



EXCERPT



Compassion (&) Conviction *The AND CAMPAIGN's Guide to Faithful Civic Engagement*

July 21, 2020 | \$22, 160 pages, hardcover | 978-0-8308-4810-2

"At a time when too many Christians let their politics shape their faith, this book is an example of faith shaping politics. You don't have to agree with every word in this book, but you do have to be grateful for the biblical principles and moral analysis that make this resource so timely and challenging."

—John Carr, director of ICSTP at Georgetown University

A Biblical Framework for Politics

There is no single Christian policy or political plan. To act like there is one, or to wish that there was one, would be to make the old mistake of thinking that the kingdom of God is like human kingdoms. The goal is not to have all Christians share the same exact politics but to have all Christians think *Christianly* about politics. Thinking about politics from a biblical framework doesn't mean we'll always agree, but it does exclude some policies and forms of advocacy that are counter to our beliefs.

Politics is a limited but essential forum for pursuing the well-being of our neighbors. It is limited in both its scope and its effectiveness. Politics can and should only reach so much and so far, and political solutions will never approach the perfect justice that Jesus is bringing. Our hope in all things is in him.

Do you advocate social justice or family values? Do you support women or are you against abortion? Do you love the poor or do you believe in personal responsibility?

Don't answer those questions—or at least not in the way they're asked. They are based on a false premise and thus create a false dilemma for Christians. This is what happens when we allow the world to frame the questions and the issues for us: we end up choosing one of two wrong answers or rejecting one of two right answers and losing control of our public witness in the process. Part of getting the correct answer is about framing the issues correctly.

When Christians enter the political arena, we often feel like we're forced to choose between two very flawed options that compromise our beliefs. This is because our political system is dangerously polarized and both sides frame the issues to fit incomplete or dishonest narratives. As you can see, when the issue isn't framed properly, there often isn't a correct answer.

America's current political system separates love from truth, compassion from conviction, and social justice from moral order as if they're somehow at odds with one another. People who support social-justice issues don't generally support traditional views of morality and vice versa. But there's no clear reason why those two stances should be separate. It's just presented to us as the only way, and we accept it. Most people aren't aware that a viable alternative exists.

Here's how these competing narratives usually play out: those on the right side of the political spectrum say they stand for individual freedom, patriotism, and moral order; the left, on the other hand, claims to stand for justice, equality, and inclusion. Conservatives say progressives are immoral because of their positions on abortion, religious liberty, and the like. Progressives say conservatives are bigoted and lack compassion when it comes to poverty, race, and gender. Both sides have become less tolerant of differing viewpoints and often stamp out candidates and advocates with a more nuanced or moderate perspective.



Tara Burns, print and online publicity
800.843.4587 ext. 4059 or tburns@ivpress.com

Krista Clayton, author interviews
800.843.4587 ext. 4013 or kclayton@ivpress.com



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Many Christians are conflicted because they believe in freedom, moral order, justice, equality, and inclusion. We want to protect the unborn *and* treat the poor and racial minorities with love and compassion. We also see merit in the criticisms of each side. Yet based on how the issues are presented, Christians are told to either surrender their biblical convictions or neglect their Christlike compassion.

There's nothing wrong with being conflicted about how both options are right in part and wrong in part. The bigger problem is when Christians are unaware or unbothered by the faults on the side they prefer. This isn't to suggest a false equivalency between the two parties. One party might be more wrong on more issues at a given time, but we must realize that both fall well short of the biblical standard.

Christians can choose a political party, but we can't choose between love and truth. We can't fully embrace movements that dismiss justice or undermine moral order. Fannie Lou Hamer and Dorothy Day didn't buy into these distorted categories. Their civic engagement spoke to the importance of both social justice and moral order, and they were confident enough to do so without apology.

Christians must be critical thinkers and question the assumptions and conclusions presented to us. We shouldn't simply accept the issues as they've been framed by political parties, ideological tribes, or the media—because these sources usually aren't analyzing the issues from the standard of the gospel. Instead, these groups often frame the issue in a way that leads us to the conclusions they desire. But Christians must make sure biblical doctrine is the framework from which we base our explanations of political and cultural questions. Once we frame an issue properly, we're able not only to respond in a more accurate and faithful manner but also to disarm the false choices that entangle us.

