

# Religion And Politics: Why We Get It Wrong And How To Get It Right



Not about “respectful conversations” but rather the framework needed for those conversations to take place.

We don't *baptize* our politics and we are deeply suspicious of "Christian politics."

But we are energetic citizens who are deeply engaged in the political realm.

Politics is yet another way we serve our neighbor.

# Lens



# The core convictions of a citizen of faith (our lens)

- God is good and in charge (and neither you nor the nation are God)
- Creation is good
- All people are made in God's image
- We are fallen creatures (humble)
- We are saved by the grace of Christ, not our good works
- We are empowered by the Spirit to love our neighbors, seek justice for them and take care of creation
- We persist in hope by the power of the Spirit

Core:

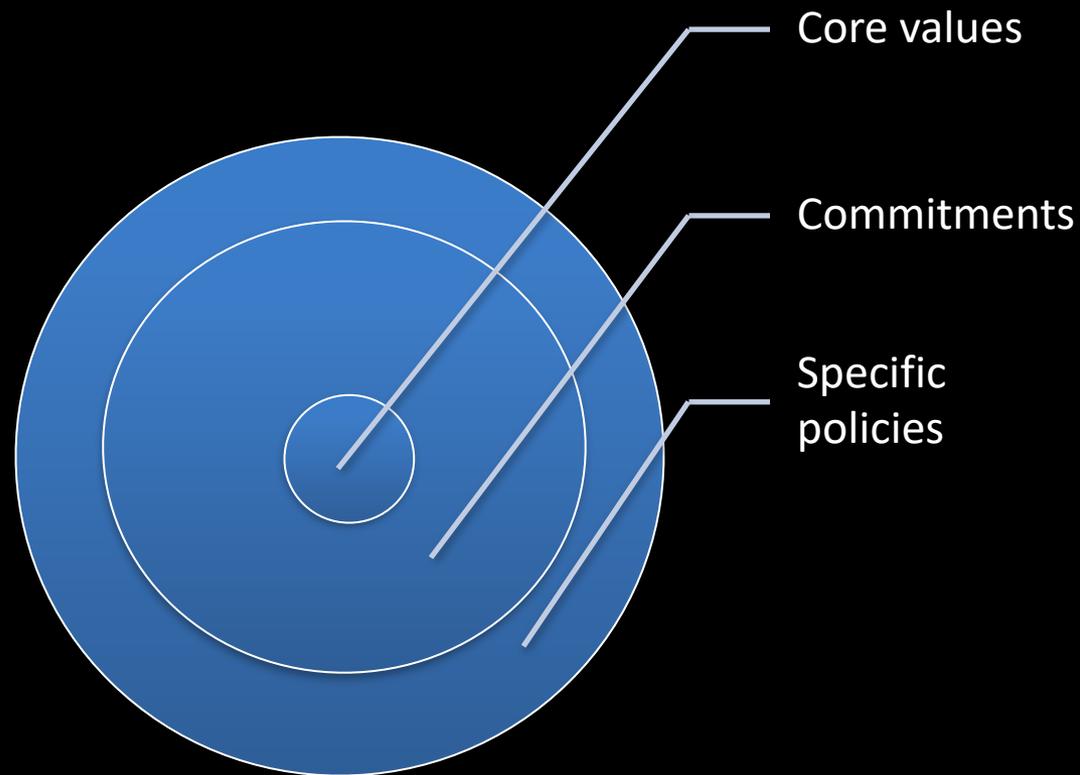
Creation good, fallen  
humanity, saved by grace  
through faith, hope

Commitments:

Justice, stewardship,  
outsider, the poor and  
vulnerable

Policies:

Tax, immigration, gambling,  
abortion, foreign policy,  
health care, marijuana, etc.



What do you think??

# 9 Theses on Vocation and Citizenship



# 1. Jesus Christ alone is our salvation



2. The primary (but not only) role of the church is to proclaim Jesus as Lord



### 3. Our calling as citizens is to serve the well-being of the community

This includes both formal politics (elected office, advocacy groups) and voluntary associations (PTA, Kiwanis, Scouts, Little League, local food shelf).

*Note that “politics” is not a dirty word.*

It is a way to see that justice is done in the community. It is how we love our neighbor in a larger context. Our involvement in this realm is crucial for the political order and the neighbor to flourish.



