



Thoughts from the Bible and Books

A Newsletter for University Reformed Church
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What's In a Name?

If you've been around URC a while, you remember the Grapevine. This URC newsletter is not the Grapevine. Not that there was anything wrong with the Grapevine—this is just not it. Whereas the Grapevine contained articles, church announcements, and calendar items, *TBB* will be a one page (double-sided) newsletter comprised chiefly of thoughts and musings from the Bible and other books. Hopefully, the brief articles you come across will be helpful in your Christian walk. If not, I suppose I'll still enjoy writing them. Chances are, I will be the main contributor, but look for staff members and others to pitch in as well.

It's not easy coming up with a good name for a church newsletter. I'm not sure I have. But I'll stick with *TBB* for now. I like *TBB* for a couple reasons. First, it explains accurately what the newsletter is about: Thoughts from the Bible and Books. Second, it's my wife's maiden name. I married Trisha Bebee. Thus *TBB* is one form of her previous initials and my sometimes nickname for her. So *TBB* it is.

KDY

I have hidden
your word
in my heart
that I might not
sin against you.

Psalm 119:11

Politics 2004

Let's Not Beat Around the Bush: What Should Christians Kerr(y) About In Their Leaders?

Unlike many churches in America, URC is politically diverse. We have red state Republicans and blue state Democrats, not to mention the unique perspectives of dozens of internationals. What's a pastor to do? For starters, he should probably avoid sermons with titles like "Why I am voting for..." or "How the Republicans are ruining our country" or "Why the Democrats want to destroy the family." Beyond that, though, is there any common ground?

I think there is. Often, there is no single "Christian position" on a particular bill, policy, or candidate. But a Christian worldview should shape the way we look at politics. I believe there are basic core values we should look for in our leaders. I've listed ten of them below. The list is not meant to be exhaustive and it is not in any particular order.

You'll notice that some values seem to be Republican issues and some seem to be Democrat issues. You should also notice that I've deliberately used broad phrases like "care about" or "stands against." I hope there is common ground in stating what our leaders should care about and stand against, but those phrases in themselves say nothing about what policies should or shouldn't be enacted as a result of such values. That's where other factors in addition to a Christian worldview must come in to play.

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Value #1 A good leader walks in humility. He or she is not pompous, nor arrogant, nor cocksure. He is aware of his own shortcomings. He walks humbly with God, acts justly, and shows mercy to others.

Value #2 A good leader is a person of integrity. He is trustworthy, upright, and truth-telling. His beliefs are based on convictions, not just conveniences.

Value #3 A good leader cares about the family. He knows the importance of marriage and the value of stable homes for the good of the nation.

Value #4 A good leader cares about the welfare of other nations. He is not blind to the suffering of other peoples. He will work for the good of his own country, without ignoring the ramifications national decisions may have for the rest of the world.

Value #5 A good leader cares about the rights of the unborn. He recognizes that fetuses are real persons, with beating hearts and sucking thumbs.

Value #6 A good leader stands against sexual immorality. He understands that deviant sexual behavior is a detriment to a healthy society and has a corrosive influence on culture.

Value #7 A good leader cares about the poor. He knows that God is deeply concerned about the plight of the poor. He does not automatically fault the poor for being poor.

Value #8 A good leader stands against injustice and bigotry. He deplores oppression and discrimination. He desires rules and systems that are fair and honorable.

Value #9 A good leader cares about being good stewards of creation. He recognizes that God created the world for our use and for our wonder. He sees the earth as a gift for our good and a beauty to behold.

Value #10 A good leader believes in moral categories and uses them carefully. In this world, there is good and evil. A wise leader is not a relativist. But he is not cavalier either. He calls out what is good and what is evil, and does so with caution.

KDY

Book Table Review

J.I. Packer's now classic work, *Knowing God*, is an indispensable tool for any Christian who desires to deepen his or her knowledge and understanding of God. From the love of God to the judgements of God, Packer draws from and expounds on biblical passages of the Old and New Testaments, to give us a portrait of God's terrible and beautiful majesty. His thorough Biblical knowledge combine with his heartfelt desire to truly know God, to produce this series of studies on the nature and character of God.

- Jason Perez

Read Any Good Books Lately?

John Piper. *When I Don't Desire God: How to Fight for Joy* (Crossway Books). Great book. Practical, thoughtful, and motivating. One of Piper's best.

Kent & Barbara Hughes. *Liberating Ministry from the Success Syndrome* (Tyndale House). Good reminders for anyone in ministry or any Christian anywhere.

Bruce L. Shelley. *Church History in Plain Language* (Nelson). This is one of the books I've been using for the Sunday night series. It's very readable and a manageable length (500 pages), considering it covers all of Christian history.

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In Communion with the Saints

"Accordingly, seeing that God appointed magistrates and princes for the preservation of mankind, however much they fall short of the divine appointment, still we must not on that account cease to love what belongs to God (i.e. government), and to desire that it remain in force. That is the reason why believers, in whatever country they live, must not only obey the laws and the government of magistrates, but likewise in their prayers supplicate God for their salvation."

John Calvin, commenting on I Timothy 2:1-2, where Christians are urged to pray for those in authority.