

IS POLITICS YOUR IDOL?

By Sean Wallentine

Capitol Ministries urges churches and individual believers to embrace the biblical mandate to pray for the salvation of the lost, especially those in the political arena (1 Timothy 2:1-5).

Unfortunately, in an election year biblical duties all too often take a back seat to the seemingly more urgent realities of pragmatic politics. As the November election approaches, Christians will spend vast amounts of time, money and energy supporting candidates running for office. But will God's people remember to pray for the souls of those men and women seeking elected office?

Political involvement is a liberty we all enjoy as Americans, but it is not a biblical duty. Sadly, politics can become an idol for many people, even professing believers. Our duty as believers is to make disciples of Jesus Christ, yet all too often we mistake duty for liberty and liberty for duty.

When we confuse our

biblical priorities, we can easily turn the mission field into the enemy. We laugh at inappropriate jokes, harsh criticisms, slanderous statements, gossip or other dishonoring statements about current politicians or those running for office. Many ignore the fact that our constitutional right of "free speech" does not trump the command of God's Word to "honor the king" (1 Peter 2:13-17).

As the election cycle heats up, you may receive emails with content that dishonors political leaders. Resist the urge to laugh at these emails or forward them to your friends. Instead, let them serve as reminders to pray.

Vote and be involved in the political process, but don't let it become an idol in your life. And don't treat your mission field as the enemy. Instead, consider how you can invest your energies in the prayer, evangelism and discipleship efforts of Capitol Ministries and your local church. Such investments reap eternal rather than mere temporal rewards. ■

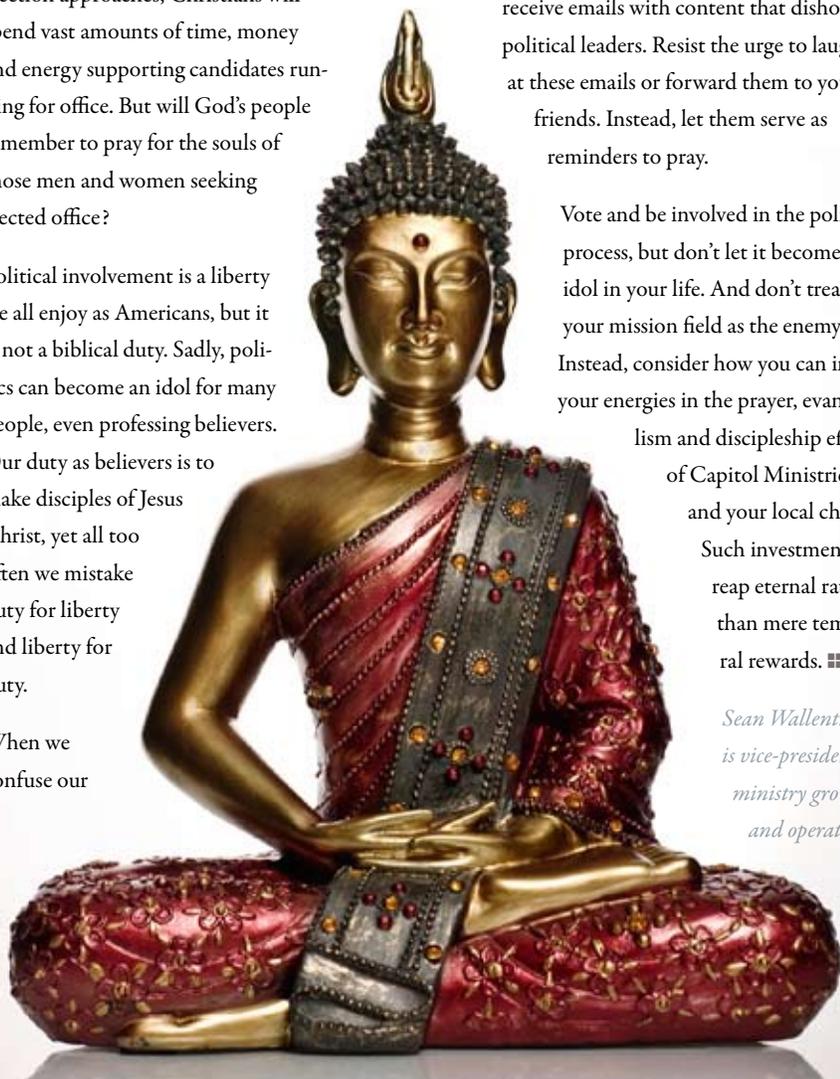
Sean Wallentine is vice-president of ministry growth and operations.

