

# Should I Vote For Trump or Clinton?

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## I. Introduction

Are you more than nervous about this presidential election, in fact, are you terrified at the thought of the “other” candidate winning? As a Christian, can you in good conscience vote for Trump or Clinton? Is it OK to vote for the lesser of two evils? Does the candidate’s character really matter? Does God actually provide guidance on how to choose a leader? If He does, what do we look for?

## II. Who/What Guides Our Decisions, Especially Difficult Ones, Fear, Anger... or God?

Millions of Christians are driven by fear, anger, and frustration this presidential election. They say things like, "If Hilary's elected, she'll destroy this country." They said similar things about President Obama. Well, it's almost eight years of his presidency and the country is still here, but some Christians respond, "Barely." Millions of Christians voted for McCain and Romney, and yet God placed Obama in the White House twice. The ultimate decision as to who will lead each nation is God's (Romans 13:1). Our job is to go by the instructions He's given on how to choose leaders. But if fear or anything else drives our vote, then we will excuse behavior we would normally call sin. We will endorse individuals we would never qualify to lead our churches. In fact, we'll turn mere humans into gods, i.e., we'll look to them to save us instead of God, even after God's promised to never leave us and to protect us from everybody, President or not (Hebrews 13:5-6).

### **How God chooses a leader compared to the World**

Deuteronomy 17:14-20: For God, Character is the acid test

These are God's instructions to Israel on how to choose a king: He must be the one God chooses and a native not a foreigner. He must not amass a massive military as if he's the nation's defense instead of God. He must not multiply wives, lest his heart turn away from the Lord in order to please himself. He must not amass great wealth as if he is his (and the nation's) security instead of God. He must make a copy of God's Law/Word in order to study and obey it, lest he convince himself that he is the master of his universe instead of God and thus become arrogant and boastful. If he reveres God instead of himself, his reign will last for generations after him.

So how does God choose a leader? Character, i.e., how will they handle every aspect of life, will they follow God or their own greatness and desires? If you think that this is specific to Israel and doesn't apply to our modern-day politics, yes, this is specific to Israel. However, all of the Old Testament was written for “our learning” and “our instruction” (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11). If Deuteronomy 17:14-20 was also written for our instruction, how do we apply it? It's about selecting the leader of a nation, thus, it reveals God's thinking on how to do it. In fact, you'll see Him point to the same acid test in the New Testament.

### 1 Samuel 8-10, 12, For the World, Appearance is the acid test

1 Samuel 8: Israel wants to follow the world's way of leadership even after God warns them that the king they choose will be of bad character; he will be utterly self-centered. After everything we've learned about Trump from his own words and actions, there are millions of Americans including Christians essentially saying, "We don't care, we want a 'king' who will save us from the Democrats." After everything we've learned about Clinton from her own words and actions, there are millions of Americans including Christians saying, "We don't care, we want a 'queen' to save us from the Republicans." BTW, do you know who the real enemy is in politics? It's not the Republicans or Democrats...it's us in tandem with Satan! He deceives us and we end up selecting our leaders the way the world does instead of looking at their character the way God does.

1 Samuel 9: God causes Kish's donkeys to be lost, which makes Kish (a Benjamite) send his son Saul after them. Notice how gorgeous Saul is. Central casting couldn't have come up with a more perfect specimen to play the king in this story, 9:2. Why did God lose Kish's donkeys? To lead Saul to Samuel so he can anoint him as Israel's first king, 9:15-17. If you know the story, Saul turned out to be a horrible king. So as you look at 9:16 are you thinking, "See we can vote for Trump or Hillary. God can use them regardless of their character to save us." Is that the lesson God wants us to learn from this? Is this the king God wanted for Israel? No, in fact he told them how horrible he was going to be. But they said, "We want him anyway." The lesson is not "God can use a bad person to save us." The lesson is "We should've turned to God to save us." The amazing thing is that in spite of Israel's disobedience God was still merciful to Israel, i.e., for a time He did use Saul to save Israel, until he strayed from God and went the way of arrogance.

1 Samuel 10 and 12: here's the point of the story. Yes, God can use anyone, even when we say to Him, "We want this one as king!" But is that what God wanted, how well will that decision go for us? Samuel anoints Saul as king (10:1) but look at God's rebuke for what they did, 10:17-24. And what are the people impressed by? Appearance, 10:23-24...and yet God is still merciful, 12:13-25.

