If you don't believe that America is the land of promise, you haven’t been listening to the political debates: promises, promises, promises.

A 4-year-old tugged on her dad begging him to stop watching television and read her a story. He agreed and started reading the fairy tale, but she interrupted him, looked up into his face and asked: "Daddy, do all fairy tales begin with: 'Once Upon a Time'?'" He responded, "No sweetheart, many fairy tales begin with: 'And when I'm elected...'

Someone said that if Christopher Columbus could have been one of the greatest politicians of all time. When he left he didn't know where he was going. When he got there, he didn't know where he was. When he came back, he didn't know where he'd been. And he did it all on somebody else's money!

In American history we’ve had politicians, and we’ve had statesmen; too many of the former and not enough of the latter. We need statesmen who will lead, not based on the opinion polls, but based on righteous principles and what is best for the American people.

Proverbs 29:2 says, "When the godly are in authority, the people rejoice. But when the wicked are in power, they groan."

Now in America, for the godly to be in authority all we have to do is vote for them. That's pretty simple, huh? Elections are a basic part of how our government works. In fact, government is one of the three institutions God established, along with the family and the church.

Paul states in Romans 13:1 that "the (governmental) authorities that exist have been established by God." Now if God established the institution of government, wouldn’t He want His people to be a part of it?

Certainly! God expects us to get involved, make a positive impact, be salt and light. Consider this:

1ST THE ROLE OF CHRISTIANS FOUNDING AND SHAPING OUR NATION

Did you know that the first representative assembly in America was convened in the church at Jamestown in 1619, "to establish one equal and uniform government over all Virginia." [Link to source]

When the Pilgrims came one year later in 1620, they were blown off course and didn't make it to Virginia. So they decided to draw up their own self-governing document, the first created in America,
called the Mayflower Compact.

It begins: "In the name of God," and gave this reason for their coming: "For the glory of God and the advancement of the Christian faith." http://www.frc.org/get.cfm?i=WX06J06&f=WX06E07 - edn2

From the beginning there was a positive influence of Christians on American culture and government.

You may not know that Connecticut is called the Constitution State because the first Constitution in America was enacted in 1639, called the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut.

But did you know that it was based upon Pastor Thomas Hooker's sermon from Deut. 1:13.

Did you know that the first education law was passed in Massachusetts in 1641 for the purpose of ensuring that children would be able to read and understand the Scriptures?

The first university established in America was Harvard. It was named for Reverend John Harvard, and was founded to train ministers for gospel ministry, and over the next 150 years it was distinctly Christian in its mission?

Did you know that the first hospitals in America were founded mostly by Christians? That it was the Quakers in Pennsylvania and Puritan ministers of New England who led the fight against slavery in America?

Did you know that 93% of our founding fathers who voted for the Declaration of Independence and crafted our Constitution were professing Orthodox Christians?

And that even of the handful who were not orthodox Christians, had deep respect for Biblical morality and used the Bible as the basis for our laws and valued religion for maintaining order and civility in society.

President George Washington said that the twin pillars essential for supporting a successful society are morality and religion. What kind of religion? Was it just any kind?

John Adams, our 2nd President, clarified that when he declared that "The general principles on which the fathers achieved independence were... the general principles of Christianity."

What I am offering documentation for is the Christians founding, molding, and shaping America. Did you know that our form of government reflects biblical principle?

In fact, representative government is based upon Exodus 18:21, which says: "Select from all the people some capable, honest men who fear God and hate bribes. Appoint them as leaders over groups of one thousand, one hundred, fifty, and ten."
Our system of checks and balances between the branches of government is based on the doctrine of the sinfulness of man - that "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

And, the three branches come from Isaiah 33:22, "The Lord is our Judge (judicial branch), our Lawgiver (legislative branch), and our King (executive branch); He will care for us and save us."

When we look back we find that Christians have been involved the founding and the shaping of American culture and government from the beginning.

Well then where did the idea of the separation of church and state come from? It actually comes from a statement that Jesus made.

In Matthew 22 some antagonists invented a plan trying to set a trap for Jesus. They wanted to see if they could get him in trouble with the Romans by telling people they shouldn’t pay their taxes.