From the President's Desk

The recent California Supreme Court decision to legalize same sex marriage blatantly contradicts both God's natural and special revelation. Many are outraged, and understandably so. Yet in seeking to formulate a proper response to such egregious court decisions, we would do well to look to God's Word. In so doing, we see that the responsibility for moral laxity as evidenced in our society lies at the feet of a weak church, not the state.

The causal agent of corporate morality in culture is the institution of the church. The state at best is a reflection of the church's obedience to its mandate by Christ to "make disciples" (Matthew 28:18-20). It follows, then, that no disciples means no morality (cf. Genesis 18-19).

First Peter 4:17 further underscores this point: "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" Additional support is found in the leading statement of this passage. God's first [protos] examination and concern is with His church, not the state. All that to say, the legalization of same sex marriage and other unbiblical court decisions are first an indictment by God on a doctrinally-weak church, not a {Continued inside }



Ralph Drollinger is founder and president of Capitol Ministries.

From the President's Desk...

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morally-lax state. Show me a doctrinally weak church and I will show you a morally-lax state—guaranteed.

This understanding shows why it is so important to make disciples in the Capitol, and conversely why other forms of “Christianity” that substitute or avoid Christ’s mandate for His church to make disciples are so harmful. Accordingly, one’s concern for the health of the church must take precedence over concern for the state. To act or think otherwise is akin to prescribing Band-Aids and aspirin for terminally ill patients—dealing with symptoms, not causes.

In Erwin Lutzer’s book *Hitler’s Cross*, he proffers a parallel analysis of the early 20th century church in Germany. What allowed the rise of a runaway Nazi war machine? Answer: an impotent, distracted, compromising church. “[Hitler’s] political machine swallowed the church whole because the church had lost its biblical mission,” states Lutzer. When the church fails to make disciples by preaching the Word of God, the state eventually falters. Why? In a fallen world, as societies and their governments obtain fewer and fewer agents of salt and light from the church, decay and darkness become overwhelming.

Is such the case in California, as symbolized by its brash redefinition of marriage? States Lutzer in regards to the relationship of a weak German church and a subsequently wayward state: “...with the humanization of God came the deification of man.” One cannot avoid this apt summary and its obvious parallel to the recent California ruling. ■

SALT AND LIGHT

By Tim Pauley

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:13-16).

Life and work in the political arena is all about influence. Legislators serve as leaders and heads of committees. Lobbyists seek to influence the passage or rejection of legislation. Groups of all kinds seek to influence legislators regarding a host of important issues. Life for the believer in the Capitol is all about influence as well, but of a different kind.

The Beatitudes describe the character and attitudes a believer will display—a set of attitudes that are totally different from the world’s. Jesus teaches that those who display such qualities will have a tremendous influence on the world around them.

In Matthew 5:13-16 He uses two powerful illustrations to describe the influence we are to have on the world. Many cite this passage as the biblical basis for Christian activism in the political arena. However, if we look at these verses in their context, we find that Jesus is not talking about political activism at all. Jesus is calling for holy and righteous living at the individual level.

Christ’s illustrations protect believers from two tempting responses toward the world:

(1) **Becoming like the world.** Jesus’ description of salt and light indicates that

believers are distinct from the world. We are different.

