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Abandoning The Duty Of A Shepherd: Should Pastors Speak About Politics From The Pulpit?

By **MARK HENRY** | APRIL 20, 2026



Should pastors speak about politics from the pulpit? Now there's a loaded question that's guaranteed to stir some debate and ruffle a few feathers within Christian circles.

On one end of the spectrum, there are some who would say worship should be kept separate from politics and therefore, political topics should never be discussed during a church service. On the other side of the spectrum, there are those who assert that it's impossible to escape touching on political issues when preaching from God's Word because much of the instruction, lessons, and principles taught in the Bible are directly relevant to issues and topics of today which are inherently political. So, how do we know who's right?

Understanding What "Politics" Really Means

Attempting to answer this question first requires one to explore what exactly is being described or alluded to when using the term "politics." We hear the word "politics" used all the time to describe conversation and content about a wide variety of subjects. For example, if a governing official makes a remark or does something that's perceived as disparaging towards another people group, it might be said that they committed "political suicide." When

certain views and positions are expressed in favor for or against particular social groups such as a select race or certain gender to sway others' opinions, it's often referred to as "identity politics." If someone adapts their language or modifies their behavior to avoid being labeled insensitive, intolerant, or offensive, they're typically described as being "politically correct."

So, what do phrases like these have in common and why are they described as being "political"? They all center around issues and topics relating to communities or collectives of people within a society.

Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines **politics** as "*the art or science of government.*" It goes on to describe it as, "*the art or science concerned with guiding or influencing governmental policy,*" "*competition between competing interest groups or individuals for power and leadership (as in a government),*" and "*the total complex of relations between people living in society.*"

In other words, politics involves the practice of providing leadership, articulating standards and procedures, and exercising authority for the governance of a society as it pertains to the subjects, situations, and circumstances arising therein. Okay, okay... I know that sounds complicated. But what it really boils down to is how those in charge deal with the circumstances of life among the people they've been commissioned to oversee.

Now let me ask, does the Bible provide instructions and guidance related to leadership? Yes! Does it speak to how followers of Jesus are to conduct themselves relative to the authorities who govern them? Yes! Does it speak on the topic of relationships and more specifically, how believers are to interact with family, neighbors, and fellow members of the Body of Christ? Absolutely! Does it touch on relevant issues and topics from God's perspective that are often the focus of political discussion and debate? Unquestionably, yes!

So, if Scripture deals with subject matter that happens to align with the current political subjects and trends of the day, any reputable pastor who teaches the full counsel of God's Word will inevitably preach and teach on a subject that could easily be perceived as political.

When Biblical Teaching Becomes "Political"

The reality is that at the heart of the current affairs, issues, and dilemmas with which our governing leaders are concerned, to which we attach the label of being "political," they're essentially matters related to morality, culture, and even spirituality.

When a pastor preaches about what God has to say in His Word about gender, intimacy and marriage, sanctity of life, parental authority, stewardship of resources whether personal or societal, defending one's family, threats of false doctrines and religions, etc., they are not being "political" but Biblical. Speaking on such topics does not imply that a pastor has an agenda; it simply means they are faithfully fulfilling their duty to proclaim the truth on such matters which God has laid out in His Word.

The Church's True Mission: Proclaiming the Gospel

Now, let's be clear. As followers of Christ, we have an agenda. We have been given a mandate, a commission. That is, to "*make disciples of all the nations...teaching them to observe all that*

I commanded you” (Mt. 28:19-20). Jesus told the apostles that they would “*be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth* (Ac. 1:8),” a mission that not only applied to Christ’s original band of apostles, but also to all who would become His followers in the future. Simply put, Jesus is to be the focus and center of our message, and its dissemination across the globe is to be our aim. As Christians, we are called to advance the Gospel.

In this commissioning to spread the Good News, it’s worth noting that two of the key words contained in these verses include “disciples” and “teaching.” Both words pertain to the impartation of knowledge, wisdom, and instruction. In other words, the responsibility of making disciples entrusted to Christians doesn’t stop at helping others to understand their problem with sin and the need to acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Savior to be right with God; it also involves education, correction, and training in righteousness (2 Ti. 3:16). Making disciples is a transformative process whereby the Spirit of God changes one from the inside out, continually shaping and refining them into the likeness of Jesus (Ro. 8:29) and equipping them with power to accomplish the work He has set before them (2 Ti. 3:17, Ep. 2:10).