Such teaching would be considered seditious and treasonous. “Teacher,” they asked, “we know that you speak the truth; you’re not afraid say what you think and you don’t try to suck up to Rome, so tell us, it is right to pay taxes to the Romans or not?”

Jesus fooled them with his response. “Give me a coin. Tell me, whose image is on this coin.” “Well, it’s Caesar’s image.” “Great,” “Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and give to God what belongs to God.”

There you have it, the separation of church and state. They are different. Jesus recognized their different roles. Our founding fathers recognized their different roles. Government’s role is to protect the public of the nation. The church’s role is to guide the spiritual life of the nation.

That’s why our founders added the first amendment to the constitution: Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech,...”

Note that the 1st amendment was established to restrict congress, not the church.

Now nobody wants a national, tax supported state church, and nobody wants the state to control the churches, which is what the First Amendment refers to.

But does that mean that God and government are to stay separate? Well that's not what the Founders believed or practiced. There are 1500 verses in the Bible that refer directly to civil government. The Bible speaks to every area of life.

There is a separation of the public arena and the governmental arena, but God is not isolated from either.

Jesus said: "You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13-16). Is there any area of life where we are supposed to withhold our positive influence and witness? Certainly not.
We need to bring our Christian faith and values to bear on our culture and our government - just as our fore-fathers did founding and shaping this nation. Second, consider

2ND CHRISTIAN VOTING IN AMERICA

When Jesus said, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” Notice he said “and.” It’s not one of the other. It’s both and.

One of the ways we provide a positive witness is to vote. Think about it. When we vote, we help determine who will lead our nation, make our laws, and protect our freedoms.

Voting is a simple act with a significant impact. Founding Father Samuel Adams said: "Let each citizen remember at the moment he is offering his vote... that he is executing one of the most solemn trusts in human society for which he is accountable to God and his country."

To many of the Founding Fathers voting was a sacred responsibility.

Voting is a privilege, a freedom, and an opportunity that millions in other parts of the world can only dream about. Yet, many Americans strangely choose not to vote.

Less than half of those eligible to vote actually do so in any given election. In fact, of the more than 60 million evangelical Christians in America, nearly half failed to vote in the 2004 election! That’s thirty million and the election was decided by 10 million votes.

People may offer many reasons why they do or do not vote, but Christ-followers have a compelling motivation. Jesus said: "Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar's and to God what belongs to God's" (Matthew 22:21).

This country has a unique government that is designed to be of the people, by the people, for the people. According to Romans 12:1 “Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.”

We are a self-governing nation. We the people are responsible for everything that happens. We elect our own leaders and officials, and according to the scripture as followers of Christ, we have a civic responsibility to do our part.

Thus I think it is accurate to conclude, that not to vote is a sin. It is a sin of omission. It is failing to execute our God-given responsibility as a citizen of this nation.

In order to obey the commands of Christ, Americans of faith must participate in government, and in America, that includes the democratic process of voting.

If you and I do not actively participate, then we are not fulfilling Christ’s command to give to Caesar or his command to be salt and light.
Ok then, who do I vote for? What if I’m not satisfied with either candidate? Remember this, there are no perfect candidates. Like Rick Green said a couple of Sundays ago, if Jesus Christ is not on the ballot, then we are always going to be choosing the lesser of two evils.

But, when Christians retreat from the arena of civil responsibility, we allow Satan to prevail in a place where Christ commanded us to make an impact.

Here's an old proverb that is still true today: "Bad politicians are elected by good people who don't vote." People, we need to vote! Third consider

3RD VOTING YOUR VALUES

We should vote our values, not a party. We vote our values not our ethnicity. It is a revealing truth that if you against a candidate, just because he’s of a different race, you’re a racist. But it is also true that if you vote FOR a candidate just because he’s of a certain race, you are also a racist.

Don’t vote party; don’t vote race. And, don't just vote for the sake of voting. Some people are concerned about the secularization of America. I’m more concerned about the secularization of Christians.