(2) **Isolating ourselves from the world.** Especially when we read of the persecution we will face, we might want to avoid the people and the situations that bring such trials. In order to have the preservative effect of salt, however, we must be in contact with a spiritually needy world, and in order to be light, we must be present in a dark culture.

In these illustrations Jesus uses irony to describe those who claim to be believers, yet have no positive influence for the kingdom on those around them. “Tasteless salt” and “covered up light” pose a hypothetical situation that is in reality impossible. Salt by its very nature cannot change and lose its properties. A lighted city on a hill cannot be hidden. Those who are genuinely members of God’s kingdom will have an influence on those around them.

The only actual command found in the passage is “let your light shine...in such a way...” Jesus encourages us to live in such a way that people will see our works and “glorify our Father who is in heaven.” This cannot truly take place without a proclamation of the gospel accompanying our good works. Paul reminds us that “God was well-pleased through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe” (1 Corinthians 1:21) and “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17).

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Salt and Light...

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Letting our light shine means we must think about our words and our works. It is only as we let our light shine through our words that people see our good works in their true light. This does not mean you must share an evangelistic message every time you speak, but it does mean you should be looking for ways and opportunities to share the gospel message. This, along with your righteous life, is the essence of being salt and light. ■■



Tim Pauley serves as state director for West Virginia. His 2008 Bible study series on the Beatitudes titled "Finding True

Happiness in the Capitol" is available at www.capmin.org.



POLITICS AND THE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF CHRIST

By Carl Dingus

"Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-4).

"Change" is a popular word in politics today. Many act as if politics will change our country, yet they fail to see the real cause of society's problems and thus

dispense the wrong prescription. If our country's problems are simply moral in nature, then education, legislation and politics will provide the answers. But if the core problem is sin, the only cure is the power of the redemptive work of Christ. To handle sin any other way is to minimize Christ's work on the cross.

Christ spoke of spiritual things to men who were living in the physical world. In the spiritual universe there are spiritual laws, such as: "the soul that sins it shall die" (Ezekiel 18:4); "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin" (Hebrews 9:22); "Without faith it is impossible to please God" (Hebrews 11:6). Paul tells us that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3); unfortunately, because we live in a

physical world we often fail to understand the values and priorities of the spiritual realm.

In Romans 8:1-4 Paul pulls back the curtain and allows us to peek into the spiritual world to understand certain laws of the spiritual realm. The laws of the physical world and the laws of the spiritual world come together. We see that Christ's redemptive work on the cross is the most significant event in human history. In this passage Paul gives us the significance of that event when he declares that the believer is freed from the penalty of sin.

This is life changing freedom. This is freedom that has changed the world in which we live. The redemptive work of Christ is a far

greater element of change than politics.

What our society needs is not just change, but the redemptive work of Christ. America doesn't need better morals, but Christ. Christians must be careful not to minimize the redemptive work of Christ by substituting his victory on the cross with a political agenda of changing our society. ■■



Carl Dingus teaches God's Word to political leaders in Pennsylvania. His Bible studies, including a full

exposition of Romans 8:1-4 titled "Politics & the Redemptive Work of Christ," are available at www.capmin.org.

MORALIZING AMERICA?

As the light of God's Word exposes sin, believers are often tempted to respond to societal problems by demanding that nonbelievers behave in a more moral manner. Some urge the church to divert significant time, money and energy into advocating the enactment (or opposing the repeal) of legal requirements that impose behavioral standards on believers and unbelievers.

A biblical understanding of sin, however, makes it clear that all humans are in bondage to sin and are, therefore, incapable of leading moral lives. Although on the outside some people appear to be morally superior to others, compared to God's holiness all human righteousness is as filthy rags:

"For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away" (Isaiah 64:6).

There is certainly an appropriate place for government actions restraining sin (Romans 13:1-4), but we must remember that laws do not have the power to purify the wicked hearts of sinners, nor will they ever reconcile anyone to God.