Instead of answering the questions at the beginning of this section as they were posed, Christians should say, "I support social justice, morality, and family values. I don't affirm ungodly behavior, but nor do I hate the individual; I affirm the human dignity of all people. I love and care for the poor and I believe in personal responsibility." In other words, the proper framing allows us to embrace the love and truth of the gospel. Christians can reject false choices in politics without walking away from civic engagement altogether.

—Adapted from chapter three, "Compassion (&) Conviction—Civic Engagement Through a Biblical Framework"



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Q & A



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"Just in the nick of time, the AND Campaign has given us a gem, a light, a guide for how Bible believers can accurately represent Christ in a public square so desperately in need of our true and faithful witness."—Chris Broussard, broadcaster for FOX Sports and president of the K.I.N.G. Movement

A New Perspective on Christian Civic Engagement

In today's political climate, what makes this book invaluable?

Michael Wear: In a political environment rife with manipulation, propaganda, and conflicting narratives, *Compassion (&) Conviction* provides a framework that can help orthodox Christians think and act faithfully in our politics for the good of their neighbors. There's a lot of theory and ruminations about politics out there, but with this book we wanted to provide a practical guide for how Christians can make a difference in our politics while staying true to themselves and their faith.

Through what lens should Christians view civic and political engagement?

Chris Butler: Partisanship cannot be the lens through which Christians view civic and political engagement; as with everything else, we should reason from Scripture. Faithful Christian engagement in civic life and politics calls for both compassion *and* conviction, progressivism in the face of persistent injustice *and* conservatism that restores and preserves timeless truth. Christians may *participate* in political parties and civic institutions, but Christians *belong* to the Lord. Christians don't have to choose a side because they are on the Lord's side.

What do you hope readers will take away from your book?

Jason Giboney: Politics is not an ultimate thing, but it does provide Christians with a robust opportunity to protect human dignity and promote human flourishing. Christians should engage in the civic space and represent the compassion and conviction of Jesus Christ when they do so. I believe there are five main things for a reader to take away from this book:

1. The gospel has political implications.
2. Christians must transcend partisanship and tribalism.
3. The gospel combines love and truth, and we should do the same in our civic engagement.
4. How we engage people in this conversation matters because we are representatives of the kingdom.
5. Christians must represent social justice and moral order, whether it is popular or not.

Michael Wear: I hope people will decide that political withdrawal or political sycophancy are not options, and instead choose faithful political engagement oriented toward the well-being of their communities and the nation.



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"Empowering. Practical. Enlightening. Convicting. Finally here's a resource for Christians to understand their civil duty in voting and how they should engage in political affairs. . . . This book isn't just an explanation of our Christian duty in the public space; it's an invitation to actively engage in politics and civics as informed believers." —**Cornelius Lindsey**, lead pastor of the Gathering Oasis Church, Atlanta

Backgrounds Rooted in Law, Politics, and Faith



Justin Giboney is an attorney and political strategist in Atlanta, Georgia. Giboney has managed successful campaigns for elected officials in the state and referendums relating to the city's transportation and water infrastructure.

In 2012 and 2016, Georgia's Fifth Congressional District elected him as a delegate for the Democratic National Convention and he served as the co-chair of Obama for America's Gen44-Atlanta initiative. A former Vanderbilt University football player and law student, Giboney served on the Urban League of Greater Atlanta Board of Directors. Additionally, Giboney has participated in LEAD Atlanta, Outstanding Atlanta, and the Georgia Bar Association's Leadership Academy.



Michael Wear is chief strategist of the AND Campaign and founder of Public Square Strategies LLC, a consulting firm that helps religious organizations, political organizations, and businesses effectively navigate the rapidly changing American religious and political landscape.

Wear directed faith outreach for President Obama's historic 2012 reelection campaign. As one of the youngest White House staffers in modern American history, he served in the White House faith-based initiative during President Obama's first term. He is the author of *Reclaiming Hope: Lessons Learned in the Obama White House About the Future of Faith in America* and holds an honorary position at the University of Birmingham's Cadbury Center for the Public Understanding of Religion. He is also a senior fellow at The Trinity Forum.



Chris Butler is the senior leader of the Chicago Embassy Church Network and has been involved in several efforts to improve educational equity in Chicago. He serves as the founder and executive director of Parent Power Chicago as well as the founder of the Chicago Peace Campaign, which organizes churches and other faith-based institutions to build peacemaking networks in local communities.

Butler has a Bachelor's Degree in Civic and Political Engagement from Northeastern Illinois University. He and his wife, Aziza are joyful parents of four children.



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