We have to take it one step further and vote our values. Unfortunately, some believers don't even consider their Christian values when voting, sometimes choosing candidates whose positions are at odds with biblical beliefs, convictions, and values.

A study by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life a few years ago showed that 62% of Americans say their faith has little to do with their voting decisions.

That's tragic because Jesus expects us to influence every part of culture and society as salt and light—including the democratic process.

Founding Father John Jay was appointed by George Washington to be the First Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court (and by the way the next President could chose as many as three new Supreme Court justices. The current average age on the court is 66).

John Jay said: "It is the duty, as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation, to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."

Whenever possible, we need Christian "rulers" if they have Christian values, right? Be aware, there are a lot of folks who use Christian lingo, but when you look at their actions, position on issue, their voting record and their associations, it becomes evident that they do not line up with biblical values.

That's why it is so important to do your homework on the candidates. Don't just listen to their campaign rhetoric; look at their records in office. Don't just watch their political ads, look at their positions on the issues. Check out www.Christianvoterguide.com.
I’ve placed a voter guide on the front counter. It was researched and formatted by Pastor Tony Amatangelo. Tony used to be on staff here and not pastors a sister church in Moorpark.

The guide is a comparison of the stance on issues between Barack Obama and Mitt Romney. It’s not biased of slanted in either direction. The information was taken from public sources and the candidates own websites.

Every candidate has his or her own set of values and positions on important issues. Where a candidate stands on moral issues is far more important than the party he or she belongs to or the campaign ads and promises?

Be careful: Don't align yourself too closely with a political party or a politician. We have but one King and that’s Jesus. We need to be free to call all political parties and politicians to accountability when they step outside of biblical morality and principle.

Founding Father Benjamin Rush worked for elected officials from different political parties. He is quoted saying: "I have been alternately called an Aristocrat and a Democrat. I am neither. I am a Christocrat."

Our loyalty needs to be first, last, and always with the Lord Jesus Christ.

We need to vote His values!

Author Mark Twain said of Christians:
"A Christian's first duty is to God. It then follows, as a matter of course, that it is his duty to carry his Christian code of morals to the polls and vote them. Whenever he shall do that, he will not find himself voting for an unclean man, a dishonest man. If Christians would vote their duty to God at the polls, they would carry every election, and do it with ease. Their prodigious power would be quickly realized and recognized, and afterward there would be no unclean candidates upon any ticket, and graft would cease. If the Christians of America could be persuaded to vote God and a clean ticket, it would bring about a moral revolution that would be incalculably beneficent. It would save the country.

OK, so what are these values? I suspect that there are multiple opinions among Bible-believing Christians when it comes to issues such as the economy, national security, energy independence, immigration, etc.

Certainly there are important moral and cultural issues with public policy implications that Christians should be concerned about and act on, such as poverty, racial equality, environmental stewardship, etc.

However, this is a critical time in American history so let me give you the three values that top God’s list. You say Ralph, how do you know these are on the top of God’s list?

Well, there are 613 laws in God’s comprehensive system delivered to us in the 1st 5 books of the Bible. Yet, God made it abundantly clear that some issues were definitely more important than
others. In fact, from that expansive system of 613 laws, God selected His “Top Ten” commandments.

Keeping God himself primary is #1. Protecting the innocent life made God’s top ten at #6. Protecting the sanctity of marriage is #7. The issues of poverty, environment, health care, immigration – these are important but not in the top ten.

How do we secure these priorities?

#1 Judicial Appointments

Ezra 7:25 “Appoint magistrates and judges who know your God’s laws to govern all the people…”

2 Chronicles 19:6-7 “Always think carefully before pronouncing judgment. Remember that you do not judge to please people but to please the Lord. He will be with you when you render the verdict in each case. Fear the Lord and judge with integrity, for the Lord our God does not tolerate perverted justice, partiality, or the taking of bribes.”

The Scriptures speak extensively about judges and their direct impact on the righteousness of a nation. America clearly demonstrates the truth of this.

It has been the judges and not the legislature who has imposed most of the clearly un-biblical policies now in place across the land: abortion-on-demand, homosexual marriage, prohibitions against public acknowledgments of God.

