

Pray Earnestly – Vote Diligently

By Brett Gottle

I must admit that politics is not my favourite topic, although I must come clean and tell you that I really do love watching question time on the ABC. It's not because I am overly interested in the debate, I just get hooked into the 'drama' of the whole thing. Their spiteful and fast-lipped-one-liners, with their seeming total disrespect for their opponent is the stuff that intrigues me and is the same behaviour that would have my kids sent to their rooms with their heads spinning.

But as I get older, and more concerned about the future of my world, I am finding myself actually caring about our political landscape more and more. My position, that seems to be emerging in me with greater momentum, is that we don't need more Christian parties; we need more Christians in politics. We need spirit filled, Jesus disciples, politically gifted men and women of incredible influence who see politics as a supreme area of godly leadership – for our nation. This was birthed after talking with Adrian de Visser the leader of Kithu Sevena Church in Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka battles with entrenched political corruption, wars that last for more than 30 years, and fierce religious and racial intolerance. It suffers these abuses because the influence of the genuine Jesus centred church doesn't see politics as a place of legitimate influence. The indifference of the church has allowed incredible dysfunction, abuse and injustice to forge their culture - I just kind of think that we can't let that happen here in our nation. We can't be indifferent, we have to get involved.

So the big and most pressing question is exactly that: in the coming weeks, as the election juggernaut swamps our TV rooms and possesses our car radios to a somewhat vomitous level, how do we get involved and what difference can we make? Well, let me give you some practical considerations:

Firstly, we have to understand that whoever is placed as a leader of a political party is primarily the figure-head of that party. Yes they have some power, but we must realise that they are principally responsible for heralding the political platforms of their party. They are the salesman of a certain product, they are not the product. And, we've seen that if they're not making the sales, they get the sack. Because I am part of the populous middle class, like most of us are, I have to continually tell myself not to get caught up in the personality hype, or the latest interest factor of any party leader. Basically, as informed and intelligent voters we can't be enticed into voting for the personality, but rather what the 'party' stands for.

Secondly, find out what each political party stands for. What is their track record? What are their political platforms from which policy is established? Some issues vitally significant to Christians and churches are now on some party agendas. These include removing tax exemptions for Christian organizations, enforcing employment of non-Christians and withdrawing government funding for Christian schools, totally removing Christian content and influence from government organisations and schools, and fully recognising homosexual relationships as marriages. Some even want to remove from the Australian constitution that as a nation we rely on God. They want to remove the Lord's Prayer from the opening of parliament and remove all Christian influence from the Australian parliamentary debate. These philosophical and anti-Christian determinations are part of the platform upon which some would forge their policies, which all Christians should oppose.

How do we find out what these party platforms and policies are?

There are three key organisations that are really worth engaging with and being informed by. Firstly, the Australian Christian Lobby (ACL) www.acl.org.au who are NOT

aligned to any political party, outline very clearly the track record, policies and platforms that lie behind each party www.australiavotes.org . This is a very important tool for us, because ACL highlights issues as far as broad Christian convictions are concerned.

Another tool that is available is from the Australian Christian Values Institute, the 2010 Federal Election Checklist, www.christianvalues.org.au which also aims at helping us make informed decisions based on party policies.

And lastly, Family Voice Australia who can be found at www.fava.org.au.

Thirdly, don't be lulled into the idea that your vote doesn't count, especially if you are a minority in a "safe seat". I battle this because I often think, "Well, what difference can I make?". I have to remind myself that a swing against a returned sitting member can still send a strong message to them and their party. The fact is, numbers count and the Christian community still has a massive say in our nation. So, we should take the responsibility of our one vote very seriously despite some of the cynicism we may feel towards our political system.

Last: Pray!

In 1 Timothy 2:1-4 Paul urges us to pray for our leaders and for governments. We are encouraged to pray for those in power so we can get on with the business of living peaceful and godly lives in a way that will bring people into the knowledge and love of God. So, we not only need healthy political parties, but powerful Christ-centred spiritual influence that brings about fairness, hope, real resources, vision and the kingdom of God for all people in our society.

Our prayer and vote should not be motivated by what we can get, but what God wants to bring.

So let's pray earnestly and vote diligently in this coming election!

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