

## **The Gospel Changes Everything**

Week Four

*“Politics (and other idols)”*

Trike’s Message Notes – Pastor Steve Treichler

October 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020

*For His Glory and our joy!*

### Message Outline:

**Introduction** – *“We never guess. We look it up!”*

### **Previously on “The Gospel Changes Everything”**

Creation Mandate

Wisdom

Social Media

This week’s message:

*“Politics (and other idols)”*

Matthew 22:15-22

### **Jesus and Politics**

Matthew 22:15-22

### **What is Politics?**

Definition:

- A. The Art or Science of Government (Government)
- B. The Art of Science of influencing Governmental Policy (Policy)
- C. The Art or Science of Winning or Keeping Control of Governmental Power (Political)

### **How does Scripture refer to Politics?**

#### The New Testament

Acts 1:6-8

Acts 5:27-29

Romans 13:1-7

1 Peter 2:13

1 Timothy 2:1-2

#### The Old Testament (The Mosaic Law and Proverbs)

### **The way Politics have played out in 21<sup>st</sup> C America: The Myth**

### **The Idolatry of American Politics**

A call to repentance

### **The Christian and Politics: What are we to do?**

The six values of politics (not in any order!):

- Care (vrs. Harm)
- Sanctity (vrs. Degradation)
- Loyalty (vrs. Betrayal)
- Liberty (vrs. Oppression)
- Authority (vrs. Subversion)
- Fairness (vrs. Cheating)

Creation Mandate applied Politics

**Gospel Application** – *Will you seek first Jesus Christ and His kingdom, and love all people, even those you disagree with politically?*

*Will you pray for our governmental leaders, even those of the “wrong” party?*

*Will you be active in creating good government with just policies without becoming political?*

### Scripture Passages:

Bible Passages

#### **Matthew 22:15-22**

<sup>15</sup>Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. <sup>16</sup>They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. <sup>17</sup>Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax <sup>w</sup> to Caesar or not?”

<sup>18</sup>But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me?”

<sup>19</sup>Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, <sup>20</sup>and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?”

<sup>21</sup>“Caesar’s,” they replied.

Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.”

<sup>22</sup>When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

#### **Romans 13:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. <sup>2</sup>Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. <sup>3</sup>For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what

is right and you will be commended. <sup>4</sup>For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer. <sup>5</sup>Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. <sup>6</sup>This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. <sup>7</sup>Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.

### **Acts 1:6-8**

<sup>6</sup>Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

<sup>7</sup>He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. <sup>8</sup>But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

### **1 Timothy 2:1-2**

<sup>1</sup>I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people—<sup>2</sup>for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

### **Acts 5:27-29**

<sup>27</sup>The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. <sup>28</sup>"We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."

<sup>29</sup>Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"

### Quotes:

As a general rule, conservatives are animated by a mythic ideal concerned with the "right-ordering" of society. Politically conservative Christians—Protestant and Catholic—are not unique in this light but draw their political ideals from this logic and philosophical tradition.

~ Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World* (p. 112). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

Like politically conservative Christians, politically progressive Christians also are defined by and operate within a reading of myth and history. If conservatives are animated by a mythic ideal of the right ordering of society, and thus see modern history as a decline from order to disorder, progressives have always been animated by the myth of equality and community and therefore see history as an ongoing struggle to realize these ideals.

~ Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World* (p. 132). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

In 1908 Georges Sorel wrote that myths in politics are "a model to which [people] can compare existing society in order to estimate the amount of good and evil it contains." Therefore, they "are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act." In this light, political myths can be seen as a source of moral energy and enthusiasm—they motivate, they inspire, and they enflame passions to create and even to destroy. Part of what is so powerful about a

political myth, according to Sorel, is that “people who are living in this world of ‘myths,’ are secure from all refutation.” What intensifies the power of political myths is the fact that they are often infused with ultimate meaning; and among people of faith, they are often conflated with the ideals of the coming kingdom. This fact makes political myths combustible—as much of a problem as it is a potential for good—for the way they invariably provide other-worldly justifications for this-worldly actions.

~ Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World* (p. 176). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

Take government, for example. In the context of the fallen world, the ends of government become distorted and its authority is corrupted. The result is an institution that has become an end in itself and thus an idol that both seduces and enslaves through its power. In its claims to freedom, peace and justice, it promulgates a false theology of redemption to the world. It is false not only because it offers itself and its best ideals as a substitute for God but also because its ideals can only be realized through force and the appeal to force. And yet God still permits human government to exist and, in existing, it functions to restrain human evil.

~ Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World* (p. 157). Oxford University Press. Kindle Edition.

The second task is for the church and for Christian believers to decouple the “public” from the “political.” Politics is always a crude simplification of public life and the common good is always more than its political expression. As we have seen, the expectations that people place on politics are unrealistic for most of the problems we face today are not resolvable through politics. That, however, is not the most serious problem. Far more grave is the way politicization has delimited the imaginative horizon through which the church and Christian believers think about engaging the world and the range of possibilities within which they actually act. Politics is just one way to engage the world and, arguably, not the highest, best, most effective, nor most humane way to do so. This does not mean that Christians shouldn’t “vote their values” or be active in political affairs. It is essential, however, to demythologize politics, to see politics for what it is and what it can and cannot do and not place on it unrealistic expectations. It cannot realize the various mythic ideals that inspire different Christian communities, it cannot even reduce the tension that exists between the concrete realities of everyday life and the moral and spiritual ideals of the Kingdom of God. At best, politics can make life in this world a little more just and thus a little more bearable.

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### **The Role of Government**

Within conservative evangelical circles, views on the role of government have often been limited to the New Testament teachings found within the epistles, e.g., Romans 13:1-7. These teachings emphasized the role God has given government to punish “wrongdoers” who threaten the peace and stability of their jurisdictions. While this role necessarily reflects several of the pillars of the moral spectrum (above), the emphasis within conservative evangelical circles has emphasized the authority aspect of this teaching. Law and order at the hands of authorities has always been a strong element in conservative evangelicalism. However, the

Bible has much more to say on the role of government than the role it plays in the establishment and sustaining of a law-abiding and orderly society. While this is obviously a very important aspect of the responsibilities of government, a complete perspective on the role of government needs to reflect the whole counsel of God.

The Mosaic Code, given by God to Israel provided not only for the punishment of wrongdoers, but also for the care of the poor and immigrant (Leviticus 19:9-10, Deuteronomy 24:19-20), protection of persons (Exodus 21:18-32), protection of property (Exodus 21:33-22:1-15), providing justice for the weak (Deuteronomy 24:17-18), prohibitions against usury (Deuteronomy 23:19-20), freedom from long-term restricting debt (Leviticus 25:8-19), the fair treatment of the handicapped (Leviticus 19:14), fairness in the courts (Exodus 23:1-9, Leviticus 19:15), the equal treatment of immigrants and non-native peoples (Exodus 23:1-9, Leviticus 19:33-34), and even quarantining (Leviticus 13:45-14:57). While we are not under the Mosaic Code, we see reflected in the laws God's perspective on the broad civic responsibilities of a nation of people.

The Proverbs contain a number of teachings on the government, often imaged as "the king":

- A nation built on justice established by the government will endure, but if the government is corrupted by bribery and favoritism, the nation will crumble (29:4).
- A government that establishes justice for the poor will endure (29:14).
- Evil governments are an abomination and will eventually fall, but a strong government is secured through justice (16:12).
- Wise governments punish the wicked (20:26).
- Governments known for their dependability and compassion will endure (20:28).
- Ruin will come upon those who fail to respect God and the government (24:20).

And perhaps one of the most striking images is that of Proverbs 31, where the future King Lemuel is being reprimanded by his mother for his womanizing and drunkenness. She admonishes him to turn from these things and to pursue a wife who will help him establish a government that protects the vulnerable and the poor and that establishes justice in the nation.

While the Prophets contain many hard words against those nations who oppress their people, the book of Amos tells of the judgment of God coming upon Israel for their religious hypocrisy (4:4-5), the oppression of the poor and needy for selfish gain by the politicians and the merchants and their wives who compel them to such acts (4:1-4, 6:4-7), and for the indifference Israel's rulers paid to the increasingly disparate and disastrous conditions of the whole nation (6:1-3).

In this brief review, we can see that God has established governments with a broad range of responsibilities that include:

- Establishment of laws that protect the rights and property of all people.