A President will be gone in eight year or less, but his judges may remain on the bench of decades. Judicially-enacted policies more often reflect the personal beliefs of judges than of society at large, and these judicial policy makers are regularly out of step with the people of our country.

For example, even thought 82% of the nation support school prayers, judges disallow that practice. And while 66% support marriage as being between one man and one woman, judges have rejected this definition.

Twice California voters have upheld the sanctity of Biblical marriage only to have a judge overturn the will of the majority.

Judges have also made abortion-on-demand for any reason the national policy even though only 21% of the nation support that unrestricted abortion policy.

#2 The Value of Human Life

Life is precious, miraculous, sacred... created by a loving God who makes every human being unique. King David prayed: "You watched me as I was being formed in utter seclusion, as I was woven together in the dark of the womb. You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed.”
God is the Author and Artist of human life. Everyone I know who has been present at the birth of child has called it a miracle.

Life made in the image of God is also a fundamental human right. According to the Declaration of Independence, "All men are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights. Among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

The order is significant. Life is the first God-given right of every human being.

Unfortunately, our God-given right to life in America has been undermined. Every day in America, more innocent human beings are put to death than those who died in the 9/11 attacks.

The most dangerous place in America for a child is in its mother’s womb. Abortion ends the lives of more than 1.3 million unborn children in America every year. Nearly 25% of all pregnancies end in abortion, sacrificed on the altar of convenience.

54 million children have been sacrificed; that’s more than all the lives lost in all the wars in our history. That’s more people than inhabit the states of California, Nevada, Wyoming, Washington and Montana combined.

Proverbs 6:16-17 "There are six things the Lord hates—no, seven things he detests: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that kill the innocent."

Who is more innocent and defenseless than a baby? When voting consider the value of human life to God. Secondly, consider

#3 The Value of Biblical Marriage

Marriage between one man and one woman is God’s design. It is basic and necessary. The family is the primary building block of society, and the first institution created by God.

Genesis 1:27 "So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them."

In fact, the two genders were meant to complete each other physically, emotionally, and in every other way. In Genesis 2:24, God further declares: "This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."

Also, both genders are needed for a healthy home. As Dr. James Dobson notes, "More than ten thousand studies have concluded that kids do best when they are raised by mothers and fathers."

In both OT and NT, one man and one woman in a marriage covenant relationship for life is the divine pattern. And when a marriage follows God's design, it is good for everyone - men, women, children, the community, the country, and the world.

Think about it. Every civilization in history is built upon the institution of marriage. It is the foundation. The welfare of children, the propagation of the faith, the wellbeing of society, and the orderliness of civilization are all dependent upon the stability of marriage according to the
divine pattern. When this God-given pattern is undermined, the whole superstructure of society becomes unstable. Any deviation from the divine pattern invites disaster.

Heterosexuality is the divine pattern, but homosexuality is a deceptive perversion. The Word of God, which does not err, is abundantly clear. Leviticus 18:22 says: "Do not practice homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman. It is a detestable sin."

Leviticus 20:13a says: "If a man practices homosexuality, having sex with another man as with a woman, both men have committed a detestable act."

Homosexuality is an abomination to God. In the strongest biblical terms homosexuality is denounced of sin.

Today, the divine pattern, the sacred institution of marriage is under attack by radicals who support homosexuality and their allies in the courts. Vote biblical values.

Our first amendment freedom of religion is under vicious assault today. George Washington in his Farewell Address said: "Of all the dispositions and habits which lead to political prosperity, Religion and Morality are indispensable supports. In vain would that man claim the tribute of Patriotism, who should labor to subvert these great Pillars of human happiness, these firmest props of the duties of Men and Citizens."

Find out which candidates are in favor of protecting and even restoring America's Judeo-Christian heritage. Find out where the candidates stand on our First Amendment right to religious freedom.

So let us resolve here and now not to let evil men triumph simply because good men have done nothing. Let us seize this moment, rise to the challenge, and take a bold stand for life, for family, and for freedom in this election.

RECOMMENDED SITES:
www.pulpitfreedom.org
www.wallbuilders.com
www.championthecandidate.com
www.speakupmovement.org