## 4. It is impossible not to mix faith and politics



SILENCE IN THE FACE OF EVIL IS ITSELF EVIL;  
GOD WILL NOT HOLD US GUILTLESS.  
NOT TO SPEAK IS TO SPEAK.  
NOT TO ACT IS TO ACT.

DIETRICH BONHOEFFER

## 5. In general, this is no “Christian” position in politics

- What would a Christian foreign policy look like?
- What is the Christian position on the war between Russia and Ukraine?
- What is the Christian position on healthcare?
- The “unholy” politics of the Christian Right and Left and the tendency to “baptize” our views—making politics our religion

**The endorsement of Trump by  
some on the Christian right**



**Franklin Graham: Trump won by the “hand of God”**



# THE PLAGUE OF CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM





**my GOD <sup>★</sup> is a Democrat™**

A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small, irregularly torn piece of white paper. The word "woke" is printed in a bold, black, serif font on the paper. The hand is positioned at the bottom of the frame, with the thumb and index finger visible, gripping the edges of the paper. The background is a plain, light-colored surface.

woke



# SECULOSITY



HOW CAREER, PARENTING,  
TECHNOLOGY, FOOD,  
POLITICS, AND ROMANCE  
BECAME OUR NEW RELIGION  
AND WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT



DAVID ZAHL

6. In our calling as citizens we are under obligation to call attention to the plight of the poor, the needy, the vulnerable and the neglected.

Martin Luther and the Common Chest



# We are freed in Christ to ask some hard questions

- What about the poor, the orphan and the widow?
- What about the hundreds of thousands in our prisons, far more percentage-wise than any other democracy and even China?
- What about those in the dawn and twilight of life—are they being cared for?
- Why are so many of our young people dying of suicide?
- Why is our rate of death by guns six times that of Canada?
- What about the social costs of gambling? What does it do to families? How does it contribute to a “get-rich-quick” mentality?

7. An important form of Christian witness is to practice the “works of mercy” as understood in Matthew 25

## Compassion in Action

I was hungry and you gave Me food;  
I was thirsty and you gave Me drink;  
I was a stranger and you took Me in;  
I was naked and you clothed Me;  
I was sick and you visited Me;  
I was in prison and you came to Me





8. In our callings as citizens we see our faith communities as a “place of moral deliberation” or free space where people can learn, listen and speak on political matters.

Called to care about our community...



9. Whenever a political order claims to be absolute, people of faith must resist, even to the point of death.



# Back to our lens



# The core convictions of a citizen of faith

- God is good and in charge (and you/nation/\$) are not God)
- Creation is good
- All people are made in God's image/life is sacred
- We are fallen creatures (humble)
- We are saved by the grace of Christ, not our good works
- We are empowered to love our neighbors, seek justice for them and take care of creation
- We persist in hope

Core:

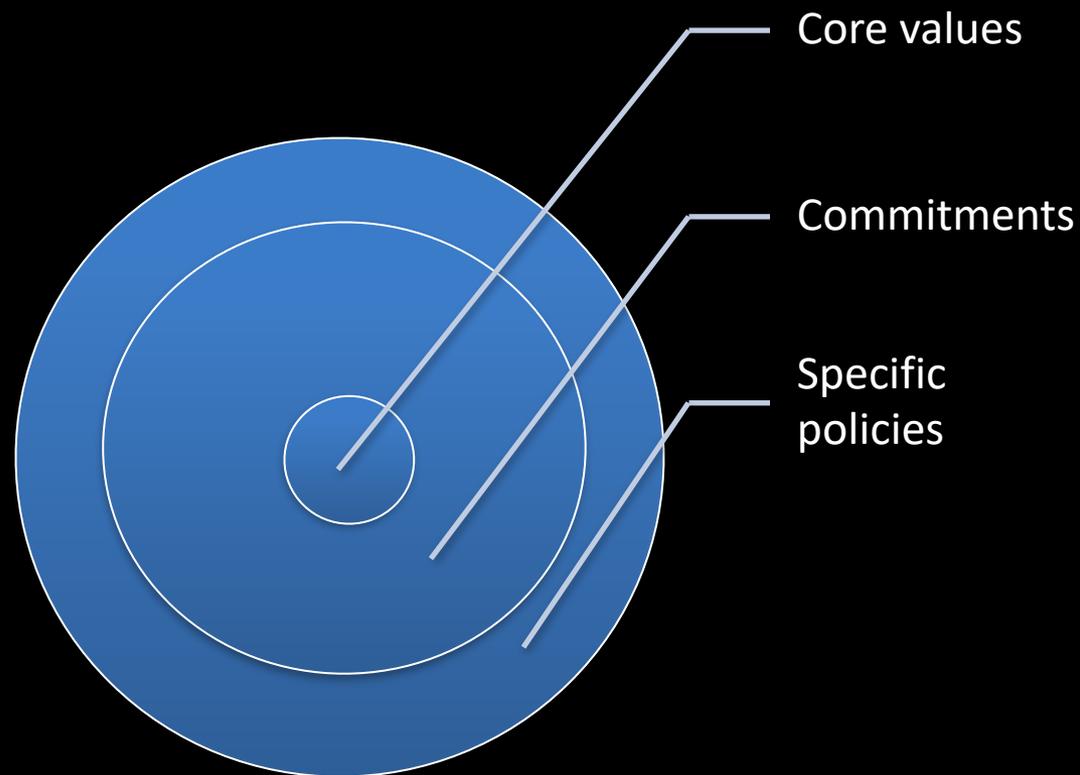
Creation good, fallen  
humanity, saved by grace  
through faith, persist in hope