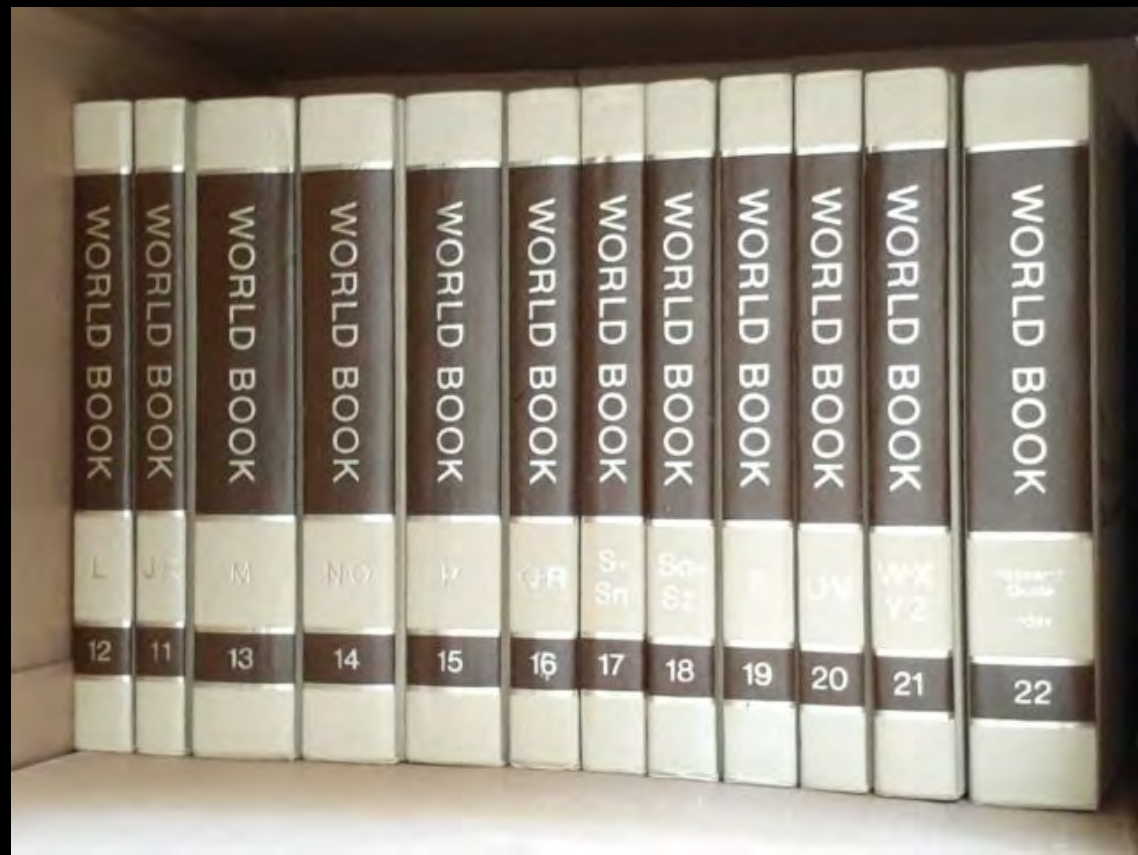
- Establishment of courts that are to judge fairly, showing no partiality to anyone.
- Protections to ensure that rulers and merchants do not systematically oppress the poor and the vulnerable for power and economic gain.
- Systems to care for and provide for the poor, the immigrant, and the vulnerable.
- Protections against the spread of sickness and disease.

As the Law, Prophets, and Writings teach, God has established governments to protect people from the evils of human society. But we also see that if a government fails in these responsibilities, it will lead not only to the downfall of those individuals responsible, for the downfall of the nation as well.