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The church's foremost priority is to declare the unadulterated heart-changing gospel of Jesus Christ to an unbelieving world. To exclude the gospel from our call for moral change is like instructing a drowning man to swim while hiding the only life preserver capable of saving him. It is no surprise



that some of Christ's harshest words were directed at the Pharisees, the moralists of His day: "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger" (Matthew 23:4).

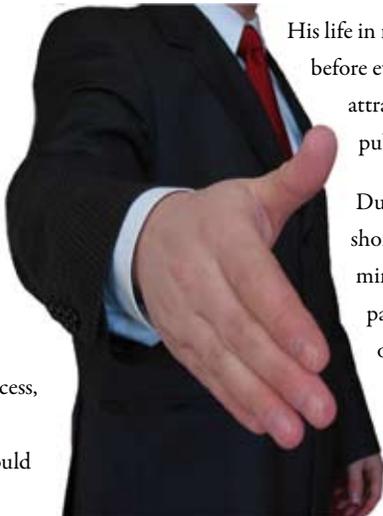
As sinners in the political arena are transformed by the gospel and instructed in sound doctrine, they become more Christlike in their thoughts, words and actions. This resulting obedience benefits all of society, but even more importantly, it brings honor and glory to God. ■

THE WORLD'S WORST POLITICIAN

By David Duran

If during his time on earth Christ was striving for worldly political success, He most certainly would rank among the worst

politicians of all time. Even from the start, He made all the wrong moves. He was born in relative poverty, far from the political power centers of His day, to parents with no clout or connections. He spent 30 years of



His life in relative obscurity before ever managing to attract any significant public attention.

During His three short years of public ministry, Jesus passed up many opportunities to make His political opinions heard.

Despite the rampant abuses and corruption

of the occupying Roman government, Christ disappointed many of His supporters by directing His harshest words, not at unpopular outsiders, but instead at those assumed to be his natural allies: the Jewish religious

leaders of His day. In response, those leaders used their political connections to end His life, seemingly snuffing out His short-lived career before it could gain any real traction or bring about significant policy reforms.

Consider three examples from the life of Christ:

He spurns his supporters' advice (John 7:1-9). In this passage, Christ spurns the opportunistic advice of His unbelieving brothers, who are aiming at enhancing His—and most likely their own—public profiles. Jesus soberly understands the reasons for the world's hatred, and He refuses to perform miracles merely to enhance His approval ratings.

He alienates a rich ruler (Luke 18:18-27). In this encounter Christ's propensity for truth-telling limits His ability to attract a high-powered, wealthy member of society to His cause. Notably, Christ does not use the occasion to lobby this leader for policy reforms or the funds needed for the same; instead, His instruction to the ruler is that he sell everything and give it to the poor. Christ's purpose is to expose the ruler's secret materialism, yet certainly any skilled political advisor would have scolded Jesus for bungling a great opportunity to build his power base.

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The World's Worst Politician...

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He befuddles a prominent politician

(John 18:28-38). Pilate, Rome's gubernatorial political appointee for Palestine, is the consummate politician, repeatedly putting his political career before the cause of truth. Christ's interactions with him show the stark contrast between God's agenda and that of the world. Our Lord declines to lobby for political change; instead, He declares that since His kingdom is not of this world, His disciples need not employ the world's weapons. He boldly declares His kingship and His purpose in coming to earth: "to testify to the truth." Puzzled Pilate doesn't even know what truth is—despite the fact that he's staring It in the face.

Clearly the Son of God never made decisions for the purpose of enhancing His political popularity. Instead, He sought only to do the will of His Father (John 8:28). He did not accomplish His mission through political means, nor did he instruct His disciples to seek political power to fulfill theirs.

Believers would do well to consider Christ's example and prioritize our God-given mission above those that are merely temporal. We must be wary of hungering for the world's applause. Christians who desire political change must remember that our struggle is not against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12) and that Christ's kingdom is not of this world (John 18:36). ■



David Duran serves as director of communications for Capitol Ministries.



