

Moral and spiritual issues in the 2012 election
Which view do you favor?

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1. There are more significant policy differences between the two parties in 2012 than perhaps at any time in American history (except the Civil War). Here are some suggestions of how to teach people in our churches what those differences are so they can make wise, informed decisions.
2. It is not true that “things will be about the same no matter who wins.” The parties have two vastly different views of the role of government. Life under one party for the next four years will be vastly different than life under the other party (see chart below).
3. In my personal view, far more is at stake than the next four years, for the entire future direction of the nation is being decided. One party or the other will likely solidify control of the Supreme Court, which is now (unfortunately) the ultimate prize in the American political process. I think what is at stake is whether America will continue as it has existed for 236 years, a federal republic of separated and defined powers under the supreme authority of the Constitution, or whether we will come under the essentially unconstrained control of an all-powerful national government.
4. Pastors can choose to teach on all or just some of these issues, seeking God’s wisdom in their decisions.
5. For more detailed discussion of these and other issues, see Wayne Grudem, *Politics – According to the Bible* (Zondervan, 2010).

	LIBERAL VIEW (votes for Party A promote this view)	COMMENTS	CONSERVATIVE VIEW (votes for Party B promote this view)
*1	The Constitution is a living document that changes meaning according to the changes of society. Judges should tell us how the Constitution is changing, and should have power to decide all the major issues facing the nation. (4 justices: Ginsburg, Breyer, Sotomayor, Kagan)	Rom. 13:1-2; Deut. 17:18; Ezek.44:24; Roe v. Wade; Lemon v. Kurtzman (1971); Kelo v. City of New London (2005); liberal dissent in BSA v. Dale (2000)	The Constitution has a fixed meaning (its original public meaning, what the words meant when it was adopted). Judges should interpret the Constitution, not change it. The people’s elected representatives in Congress and in state legislatures, not unelected judges, should decide the major issues facing the nation. The fixed meaning of the Constitution is our foundational protection against the tendency of governments to usurp more and more power. (4 justices: Roberts, Scalia, Thomas, Alito)
*2	Freedom of religion should be diminished and become freedom from religion in public places (government events, schools, school buildings, parks, sports). First Amendment means government should not even favor all religion in general. Freedom of conscience must be nullified if it stands in the way of supporting abortion-causing drugs, contraceptives, and same-sex “marriage.”	Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 5:29; 1 st Amendment – original intent; 50% of delegates voting “no” to add God to a party platform (people’s “God-given potential”); admin. position in Hosanna-Tabor v. EEOC (2012)	Freedom of religion means individuals should be free to express their beliefs in public places. First Amendment means government should not “establish” an official national church, but it should have policies that benefit all religions generally. Government should not force people to violate their consciences over widely-disputed moral issues like abortion, contraceptives, and same-sex “marriage”
*3	Abortion: Laws should protect a woman’s right to abortion on demand throughout entire pregnancy . Only judges who agree with this should be confirmed as federal judges.	Ex 21:22-25, Psalm 51:5 Deut 30:19-20, Psalm 139:13, Health Care Mandate	Laws should protect the life of the unborn child throughout pregnancy . Judges should not create new laws about abortion but should leave this to be decided by elected representatives of the people.
*4	Same-sex “marriage”: Government should recognize and promote same-sex marriage. Federal courts should declare any other view unconstitutional (even state constitutional amendments such as Prop. 8 in CA should be nullified by the courts). Speaking against this view is hate speech.	I Cor. 6:9-11, Rom. 1:26-28, Gen. 1:27	Marriage: Government should preserve marriage between one man and one woman . The definition of marriage should be decided by the will of the people through their elected representatives and referendums, not by unelected, unaccountable judges.