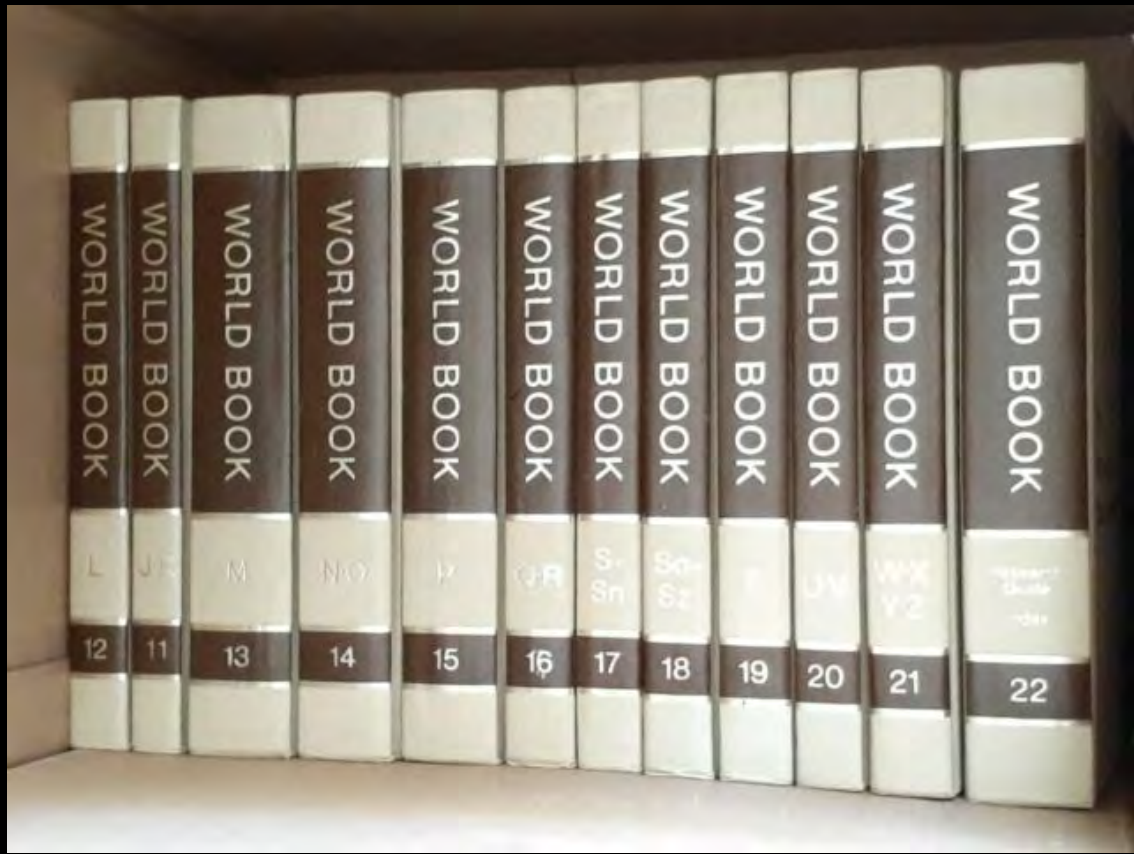
The Bible isn't specific on the form of government or on the structures it creates to accomplish the functions given to it by God. These things vary from time to time and culture to culture. However, if it fails to successfully meet its responsibilities and continues to fail over time, it will eventually lead to the downfall of the nation itself. Whether we are talking about monarchies or democracies, kings' soldiers or police departments, at issue is the character and justice of the structure and the people serving in those roles. Just kings who execute justice and protect the poor and the vulnerable will rule over a peaceful and enduring nation. Evil elected officials who use their power for selfish gain at the cost of the people will find themselves and their nation crumbling.

It is important to note several things. First, the church is not the government. It cannot fulfill the requirements of government, nor should it try. Reformation of the type that is needed not only in Minneapolis, but in all cities and nations, to confront systemic and institutionalized racism and prejudice is going to require legal and political action at all levels of government and politics. Second, the Church has the formal responsibility to call out sin and to press its people toward a gospel-based perspective of all peoples. It has the formal responsibility to identify and warn people of the sins of its culture and to call people to repentance. The people of God who make up the church are then called to take the gospel and its perspectives into their families, neighborhoods, and workplaces as witnesses to the Kingdom of God. It is within these spheres that the voice of the gospel will be made known in the culture. People across all callings will have opportunity to affect their spheres with the gospel and teachings of Jesus Christ. Third, the people of God are also called to pray persistently and vigilantly for their governments that God would work in them to bring about His purposes within the jurisdictions of those governments. This instruction is actually one of the first ordering instructions Paul gives to Timothy on the order and function of the church—to be in prayer for the governments. I wonder to what degree the churches of Jesus Christ have neglected this vital instruction and to what degree this has affected the current state of things. Fourth, as American Christians, we are to exercise the privilege and freedom that we have to vote for those people who we think are most capable of leading and governing our nation to provide the full spectrum of responsibilities God has given government bodies. While we know that the outcomes are in the hand of God, this does not free us from exercising our responsibility and using our minds, through which God works to establish his plans and purposes.