So how does the world choose a leader? Appearance, the person who looks and sounds the best. How much money does it take to win the White House? Approximately one BILLION dollars. Why so much? To hire teams of people (including pollsters and market research firms) to mold and direct the candidate in how they should look and sound. All of it, so that they will come across to the average "Joe" as an average "Joe." In other words, to mold a winning appearance that will get your vote. That's why politicians speak the way they do and promise you what you want to hear. And if they lie, cheat or have a shady sexual or financial past, there's another team that goes into action to save the appearance. They teach the candidate how to apologize and others are disseminated into the media to excuse and/or obscure the accusations. And the people often elect the one that looks and sounds the most "choice and handsome" (1 Sam 9:2).

### 1 Samuel 16, For God, Character is the acid test

Saul turns out to be as God told them so He sends Samuel to anoint God's choice as king, a runt named David. Here again we have the world's view of picking a king (and Samuel's also impressed with the world's view) 16:6-7. But look at what kind of character the one the world picks has: 17:28. In contrast, how does God choose a leader? Character, 16:7. The world says, "Look at how he/she speaks, impressive isn't it?" Bill Clinton was a master at giving a captivating speech. Obama may even be better; he's another master communicator. He was awesome at campaigning, but not very good at actually governing. God says, "Don't look at the flowery words. Look at what's inside the person." God always points to their character, rather than the outer appearance. This is how He chose Israel's second king, 1 Samuel 16:6-7 (additionally, the first thing Deuteronomy 17:14-20 says is that Israel's king was to be the one whom God chose. Israel's kings were supposed to come from the tribe of Judah not Benjamin [Saul's tribe], Genesis 49:10).

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, For God, Character is still the acid test

1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 list the qualifications God mandated of any individual who wanted to be an elder in a church.

1 Timothy 3: he must be blameless (not perfect but free from any clear character flaw), the husband of one wife (not a polygamist), temperate (restrained in their conduct), sober-minded (self-controlled), of good behavior (characteristics that evoke respect), hospitable, able to teach (and/or teachable), not given to wine (a drunk), not violent (a bully), not greedy for money, gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous (not in love with money), one who leads his house well and has children who respect and obey him, not a novice (newly converted) lest he become conceited, and he must have a good reputation with those outside the church.

Titus 1: he must be blameless (not perfect but free from any clear character flaw), that is, the husband of one wife (not a polygamist), whose children aren't accused of dissipation or insubordination (of being wild or rebellious), not self-willed (arrogant), not quick-tempered (inclined to anger), not given to wine (addicted to wine), not violent (a bully), not greedy for money, hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded (self-controlled), just (upright, fair), holy (devoted to God's view of things), self-controlled (in impulses, emotions, and desires), one who holds fast to God's reliable Word and uses its sound instruction to encourage and refute those who oppose it.

Yes, God ultimately chooses the leaders of nations, sometimes they are horrible characters, but He has His reasons for doing so. And unless we are privy to those reasons, all we have to go by is His instructions on selecting leaders. And when we look at those instructions, His main qualification is Character. That is, what kind of an individual will they be in public and private? What will they be like when faced with a crisis? Will they be arrogant and self-centered and turn to themselves or turn to God? How do they lead their family? Are they focused on pleasure, wealth, and prestige? God's view on choosing a leader hasn't changed. The acid test is the same: Character, how will they behave in every area of life, will they be the master of their universe or God?

**Arguments Christians make for voting for Trump:**

Argument 1: I'm voting the platform not the personality, first, the individual rarely implements their party's platform. Instead, what guides them is their political ideology and philosophy on life. This is how they govern and what they try to pass through Congress. Second and more importantly, platforms don't run for president, people do. Your vote doesn't endorse the party's platform; it's an endorsement of the individual candidate, including their character which affects how they govern.

Argument 2: Yes, Trump's a seriously flawed and offensive candidate, but this is not about your sensitivities; the future of the country is at stake, when does God ever say it's OK to take a wicked path in order to achieve a godly end? God doesn't just care about **what** we do, but **how** we do it: when we **do** the **what** wrong, God is very displeased, 1 Samuel 15:22, "to obey is better than sacrifice." Further, your vote is not about sensitivities; it's about what you endorse. If you endorse Trump, then you endorse him and what he stands for. And this is what our vote means as Christians. That is, we are Jesus' hands and feet here on earth. We are the Body of Christ. So wherever we go, we represent Him. We are His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5:20; Ephesians 6:20). So if we vote for this candidate or that candidate, we are telling our neighbors and the world that this is who Jesus would endorse.

