



## Political Models for Spreading the Faith—or *NOT!*

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Those of you reading from around the world probably know that we are in the midst of the election of our U.S. President. Unlike many countries, this happens every four years—which has advantages and disadvantages.

During the election, we watch candidates argue as to why they are the best person to take on this job. They give their background and they parade around to all kinds of events with all kinds of people. Broad appeal is crucial, so the presentations and audiences are often hand-selected and choreographed.

Along the way of course, they usually also put down the other candidate (even when they agree on most things!). They tell why that other person isn't the best candidate. They argue why their ideas, policies, track record, co-workers and associates are bad or won't work.

In the process, if they say anything good about the other person's view(s)—especially in an official debate—they may lose, and suffer a decline in the perception of their "real leadership." And candidates from the other side jump on that.

Here's the sad parallel: we do the same thing when we interact with Christians of other backgrounds and often with non-Christians when we discuss our faith with them. We argue about what we believe as opposed to what they believe. We don't concede any points. We can't acknowledge any parallels or similar features in Islam, for example. We feel that if we do, we will be perceived to be showing a crack in our doctrinal/theological armor. If that happened, we would be sliding down a slippery slope of doctrinal change!

Actually, we really don't have all the answers. And just like the presidential candidates, we really can't solve any problem—no matter what job or role we have. 2 Cor. 3:5-6a says, "Not that we are adequate to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who has made us adequate as servants of the new covenant."

It is God who is at work through us. He is the one who accomplishes everything. He will defend himself. When Paul talks about being placed here to

defend the Gospel in Phil 1:16, the passage points to Paul's particular role at that point in time—not a role we all have. In many situations in Acts, Paul and others give a defense, but that is often in a legal situation where there are specific accusations.

But the main point is: when we express our faith, we must refer directly to the Scriptures, not to Christian doctrines or history. A friend of mine answers every spiritual question with: "I don't know, let's look at the Scriptures," or "I have the same view on that as Jesus has." He really does know often, so I guess you could call that a lie. But the main advantage is that it points to *the Source* for our authority and not to our knowledge or knee-jerk catch-phrases. It naturally leads to someone asking, "What does Jesus think?" It keeps discussions going if you admit you don't know sometimes.

For example, when people ask how God can allow evil, we say, "It is part of His sovereign plan," and, "We can't understand it with our finite minds." Those are both true. But perhaps we should try to share a passage such as where Jesus weeps over Lazarus? What Jesus does there is, of course, not an answer at all. In fact, Jesus resolves the problem by raising him from the dead. But it demonstrates the compassion of Jesus in death. That is the kind of thing people are looking for.

I find it very freeing to not have to have answers for every question. But it means that we need to know our Bibles even better. A standard way of sharing our faith does not work for many people. For all of us, it is a process.

Try it out! Saturate yourself in the Scriptures and let the Bible speak—especially Jesus. See where it takes the discussion. Let me know how it goes.

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