~Pastor George Stagg, in his letter to Twin Cities Church, *For the Sake of Unity* (June 2020)









# The Gospel Changes Everything



Fall  
2020  
Series



# The Gospel Changes Everything



***The Creation Mandate***

Fall  
2020  
Series



# The Gospel Changes Everything



***Gospel Wisdom for  
such a time as this***

Fall  
2020  
Series



**The Gospel  
Changes  
Everything**



***The Social World  
we live in***

Fall  
2020  
Series



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# The Gospel Changes Everything

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100%

***Politics  
(and other idols)***

Fall  
2020  
Series

# THE POLITICS OF JESUS

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# The Politics of Jesus

## Matthew 22:15-22

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“Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus and high priest”

# The Politics of Jesus

**Matthew 22:15-22**

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# Politics of the New Testament

## Acts 1:6-8

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# Politics in the Old Testament

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# politics

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## Definition of *politics*

**a:** the art or science of government

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## Definition of *politics*

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# BEING POLITICAL



CAUTION: LOADED WITH P9LITICAL PROMISES





As a general rule, conservatives are animated by a mythic ideal concerned with the “right-ordering” of society. Politically conservative Christians – Protestant and Catholic – are not unique in this light but draw their political ideals from this logic and philosophical tradition.

[P]olitically progressive Christians also are defined by and operate within a reading of myth and history. If conservatives are animated by a mythic ideal of the right ordering of society, and thus see modern history as a decline from order to disorder, progressives have always been animated by the myth of equality and community and therefore see history as an ongoing struggle to realize these ideals,



In 1908 Georges Sorel wrote that myths in politics are “a model to which [people] can compare existing society in order to estimate the amount of good and evil it contains.” Therefore, they “are not descriptions of things, but expressions of a determination to act.” In this light, political myths can be seen as a source of moral energy and enthusiasm – they motivate, they inspire, and they enflame passions to create and even to destroy. Part of what is so powerful about a political myth, according to Sorel, is that “people who are living in this world of ‘myths,’ are secure from all refutation.”

“What intensifies the power of political myths is the fact that they are often infused with ultimate meaning; and among people of faith, they are often conflated with the ideals of the coming kingdom. This fact makes political myths combustible – as much of a problem as it is a potential for good – for the way they invariably provide other-worldly justifications for this-worldly actions.

~ Hunter, James Davison. *To Change the World*, Oxford University Press, pages, 176

A billboard advertisement for 'The Republican Song' is mounted on a green metal structure. The billboard features a blue background with a stylized American flag on the left side. The text is written in a white, serif font. Below the main text, the website address is displayed in a smaller white font. The billboard is set against a backdrop of green trees and a clear sky.

**Please Don't Vote  
for a Democrat**

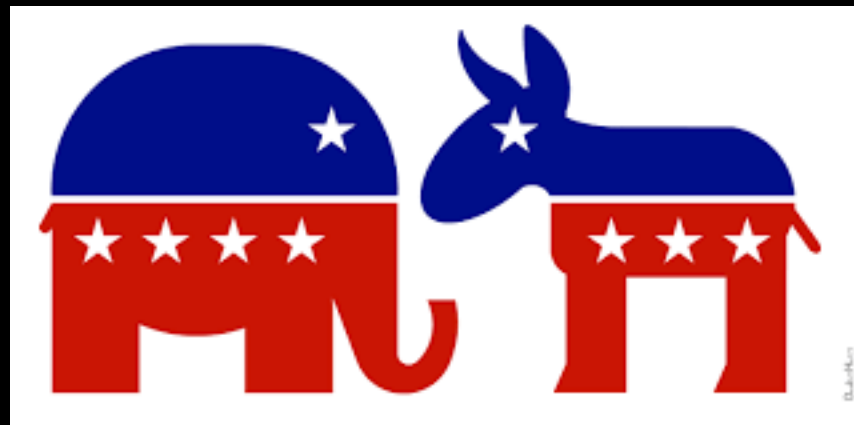
[www.TheRepublicanSong.com](http://www.TheRepublicanSong.com)

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“Take government, for example. In the context of the fallen world, the ends of government become distorted and its authority is corrupted. The result is an institution that has become an end in itself and thus an idol that both seduces and enslaves through its power. In its claims to freedom, peace and justice, it promulgates a false theology of redemption to the world. It is false not only because it offers itself and its best ideals as a substitute for God but also because its ideals can only be realized through force and the appeal to force. And yet God still permits human government to exist and, in existing, it functions to restrain human evil.



