still have gone either way — and people were very uncertain about what the future held. They were not sure the sacrifices they were making at home and on the battlefield were going to be successful. 272 words solidified an ideal, a fantastic scheme of government that was no longer a political theory, but a reality — a reality Americans, both in blue and grey, were fighting and dying for, a government of the people, by the people and for the people.

I am not condoning war or the decisions of men that lead the United States into that great and terrible conflict (certainly armed combat is the basest and most infantile way to "discuss" our differences), but there are great lessons that we can learn from our history if we critically examine our past and make appropriate changes in our lives. One of the greatest lessons of that time period is that our country is a living, evolving organism that changes with the moral values of the people. Slavery, as far as the law was concerned, was perfectly legal. Though legal, it is the worst blemish on our nation's history and something that every one ought to think about with a sense of shame. Because it was legal, it took a long time and the evolving morality of the country to make the change to a truly free nation.

What does this mean? It means that the people voted based on their moral and religious beliefs. It means politicians backed up what they believed with bills and resolutions. Change only came through this process of individuals who were willing to vote based on what they believed. The end of slavery was just as much a moral decision as it was a political one.

Today, however, there seems to be a notion that we ought not to consider moral values or other beliefs when we vote. I will admit this is something that I said myself in the past (long before I was a Christian), but now I recant, retract, repent and say that is a ridiculous idea and out of line with the entire history of our country. If our government truly is "of the people, by the people and for the people", then how can morality and religious values not enter into our decision process when voting?

I realize that I am about to commit a major faux pas, but that is only because someone, somewhere, a long time ago incorrectly said that you shouldn't talk about religion or politics — and certainly not both at the same time. Socially unacceptable as it may be, I am going to continue, but I am not going to talk about "for whom you should vote". Instead, I will talk about "for what" we should vote.

If abortion is not on your priority list for choosing a candidate for every office at the local, state and federal levels, then it should be. This evil practice has slipped into the realm of "legality" (just like slavery) because people have refused to elect individuals who will stand up against the killing of innocent children (this is true for both major political parties, by the way). The only way to make this "legal" destruction of unborn children illegal is to vote according to your conscience and your sense of right and wrong. This is directly related to religion and what God has said concerning the subject, is it not? Brothers and sisters in Christ, we must be willing to say what is right, to be a voice for morality in the world when we are given the chance!

I want to make it very clear that this does not make one political party correct and the other wrong — there are individuals in both parties who are opposed to abortion. We need to just vote for those people! Until we make this an issue every time there is an election, we cannot expect to see any kind of change. Is this legislating morality? Is this forcing others to follow our beliefs? No, it is not. It is the way a government of the people, by the people and for the people is created. It is the way our government is supposed to work. It should be noted that atheist, gay and lesbian activists vote according to their beliefs every chance they get. Why should there be one set of rules for them and another for people who fear God? Should we not use the word of God as a guiding principle for all of the decisions that we make?

There are many issues that we need to think hard about with regard to their morality when it comes time to vote. Abortion, creating embryos to harvest stem cells, and myriads of other questions need to be considered in the light of what God has told us in His word. I, personally, cannot and will not ever vote for someone who advocates the killing of unborn children — no matter what party they're running under. Things like these ought to be the guiding star when we cast our votes rather than political allegiances or personal preferences. I do not believe we can convert the country to Christ through legislation, but at least we can work toward a common standard of decency and morality. We should never fear being changed people who use the rights given to us by our government to glorify God.