Commitments:

Justice, stewardship,  
outsider, the poor and  
vulnerable

Policies:

Tax, immigration, gambling,  
terrorism, health care,  
marijuana, abortion







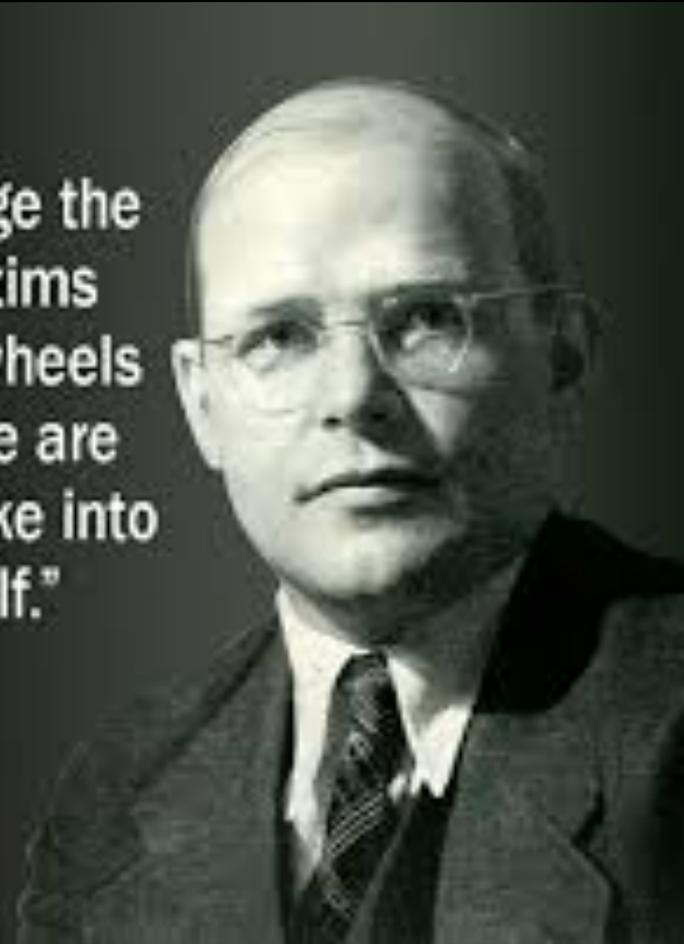
# Another lesson from Bonhoeffer...

**"We are not to simply bandage the wounds of victims beneath the wheels of injustice, we are to drive a spoke into the wheel itself."**

*Dietrich Bonhoeffer*  
(1906-1945)



Lutheran World Relief  
LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF



# And a quote to ponder from Martin Niemöller



First they came for the Communists but I was not a Communist so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Socialists and the Trade Unionists but I was not one of them, so I did not speak out. Then they came for the Jews but I was not Jewish so I did not speak out. And when they came for me, there was no one left to speak out for me.

(Martin Niemöller)

[izquotes.com](http://izquotes.com)

# A challenge from Edmund Burke

“The only thing necessary for  
the triumph of *evil* is for  
*good* men to do nothing.”

- Sir Edmund Burke