Argument 3: Trump has surrounded himself with good Christians, which means that he'll govern more like a Christian than the arrogant, brash, crude individual we've seen in the Primaries, Twitter, and that 11-year old video, the question is not whether the people around Trump are walking with God. The question is, is He? Every time he opens his mouth, he proves that the god he believes in is himself. Is it possible that Christians can influence Trump? Sure, but how well has that worked with past leaders who were surrounded by Christians yet lacked character? Did they follow God or their own ends?

Argument 4: Once Trump becomes President, he will realize that the job is bigger than himself and he'll be forced to reach out to good people, to vote for Trump based on a hope that the awesome responsibility of the presidency will humble his arrogance is wishful thinking. There's no evidence that Trump is that humble or will ever be. From Trump's attitude and words from the moment he announced his candidacy for President, he has shown that he thinks nothing is too big for him. Indeed he believes that he is going to make America great again. Additionally, what is it that God calls us to reform, our economic policies, foreign policies, our social policies or our hearts? God is calling us and this nation to repent. How will we do that, through the person in the White House?

Argument 5: Trump may not know policy details and fail to do his homework, but he's a great businessman who knows how to delegate to competent people in order to create success, he might and then again he might not. Not every decision Trump makes is a brilliant one, just read some of his 2:00 a.m. tweets. And for the sake of argument, let's assume that Trump makes America great again, i.e., by the world's standards: He reduces unemployment to 0%, America is once again admired by her friends and respected by her enemies, and he institutes conservative and/or liberal social policies that everyone is happy with. One question: To whom do you think Trump will give the credit, God or himself? America can become #1 again in every sector, but if God is not in it, then it's just another prosperous wicked nation.

Argument 6: Religious freedom is at stake. Nurses may be forced to perform abortions or lose their jobs and third graders will be indoctrinated in a host of issues like gender-identity, this and much more is always at stake. But if we're going to have the moral authority to resist it, we have to have visible convictions. If we endorse one sinful individual to avoid another, where's our moral authority, e.g., how much moral authority do Jerry Falwell, Jr., and his wife have now after endorsing Trump in front of his trophy wall which included a Playboy Cover of Trump with a half-nude woman wearing his tuxedo jacket? Further, when is the Church not under persecution? Aren't Christians constantly fighting against the philosophy of this world? In fact, don't we have a 50% divorce rate now in Church? Is that the Democrats' fault or ours for not following God's Word? Finally, if we lose our job or have to pull our kids out of school, who can we turn to for help? Didn't God promise to protect us from everything? If we're going to call this nation to repent, we must not fear. Instead, we must offer them the thing they don't have: a hope that does not fear.

Argument 7: The 11-year old video is Satan tearing God's candidate down. But God is using it to humble Trump. He's repented and apologized. God can use a Sampson but not a Jezebel, what Trump did, after the video came out, was not repentance. Trump's words aren't the words of a man who's contrite and knows he needs to change. He excused the 11-year video as "locker-room talk." Is this repentance? He keeps blaming this problematic video on Hillary's campaign and the Media. Now there are more accusers and Trump dismisses them the way the Clintons and their defenders did when Bill Clinton was accused of similar or worse behavior. Trump's accusers may/may not be truthful, but is this the way a repentant man faces his accusers? Further, yes, God used Sampson but God actually chose Sampson. Where's the evidence that Trump is "God's candidate"? And this is the reality, unless you get a clear revelation from God that He specifically chose a certain candidate, all we have to go by is what He's said in His Word about selecting our leaders. As an old friend used to say, "When we cannot see the hand of God, we have to trust the Word of God."

Argument 8: You have to choose the lesser of two evils or the country is doomed. Every choice we make is tainted by sin. Look at all the former presidents who had sexual peccadillos, choosing the lesser of two evils is still choosing evil. And no, not every choice we make is tainted by sin. Didn't Christ come to save us from exactly that? Doesn't He promise that if we walk by His Spirit we will not fulfill the lust of the flesh (Galatians 5:16-24)? There's a proposition on California's ballot: Proposition 60. Among other things it mandates that performers of pornographic movies must wear condoms. What's the lesser of two evils in this choice? When the State gives you a choice between two evils, you're not supposed to choose either. You're supposed to side with God and not vote. When Caesar mandates something from you that goes against your faith, you're supposed to refuse and trust God to protect you.