RECOMMENDED READING

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Church
by Dean Merrill

Why Government Can't Save You
by John MacArthur

Why the Cross Can Do What Politics Can't
by Erwin Lutzer

To request a complimentary copy of any of these books (limited quantities available), please contact us at 916-446-1112 or info@capmin.org.

EXPANDED PRESENCE AT NATIONAL LEGISLATORS' CONFERENCE



This summer, Capitol Ministries hosted a special seminar and for the first time ever morning devotions at the American Legislative Exchange Council's 35th annual meeting in Chicago, Illinois.

Since 1999 Capitol Ministries has provided an opportunity for all state lawmakers attending the annual ALEC meeting to hear the gospel at a Bible study similar to those we hold in state capitols. In addition to ministering to those in attendance, Capitol Ministries' staff seek to develop relationships with legislators from states where the ministry hopes to expand in future years.

This year's seminar was titled "Does God Judge Nations Today?" This question has tremendous implications for those who believe upholding morality in America will prevent God's judgment. We invite you to learn more about this important topic by reading or listening to Ralph Drollinger's July 2, 2008 study, which is available in the California section of our web site at www.capmin.org. ■



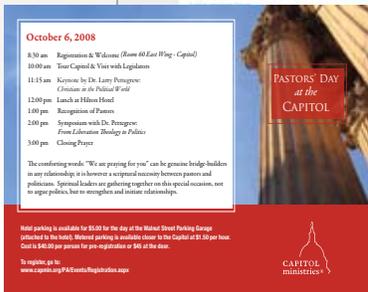
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Creative Giving Opportunities: The Cow-A-Month Club

{In each edition of our newsletter we highlight a creative way you can support the work of Capitol Ministries to reach political leaders for Christ.}

Psalm 50:10 tells us “For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills.” You’ve heard the phrase, “Holy Cow!” Capitol Ministries is giving it a more spiritual meaning. Yes, you can give your cows or other farm animals to Capitol Ministries—well, not the actual animal, but the proceeds of the animal’s sale.

The Cow-A-Month Club is a creative way for Christian dairy farmers, ranchers and other farmers to support the ministry. Originally conceived by Capitol Ministries in 2004, the Cow-A-Month Club has attracted dozens of partnering dairy families who have developed a passion for reaching elected officials for Christ.

How does it work? It’s simple. When dairy-men send a group of cull cows or other animals (even the premium ones) off to the

auction house or meat packer, they designate the sale proceeds of one or more animals to Capitol Ministries. After the animal is sold, the packer or auction house staff then forwards the sale proceeds directly to Capitol Ministries. The ministry sends a tax-deductible receipt to the dairyman for the value given. Participants can give

monthly, periodically, annually or whenever they want—according to their farming cycle.

Donating cows is just one creative way to support Capitol Ministries. Other great ways include mailing checks on a monthly basis or taking advantage of the ministry’s automatic bank draft program or credit card giving option. Every way it is given, will help

Capitol Ministries reach more and more political leaders for Christ, in America and around the world.

For further details about how you can aid our resource development efforts, please contact Nora Lynn at 916-446-1112.



“The faithfulness and presence of Capitol Ministries ... has been an encouragement to me personally as we deliberate the affairs of this state. Although many entities on the capital complex vie for my support, this ministry serves and upholds us through prayer and the study of the Word of God without seeking special treatment in return.”

- GLORIA ARIAS HASKINS,
SOUTH CAROLINA



“Capitol Ministries is a beachhead of biblical truth within the political battles of each session. The Bible studies refresh and renew my spirit every week.”

- REPRESENTATIVE
KEVIN
LUNDBERG,
COLORADO



“I am thrilled to welcome Capitol Ministries to the Texas Capitol! From the first time Don presented [Capitol Ministries’] vision for ministry in Texas, I have been convinced of the need for such a ministry and eager to help the ministry take root here.”

- REPRESENTATIVE NATHAN
MACIAS, TEXAS

