**Oil and Water**

Well, midterm elections are over and the results are in. I hope your favorite candidates won! It’s wonderful living in a country that is a government of, by and for the people. You may have noticed a distinctive lack of campaigning in any of West Murray’s Bible classes, pulpit sermons or publications. Political commentary is a regular staple in many denominational pulpits. In fact, it is not unusual to see politicians given the opportunity to pitch their political views from many denominational podiums. Even some churches of Christ consider it appropriate to get directly involved in any number of local referendum battles (alcohol sales, for example). So, what’s up with West Murray? Are we negligent in failing to use our resources to forward political causes we deem most consistent with scriptural teaching? Where should we be directing our efforts and attention? Of course, the only way to answer these questions (in fact, any spiritual question) is to search the pages of the New Testament.

**Authorized mission of the church** – 1 Timothy 3:14 teaches that the church of the living God is the “pillar and support of the truth.” There is not a better mission statement in all of scripture. Of course, supporting truth includes 1) Evangelism (Philippians 4:15-16), 2) Edification of the saints (Ephesians 4:16), and 3) Caring for needy saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). 2 John 1:9 says that “anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God”, so unless someone can provide scripture for the West Murray church engaging in any work other than those outlined above, we won’t be involved. That includes political activism.

**What did first century evangelists preach about? –** That’s a pretty important question. There were plenty of social ills in both Roman and Jewish societies. If the gospel preachers of the day were focusing on influencing public policy, I would expect to see that reflected in the many sermons that are recorded for us in the pages of the New Testament. You know what I find? The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 2:2); God’s plan for redeeming men and women (Acts 2:38); Christian living (2 Peter 3:11-18). Even when the apostle Paul had the opportunity to have lengthy discussions with a prominent government official, he reasoned with Felix about “righteousness, self-control and judgment to come” (Acts 24:25). You see, the gospel message is that God can change the world, one person at a time, and that was the focus of first century Christians (Acts 8:4).

**So, where does politics figure into the life of a Christian?** Romans 13 teaches that “every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities” with the only exception being when the government tells me to violate God’s will (Acts 5:29). This command applies equally to Christians with good governments and Christians with bad governments. Those of us fortunate enough to live in a free democracy have the right and privilege of choosing our leaders and influencing public policy through our representatives. The apostle Paul often took advantage of his Roman citizenship as an individual (Acts 16:37; 22:25) and we should exercise our rights as US citizens as well. We should vote for the candidates that best represent our values. We should write letters to our representatives to let them know how we feel. Every American has values and concerns that are important to them. The only difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that the disciple of Jesus is in the process of molding his entire value system to reflect the teachings of his master. The point is not to write the law of Christ into civil law. The fact is, every effort of a Christian to influence public policy is made in the context of having his “senses trained to discern good and evil” (Hebrews 5:14). Each person in a democracy has a world view and the Christian citizen is just as entitled to his as the next man.

The bottom line is that the mission of the Lord’s church collectively is to be the pillar and support of the truth. Period. Individual Christians are in the business of serving God and serving both the spiritual and physical needs of his fellow man. Political activism and the church are like oil and water. Any effort to mix the two show a blatant lack of respect for God’s authority.