

TEN COMMANDMENTS OF TALKING (OR BLOGGING) POLITICS

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Let's talk about politics. It's that time. Now that both parties have had their convention, things could get heated. Here's a reminder to folks to behave appropriately. In fact, let's hold each other accountable in this network to a higher level of discourse for the next few months with these Ten Commandments of Talking (or blogging) Politics.

1. **Do not worship political theories or parties. (You shall have no other gods before me.)**

Do not worship ideas or theories instead of God. Not your stance on global warming or Capitalism or de-regulation or education or abortion or gay marriage or health care or international trade or war. Do not put your hopes in a political stance or party line or economic theory. Those things are important, but they should not distract us from our unity in Christ Jesus.

2. **Do not worship political figures or images. (You shall not make for yourself an idol.)**

Obama is not the savior. Neither is McCain. Neither is the Republican Party or the Democratic Party. Do not bow to Elephants or Donkeys. Good leadership is important. Political pep rallies and mascots are fun, but they should not distract us from our unity in Christ Jesus.

3. **God is not divinely endorsing your political opinion. (You shall not make wrongful use of the name of your God.)**

This is slippery. But it is important. We can't answer the question Who Would Jesus Vote For? except in the privacy of our own hearts. I'm serious. This doesn't mean Christians

can't express political opinions if they are so inclined. But it does mean we must humbly represent our opinions as our own personal opinions, not God's opinion. Neither party is God's party. And in a sense, both candidates already belong to God because they both acknowledge him publicly. (And of course, we don't judge hearts.)

4. **Do not use God to prop up your politics. (Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy.)**

OK, people. Both sides fail at this too. Corporate worship is not the place for political messages. Period. This is a fine line to walk. It doesn't mean politics can't come to church at all. Rick Warren did a fair job at Saddleback recently. But it wasn't under the guise of worship. In your blogs, do not use the Word of God to prop up your political hopes. Don't.

5. **Honor your father and mother. (Honor your father and mother.)**

Election season is probably not the time to try to convert your parents to your political viewpoint. Here's my suggestion. If they start ranting and raving against your candidate, respect them by keeping your mouth shut. Don't take the bait. And certainly don't bait your par-

ents! This doesn't mean all political discourse is off limits—but remember that elections aren't sporting events. Do not let abstractions become a wedge between you and your family. It's not worth it.

6. Don't be cruel. (You shall not murder.)

Elvis may have said it best, but Jesus had some good words on this too. He said, "Anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment... anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." (Matt 5:21-22). If another blogger slanders you, talk to him or her privately first (Matt 18:15-16). Don't air ugly conversations in your comment sections. Don't attack people or ideas in public posts. This doesn't mean you have to be silent. Respond to comments with an email. Engage them as Jesus says. And remember that it isn't a sin for two Christians to disagree about politics.

7. Be pure. (You shall not commit adultery.)

I'm not sure how this applies to politics except as a reminder that we need to be examples of purity. Before you post a comment for or against someone, ask yourself if you are going to sully yourself or discredit yourself as a Christian. And don't forget the comparison between idolatry and adultery. Don't get so excited about politics that every conversation and post and comment reveals which side you are "in bed with."

8. Be honest. (You shall not steal.)

Be honest when you vote. Stolen elections won't help anyone. For some people, this may be a call to volunteer to work the polls on Election Day! A friend of mine volunteers for every election. Of course,

every state is different, but she recommends contacting your local democratic or republican headquarters. Tell the party chairman for your party that you want to volunteer on Election Day. (You will need to be trained before you can work the polls.) The phone book should list contact information for both parties under "Associations" or "Political Organizations."

9. Defend the truth and the facts. (You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.)

And who is your neighbor? Barack Obama. John McCain. Joe Biden. Sarah Palin. But also the Democrat next door and the Republican across the street. Here's my practical suggestion. Refrain from sending asinine email forwards. But let's take it one step further. If you receive a slanderous email, check the Snopes page on McCain or the Snopes page on Obama. Then send a kind response to the person who forwarded the email (NOT the whole list) explaining the error as gently as possible.

10. Be prepared to accept the results. (You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.)

In November one party will win control of the executive branch. The other will lose. When the time comes, do not covet your neighbor's political victory if your side loses. If your side wins, do not gloat.

With God's grace, we can all get along for the next few months regardless of who we will support at the polls in November...