# A Call to Repentance

The background of the image is a wide-angle landscape photograph. It shows a series of rolling hills and mountains under a clear sky. The sun is positioned on the right side of the horizon, creating a bright, warm glow that transitions from yellow to orange and then to a deep blue at the top of the frame. The foreground features a rocky, grassy ridge. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

Faith

Politics



# Moral Foundations Theory

## THE RIGHTEOUS MIND

WHY GOOD  
PEOPLE ARE DIVIDED  
BY POLITICS AND  
RELIGION

JONATHAN  
HAIDT



*"A landmark contribution to humanity's understanding of itself."  
—The New York Times Book Review*

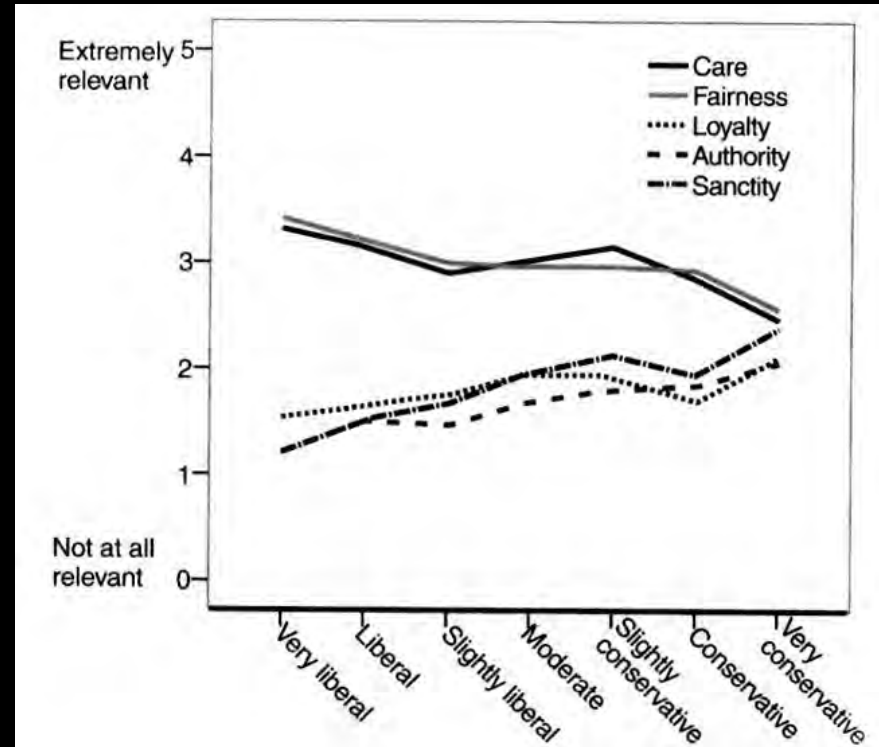
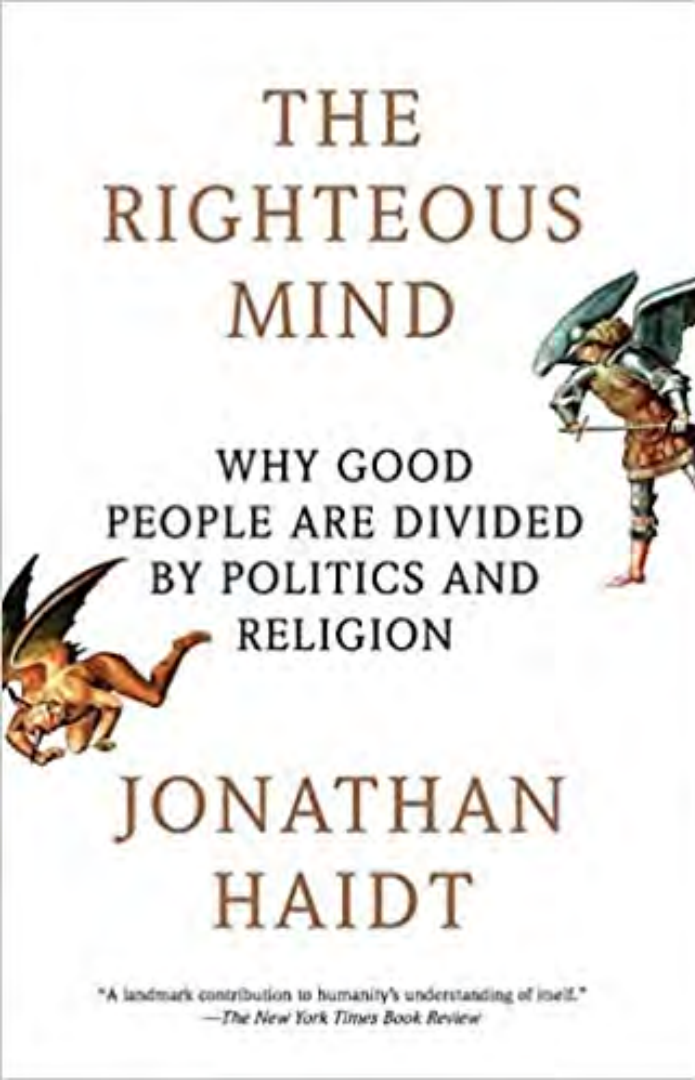
*Care/harm  
Sanctity/degradation  
Loyalty/betrayal  
Liberty/oppression  
Authority/subversion  
Fairness/cheating*

