

Better Political Engagement

(Exerpts from an article by **Daniel Bennett**, an associate professor of political science and assistant director of the [Center for Faith and Flourishing](#) at John Brown University. He also serves as president of Christians in Political Science.)

“How can Christians prepare for 2020 and beyond?” Let me suggest three markers of a better political engagement.

First, we must hold fast to God’s declaration in [Genesis 1:27](#) that every person is made in his image. The *imago Dei* is more than a theological statement about creation. It tells us that our attitudes toward others should reflect the love God for them, acknowledging their inherent dignity as created beings. Importantly, remembering the *imago Dei* does not mean we must agree with others. Christians are called to speak truth into a corrupted world. But we can do this in ways that don’t diminish human dignity.

Second, we should listen—really *listen*—to our perceived opponents. John Inazu has [written](#) eloquently about how, in order for a pluralist society to thrive, citizens must seek to understand perspectives and views we believe are wrong. No, this doesn’t mean Christians should be “squishy” on meaningful matters. But our belief that God is the author of truth should free us to genuinely hear from others, to wrestle with their views, and to engage their reasoning with humility and grace. We should be slow to ascribe the worst motives to those holding views we find misguided. Just as we have received immeasurable grace when we did nothing to deserve it, so we should be quick to extend grace to those with whom we disagree.

Finally, we must put politics in its rightful place and not let it dominate our actions, relationships, or priorities. Political affiliation is not our identity. We are to be Christians first in thought, word, and deed. No matter how often you hear commentators declare 2020 “the most important election of our lifetime,” don’t buy into the perspective that the stakes of any one election are greater than the stakes of a compromised witness that besmirches the name of Jesus. Our hope is eternal, which is infinitely longer than four years in the White House or 30 years on the Supreme Court. In light of this magnificent hope, it makes little sense to panic over cultural setbacks *or* to compromise convictions to better compete in contemporary political battles. Losing political battles changes nothing about where we stand in eternity. Our hope is wholly in Christ.. For Christians called to be salt and light in a dark and decaying world, it’s even harder. But the challenging reality of politics shouldn’t lead us to give up on it.

Christians should take political engagement seriously for the sake of the kingdom, to seek justice, to defend the defenseless, and to love our neighbors. But whereas much political engagement today stems from fear, anger, and even despair, ours should stem from our identity in Christ. It should reflect our confidence that whatever happens in the state of earthly affairs, and regardless of temporal wins and losses, the King of glory remains on his throne.”