5	The national government should have unlimited powers so that it can do whatever Congress and the president decide.	Deut. 17:16-17; 1 Sam. 8:10-18; biblical examples of kings with too much power going astray; 10 th Amendment; liberal 4-justice dissent in Affordable Care Act case.	The national government should be a government of limited powers . Powers not given to the national government are reserved for the states and the people.
6	The president should be free not to enforce laws he disagrees with.	Deut. 17:18-19; 2 Sam. 12:7-9; non-enforcement of immigration law, Def of Marriage Act, welfare reform work req's; "recess" apt s like CFBP	The president should enforce the laws passed by Congress and signed in the past by any president.
7	More government regulation and control makes society better.	Exod. 20:2 (out of slavery); Lev. 25:10	More individual freedom promotes a better society. (But people should not be free to commit crimes.)
*8	Tax dollars for education should only go to public school teachers who are represented by national teachers' unions. Government experts know best how to raise children.	Deut 6:4-9, Eph 6:1-4 Proverbs 4:1-9	Tax dollars for education should allow parents to have free choice in how their children are educated (using tuition vouchers to pay for any public or private school). Parents know best how to raise children.
9	The money in society belongs to the society as a whole (or the government), so that tax cuts are government's " gifts " to people who are allowed to keep more of society's money.	understanding of private property in Exod. 20:15; 30:15; 1 Kings 21 (Naboth); Prov. 17:26; 19:14	The money in a society belongs to individuals who own it, so that tax cuts are not government "gifts" but are simply allowing people to keep more of what was always their own money in the first place.
10	Prosperity is created by government stimulus spending .	Gen. 1:28	Prosperity is created by productive human work .
*11	Care for the poor: The solution to economic recession is more government spending to "stimulate" demand and get the economy growing again, especially through more government-paid jobs.	I Sam. 8:10-18 I Sam 12:3,4	Care for the poor: The solution to economic recession is less government spending , because this allows lower taxes , which leaves money in the hands of the people who create productive businesses and more jobs .
12	More government debt ("deficit spending") is not very harmful and is needed to fund important government social programs today.	Ps. 37:21	More government debt ("deficit spending") is always harmful because it requires higher taxes now and in the future; it also removes money from the private sector, leading to economic slowdowns. More debt also leads governments to print more money to pay the debt, causing harmful inflation. Inflation hurts everybody.
*13	The solution to poverty is government giving poor people more money to live on, and hiring more people in government jobs, paid for by higher taxes on those who are earning money. Any tax cuts should be temporary and targeted to specific needy groups.	Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; understanding of private property in Exod. 20:15; 30:15; Prov. 17:26; Thess. 3:10	The solution to poverty is lower permanent tax rates for everybody , removing much uncertainty for business planning, and leaving more money in private sector to build businesses which create jobs so that people can support themselves.
14	Promotes welfare policies that result in more and more people dependent on government .	2 Thes.3:7-10; I Sam 8:10-18; ; Mark 6:3; Acts 18:3; 1 Thess. 4:11-12;	Promotes economic growth and work incentive policies that lead to more jobs in private sector and fewer people dependent on government .

15	Economic justice requires more equality of results (more equal sharing of income). Emphasis on equality .	Exod. 23:3, 6; Lev. 19:15; Prov. 17:26;	Economic justice requires more equality of opportunity , and differing incomes will result from different economic values for people's different work. Emphasis on freedom . Economic justice also means allowing people to keep the fruits of their labor.
16	Businesses need more and more regulations and taxes , even if they have to downsize or shut down, because they are generally corrupt and make excess profits.	Romans 13:4a 1 Peter 2:14 Proverbs 17:26	Businesses need less regulation and lower taxes because, while we need laws against fraud and defective products, businesses in general provide jobs and products of value that bring good to society.
17	The economy should be controlled by the government , who will pick winners and losers in the private economy, supporting some industries and companies and restricting or taxing and punishing others.	Private property in Bible; Exod. 20:15; Lev. 25:10; Deut. 19:14; idea of personal stewardship of money; limited role for government in Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-14	"Nobody" should control the economy, but instead the free choices of millions of individuals should direct the market by influencing supply and demand.
18	Carbon dioxide is causing dangerous global warming . Therefore we should drastically restrict our use of coal, oil, and natural gas , and force people instead to use solar and wind energy. It does not matter that this will cause significant economic loss, and it does not matter that solar energy and wind energy are unreliable, diffuse, difficult to transport, and 2 to 5 times more expensive than carbon-based fuels. Saving the earth is more important.	Gen. 1:31; Gen. 1:28; Job 38:9; Isa. 45:18; Prov. 8:29 Gas prices: (2008) \$1.86 → \$3.83 (today). Coal plants being shut down. Oil drilling restricted, permits delayed, Keystone Pipeline from Canada blocked	Carbon dioxide is an ordinary and valuable part of nature . The correlations between carbon dioxide concentrations and global temperature change are uncertain and at most bring minimal change. The cheapest, least harmful, best solution to small temperature changes (1 or 2 degrees per century, alternating between warmer and cooler) is human adaptability. Coal, oil, and natural gas are the most abundant, compact, easily transportable, cheap sources of energy in the world and we should continue to use them as good gifts from God. Restricting their use in wealthy nations will lead to prohibitively high energy costs with little if any benefit.
19	Our military strength is excessive and leads to danger, because the nations who oppose us do so because of the evil things we have done to them.	Deut 7:1-3, Deut 10:1 Joshua 1:6-9 Romans 13:3,4 Just war theory; US Navy: 588 ships in 1988 to 285 today; missiles cut from over 5000 to 1500; antimissile defenses canceled in Poland, Czech Rep.	Our military should be strong – able to defeat any two enemies at once. Like it or not, we are the world's peacekeeper and the sole defender of freedom for many smaller countries. Peace through strength. If US weakens, China → Taiwan, S Pacific; Cuba/ Venezuela → Latin America; Iran → Middle East, Israel; Russia → E. Europe; Islamic terrorism → many countries
20	Israel should be condemned for all Palestinian deaths caused when it is defending itself, and should go back to its pre-1967 borders.	Gen 17:8; 1 Chron. 16:16-18; Rom 11:28; Gen. 12:1-3; 15:18-21	Israel has a right to exist and to defend itself within its current borders. Root of Arab-Israeli conflict is 1947 refusal of Palestinian Arabs and other Arab nations to accept UN resolution calling for independent Palestinian state and continuing refusal to accept Israel's right to exist.
21	Other nations: We should stay away from influencing other nations or trying to persuade them to have governments that are truly democratic, accountable to the will of the people. Trying to spread democracy is arrogant imperialism.	Lev. 25:10; Declaration of Independence that "all men" (that is, on earth) have been endowed by Creator with rights to life, <u>liberty</u> , and pursuit of happiness	Other nations: We should try to use diplomacy, foreign aid, dissemination of information, public policy statements, and sometimes financial and military help, to promote democratic movements in the unfree nations of the world. We should not apologize for this.