**Table 2.1** The original five foundations of intuitive ethics

<b>Foundation</b>	<b>Care/harm</b>	<b>Fairness/cheating</b>	<b>Loyalty/betrayal</b>	<b>Authority/subversion</b>	<b>Sanctity/degradation</b>
Adaptive challenge	Protect and care for children	Reap benefits of two-way partnerships	Form cohesive coalitions	Forge beneficial relationships within hierarchies	Avoid communicable diseases
Original triggers	Suffering, distress, or neediness expressed by one's child	Cheating, cooperation, deception	Threat or challenge to group	Signs of high and low rank	Waste products, diseased people
Current triggers	Baby seals, cute cartoon characters	Marital fidelity, broken vending machines	Sports teams, nations	Bosses, respected professionals	Immigration, deviant sexuality
Characteristic emotions	Compassion for victim; anger at perpetrator	Anger, gratitude, guilt	Group pride, rage at traitors	Respect, fear	Disgust
Relevant virtues	Caring, kindness	Fairness, justice, trustworthiness	Loyalty, patriotism, self-sacrifice	Obedience, deference	Temperance, chastity, piety, cleanliness

Adapted from [Haidt \(2012\)](#).

# Moral Foundations Theory



# THE RIGHTEOUS MIND

WHY GOOD  
PEOPLE ARE DIVIDED  
BY POLITICS AND  
RELIGION

JONATHAN  
HAIDT

\*A landmark contribution to humanity's understanding of itself.\*  
—The New York Times Book Review



# Moral Foundations Theory

Liberal way of seeing politics

1. *Care/harm*
2. *Liberty/oppression*
3. *Fairness/cheating*
4. *Loyalty/betrayal*
5. *Authority/subversion*
6. *Sanctity/degradation*

# THE RIGHTEOUS MIND

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# Moral Foundations Theory

Conservative way of seeing politics

1. Sanctity/*degradation*
2. Authority/*subversion*
3. Loyalty/*betrayal*
4. Fairness/*cheating*
5. Liberty/*oppression*
6. Care/*harm*

The task is for the church and for Christian believers to decouple the “public” from the “political.” Politics is always a crude simplification of public life and the common good is always more than its political expression. As we have seen, the expectations that people place on politics are unrealistic for most of the problems we face today are not resolvable through politics. That, however, is not the most serious problem. Far more grave is the way politicization has delimited the imaginative horizon through which the church and Christian believers think about engaging the world and the range of possibilities within which they actually act. Politics is just one way to engage the world and, arguably, not the highest, best, most effective, nor most humane way to



do so. This does not mean that Christians shouldn't "vote their values" or be active in political affairs. It is essential, however, to demythologize politics, to see politics for what it is and what it can and cannot do and not place on it unrealistic expectations. It cannot realize the various mythic ideals that inspire different Christian communities, it cannot even reduce the tension that exists between the concrete realities of everyday life and the moral and spiritual ideals of the Kingdom of God. At best, politics can make life in this world a little more just and thus a little more bearable.

**EMERGENCY**

# Gospel Application

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