From cover to cover, the beauty of the Gospel conveyed in God’s Word is its power to transform individuals by turning hearts back to God. This then, transforms relationships with others which has the power and potential to transform entire cultures and civilizations. Paul and Silas are fitting examples who modeled this and were accused of “upsetting the world,” showing just how much the message they brought impacted entire communities for Jesus (Ac 17:6). At the same time, it’s clear that their teachings didn’t sit well with everyone and soon escalated into accusations of opposition to Caesar’s decrees, requiring the involvement of city authorities (Ac. 17:7-9). Said differently, these two preachers proclaimed what could have been easily labeled a “political” message according today’s standards and it upset a lot of people.

Fear, Compromise, and the Silence of the Pulpit

That, my friends, is really the root of why many pastors today preach weak sermons and why churches, if not entire denominations today are drifting away from sound Biblical doctrine which has been the bedrock of Christian beliefs for generations – Fear. Fear of being called “political.” Fear of accusations of being divisive. Fear of being labeled intolerant, insensitive, or not being inclusive. It’s a fear of man that overshadows the fear of God.

The Bible itself doesn’t shy away from stating how the values and beliefs of the world are at odds with those of God (Jn. 2:15-17, Ja. 4:4). It is exactly why Jesus warned His disciples that they would be hated by the world considering that the world first hated Him (Jn. 15:18-25).

Speaking Biblical truth naturally makes others uncomfortable and can be upsetting when it challenges beliefs and behaviors that are out of alignment with God. Pastors know this all too well, and for many preachers, it becomes the rationale for why they choose to avoid teaching on hard passages and topics in Scripture. Were they to do so, it could result in losing church attenders, seeing a decline in giving, creating division among the congregation, causing their church to lose non-profit status, developing a negative reputation, or being “cancelled” entirely, and potentially losing their job. That’s a lot to risk.

Rather than jeopardizing the status quo in their church by accurately, completely, and

faithfully preaching from God's Word, it simply becomes easier to water down the message, avoid certain subjects, or worse, to compromise sound doctrine instead of chancing potential accusations of being "political" or facing other undesirable fallout stemming from people being offended.

Here's the thing...It's entirely possible for pastors to accurately communicate Biblical truth about current political issues without endorsing a specific candidate or promoting a particular political party. In fact, it may be wise for ministers to avoid making endorsements. But, purposefully neglecting to deliver instruction from any part of God's Word because of fear, or sacrificing Biblical truth for the sake of maintaining unity amongst a congregation is a dangerous abandonment of his duty as a shepherd of Jesus' flock. Pastors should strive to "rightly divide" (accurately handle) the Word of truth just as Paul urged Timothy (**2 Ti. 2:15**). That includes speaking truth that can make people uncomfortable or that challenges the cultural norms of the day.

Speaking Truth Regardless of Labels

By nature, truth is divisive. Truth distinguishes reality from fantasy or that which is certain from that which is doubtful. It is the dividing line between fact and fiction, accuracy from error, and good from evil. It is God Himself that is the source and standard of truth. Therefore, anything standing in disagreement or opposition to God or that which He's expressed in His Word, will be challenged, exposed, and condemned as sin. That's not political; it's spiritual.

If you attend a church that has a pastor with the courage and boldness to faithfully teach and preach all that's contained throughout the pages of the Bible, a shepherd who doesn't compromise truth just because it might be discomfoting to some, you should heartily thank the Lord for blessing you with the gift of such a devoted shepherd. More importantly, pray for your pastor knowing that every time he stands behind that pulpit on Sunday morning, he not only opens himself up to scorn, accusations, and attack personally, but also risks the livelihood of his family.

To you faithful pastors who might be reading this, I thank you for your sacrifice and service in equipping and encouraging the saints (**Ep. 4:12**), I encourage you fight the good fight of faith (**1 Ti. 6:12**), I remind you that God hasn't given us a spirit of timidity (**2 Ti. 1:7**), and I humbly share the privilege and responsibility with you of watching over the souls entrusted to us by Jesus, knowing that it's to Him whom we will one day give an account (**He. 13:17**). So, let us not forsake our calling to faithfully preach the Word – the entire Word, and fulfill our ministry (**2 Ti. 4:2-5**)!

In closing, to answer the original question, "*Should pastors speak about politics from the pulpit?*" it really boils down to whether a pastor should communicate the truth. Truth can be hard. Truth can hurt. Truth can be divisive. But if speaking truth entails what some might consider being political, then being political it is. Jesus is clear that *He* is the truth (**Jn. 14:6**) and it is *Him* that we preach, a stumbling block to some, foolishness to others, but to us believers who have been called, it is the power and wisdom of God (**1 Co. 1:23**).

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