22	Immigration: [I'm unsure what the position is but it seems to be:] We should postpone a resolution of this question as long as possible (unspoken: because the presence of more undocumented people in the country gives more political advantage to one party). It is selfish for wealthy Americans to want to close the border. Undocumented people who are here should probably be given an easy path to full citizenship.	Exod. 22:12; 23:9; Deut. 10:19; but also: governments in the Bible always controlled who was allowed to enter, and sojourners were there legally. Rom. 13:4 and the Constitutional requirement that government "ensure domestic tranquility" and "provide for the common defense" and "promote the general welfare."	Immigration: (1) We should massively increase the number of people who are allowed to come here <u>legally</u> , but also reform the system of "chain migration." (2) We should immediately secure the <u>entire</u> border completely, so that we can determine who will enter and who will not. (3) Establish some kind of immediate registration and residency process for people who are already here illegally (but not for felons, who should be deported). (4) After steps (1) and (2) are completed, the American people will overwhelmingly support a compassionate but just solution for those who are here illegally, including a lengthy but possible and fair path to full citizenship. [this paragraph is WG's own personal view – various views are all over the map]
23	Religious freedom: We should not meddle in the internal affairs of other countries, even when their governments persecute Christians and people of other religions.	Ps. 82:3-4; Lev. 25:10; Isa. 61:1; Luke 4:18	Religious freedom: We should use our influence on international public opinion, international organizations, and diplomatic and economic pressures to stand up for persecuted Christians and others in every other country on earth.
*24	We should apologize for America, because we are primarily responsible for slavery, colonialism, and exploitation of third world countries. We should be ashamed of America's many faults.	II Cor. 3:17, Psalm 33:12, greater than any other country in aiding the downtrodden, protecting freedom.	We should be proud of America. It has probably done more good for the world than any nation in the history of the earth and, although it has its faults, they are far outweighed by the good it has done for the world. America is the wealthiest, most powerful nation in the history of the world, but, unlike all previous powerful nations, it has used its power not to conquer other nations but to protect them and to defend their freedom from powerful aggressors.

What if you can't learn about every candidate? You can still vote responsibly, based on the ideas and policies in this chart, because **you are in reality voting for the party more than for the candidate:** In the current political system in the United States, every vote for every candidate is much more a vote for one party or another than for the candidate. This is because laws are not passed by individuals but only by one political party the other, under the leadership of that party's elected officials. Therefore Americans need to choose which column best represents their view, and then vote for candidates in the party that represents that column.

We should not think we have to decide to choose "the lesser of two evils." The positions in the B column above are not evil positions. They protect rule of law, freedom of religion, life, marriage, liberty, sound education of our children, fiscal responsibility, care for the poor, care for overcoming racial discrimination and income disparities, economic growth, a strong defense against evil enemies, and care for protecting freedom in other nations who depend on us, including Israel. Rulers who follow such policies are not doing "evil." They are doing what Rom. 13:4 says rulers are supposed to do, under God: they are to be "God's servant for your good" (Rom. 13:4; see also 1 Pet. 2:13-14).

All of the class lessons and outlines are posted on the class website <http://www.christianessentialsbc.com>.