Finally, what's the common thread in these eight arguments? All of them have this underlying assumption, "If we don't elect Trump Hillary will destroy America." Is this really the statement Christians want to make this presidential election, that Hillary holds this country's future in her hands instead of God?

### **What about Hillary?**

The reason this is so focused on Trump is because the majority of Christian leaders, especially the prominent ones, who've been vocal about this presidential election are in favor of Trump. They defend, excuse, and/or make the same or similar arguments as listed above. Undoubtedly there are Christian leaders who support Secretary Clinton but they haven't gotten such media attention. Regardless, lest you think that Secretary Clinton is a better alternative to Trump, she's not. Why do so many Americans not trust her? Because they think she has difficulty with the truth. Back in 1996 when Secretary Clinton was First Lady, respected reporter William Safire wrote an article about her titled, "Blizzard of Lies," where he called her a "congenital liar." This is a serious charge; the problem for Secretary Clinton is that Safire backed it with several damning examples. Then there were her accusations of a "right-wing conspiracy" concerning her husband's sexual improprieties in the Oval Office with an intern named Lewinsky, knowing full well of her husband's sexual misdeeds going back to his days in Arkansas.

But perhaps she's changed, after all that was 20 years ago. Apparently not. She blamed the Benghazi attack, which killed Ambassador Stevens, on an anti-Muslim video when she knew that it was a terrorist attack. When asked why she did so, she blamed it on the "fog of war." She made several statements about her use of a private email server (which she established before she became Secretary of State) that were directly and clearly contradicted by FBI Director Comey's testimony before Congress. In fact, when Director Comey decided NOT TO indict Secretary Clinton, he made the unprecedented move of holding a press conference. Why hold a press conference if you're not going to indict, makes no sense. Though many respected Comey's character, they wondered if he too was playing politics. Whether he was or wasn't, in his press conference he made several scathing remarks about Secretary Clinton's behavior regarding her use of a private email server. Then there are the WikiLeaks emails that continue to come out which show among other things, a shady relationship between then Secretary Clinton and the Clinton Foundation. People excuse this as politics as usual, "Money changes hands and favors are done, what a shock. That's the way Washington D.C. works." That may be so, but what does that reveal about the character of someone who goes along with this system?.....it's not just Trump who has character problems.

## So who should I vote for?

First, if anything other than God's instructions on choosing a leader is the reason for your vote, you need to have a conversation with God and confess the lies you believe, e.g., "Father, I believe that if Trump/Hillary is elected, this country will be destroyed. But I know that this is a lie because You are sovereign over all. Will You show me Your truth in this election and remove my fear?"

Second, when choosing a leader character matters, in fact, it's the main thing. If they're brilliant in everything else, but lack sound character, you may have 2% unemployment but the effects of such an individual on the nation—economically, militarily, socially, morally, and/or culturally—will be felt for years to come. How did Nixon affect this country? How did Bill Clinton affect this country?

Third, our calling is not to guarantee the future by electing the right person to nominate Supreme Court justices or institute conservative social and economic policies. Our calling is to represent Jesus to our neighbors. If you honestly think that Jesus would endorse Trump or Hillary as a political leader, then vote your conscience. If you honestly think that both of these two candidates are totally unfit for office, then don't vote for them. You represent Jesus; do not put Jesus' endorsement on someone that you don't believe Jesus would endorse.

Fourth, voting for a third party candidate is not throwing away your vote. What if millions of Christians supported a candidate who was not only qualified but had the character that God speaks of? And what if we as Christians started doing that 30 years ago?! Would we have ended up with Trump or Hillary as our presidential choices this presidential election?

Fifth, our job is to disciple the nations, to show them how to look at every aspect of life the way Jesus does (Matthew 28:19-20). Therefore, real deliverance for this nation will not come from Washington, no matter who gets elected. Our hope (and this world's) is not supposed to be in a political system. Real deliverance will come from God, and it will come when we repent and turn toward Him. Therefore, you have a higher calling than arranging things in Washington. Your best service to the country is not in how you cast your vote, but in how you call the nation to repentance. How can we do that if we excuse and endorse sinful behavior in order to elect a "savior" when our Savior is God?

## III. Conclusion

*"When you come to the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,' you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother. But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for the LORD has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.' Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. Also it shall be, when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write for himself a copy of this law in a book, from the one before the priests, the Levites. And it shall be with him, and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God and be careful to observe all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted above his brethren, that he may not turn aside from the commandment to the right hand or to the left, and that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he and his children in the midst of Israel."*