

# Navigating Christianity and politics - Part 1

## TRANSCRIPT

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**NOTE: This transcript was AI-generated and has not been fully edited.**

[00:00:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Welcome back to the Denison Forum podcast. I'm Dr. Mark Turman, Executive Director of Denison Forum. I want to thank you for joining us for this conversation and welcome you to the start of a special series that we are calling Politics Discerned Differently. This is actually going to be an eight podcast series over the coming weeks.

That we hope will help you to discern politics in a particularly biblical way. We want to equip you as we always do to think biblically, to live holy and to serve redemptively and all of the opportunities that God gives you wherever you may be and whatever he may have placed into your hands as a way of stewarding things for his glory.

And so we're going to have a number of different guests. We're going to sit down today with. Our cultural apologist and founder, Dr. Denison, he'll join us in just a second, but we're going to have many other guests throughout this series as well. Some folks that you've heard on our podcast in the past, like Dr. Ryan Denison, who is a part of our ministry and Dr. Katie Fruge and others. But we'll have Dr. Denison today and a little bit down the road. And we look forward to having some conversations that we hope will help you navigate. This really interesting in many ways, scary and unusual season of politics providentially, I guess, in some ways we might say we're starting a podcast on politics along with some other resources at a time in history that seems completely unique and unprecedented in many ways.

And I say that as a person who was born six months before John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas. And so some of these things have marked my life all along the way as they probably have yours. And we look forward to discerning how God would want us to live through these days. Let me also say here at the outset that there will be continuing resources that we put together and you can find those.

[Denisonforum.org/election](https://denisonforum.org/election). That's where you'll find all of this podcast series as well as additional articles and resources from us and from others that we hope will be encouraging and equipping to you through this very unique and sometimes strange season. So with all that said let me just

say hi to Dr. Denison. Dr. Jim, thank you for joining us for this introduction. Thank you To this important series.

[00:02:28] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Glad to be with you today, Mark. It's a privilege always to be in this conversation, but especially given the things we'll talk about today and that you'll talk about in this series as well.

[00:02:36] **Dr. Mark Turman:** It is a very unusual time. We're recording this podcast just a few days after president Joe Biden announced that he will not be running. And Kamala Harris appears to be moving rapidly in the direction of taking over the democratic nomination. We're not very far away, just a couple of weeks since Donald Trump was nearly assassinated.

And who knows what is yet to come in the days ahead, hopefully Nothing is dramatic is what those two things have been. But just I just want to ask you a question, Jim, as I referred to a moment ago. Growing up in East Texas, I was raised in a large Catholic family. My family, in some ways, significantly identified with the Kennedy family in the fifties and the sixties and like, seemed like the whole first two decades of my life with the assassination of JFK.

And then later Vietnam Watergate, the assassination of MLK, as well as Robert Kennedy. I can remember as a young child sitting in my. my house, wondering why they couldn't get rid of these things called the Watergate trial so that I could watch something I enjoyed. Did you grow up in that kind of an awareness?

In that was it kind of hanging in the air in some ways politically for you?

[00:03:54] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, it really was. In fact, I was two years old when Kennedy was assassinated, and I actually think I have a very early memory of my mother crying in the midst of all that, kind of seeing things on that very early television and all of that, just how shocking all of that was. I'm also old enough to remember the Cold War.

On a level mark where we were doing bomb drills, where we would get under our desks. I have no idea what good we thought that would do, but we nonetheless did it and did fire drills pretty regularly because of bomb threats that could happen inside the school, all of that. And so, yeah, you know, we, every, I think generation thinks that their situation is on some level unique in history and in certain respects it is, but in other respects, it's not.

Human nature doesn't change. It's one of the reasons I'm convinced the Bible is still relevant because God doesn't change and we don't change. So what God said then is still as relevant today as when he originally spoke it. But that's certainly true, I think, relative to political chaos back in the sixties and in many ways, the political chaos that we're seeing today.

[00:04:50] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, that's one of the things we'll get to down the road. Our friend the pastor Curtis Chang will join us. For one of these episodes. And we'll talk a lot about the sense of uncertainty as well as the desire for stability. As Curtis recently talked about on his own podcast that we sometimes maybe think we have a right to stability.

And we'll get into that down the road, but let's talk about some things that introduced this series, but I want to back up a little bit before that as a ministry, Denison Forum and Denison Ministries is celebrating this year, 15 years. of ministry since you and your partner, Jeff Byrd felt the call of God.

And since the vision of God to start Denison Forum 15 years ago in 2009 our tagline in Denison Forum is, is we want to discern the news differently. And in this particular opportunity, how do we discern politics differently? Explain to us, what do we mean by discern the news or discern politics differently?

How is it that we're trying to help Christ followers to be different and to be equipped in this particular way? What do we mean by discerning?

[00:05:59] **Dr. Jim Denison:** That's a great question. I think both words are important to discern and differently. To discern something I think is to understand it, not just to read it, not just to know what's happened, but to have a sense of why. It happened. Why is it that we are where we are? That's so much what motivates me with the articles I write every day and the other work I do.

As a philosopher originally and an apologist, why is the world doing what it's doing? Why did that happen? Why did they say that? Why did they do that? Then when we say differently, we mean differently from the way the rest of the world is. In our sense, we mean that biblically. We mean that redemptively. We mean that in a sense that advances God's kingdom and glorifies Jesus as Lord.

And so we want people to understand what's happening. And then to put that in the context of a biblical worldview in a way that will empower and equip them to do something about it, to make a difference using their influence to the glory of God. And so all that kind of comes together in the essence of what we seek to do every day with every article we publish, with every podcast we produce, with every tweet that we send, that's our desire, help people understand the world so they can make a difference in the world.

It's not just enough to understand it. We have to change it. If we're going to be salt and light. And that's the call of God in our lives.

[00:07:07] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And I love that. You know, we talk a lot around here about Jesus's summation of, of the law and that he said everything was about loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself. And as a ministry, we want to help people both with how do they think well, but also with their heart.

Can we talk about the head and the heart being involved and that it does need to not only change you personally, that's the, you know, the part of growing in holiness, but it also is about using our lives for the glory of God and for the good of others, helping the world to flourish. And as you said a moment ago, to do something about it, to understand it.

well enough to care deeply enough like Jesus does, and then to try to be involved in what he is doing. People familiar with the language probably of being the hands and feet of Christ. What does it mean to be a representative of Christ in every one of these opportunities that God made? Give us, and that includes the platform, the opportunities that come in politics.

Some would say that we should just stay away from this area and that the church has no business being in this area. Jim, how would you respond to that? Hey, you, you guys just need to stay with theology. You just need to stay with the things of spiritual and religious life and stay out of these kinds of conversations.

How would you respond to that?

[00:08:29] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Jesus told us to render to Caesar, what Caesars and to God, what is God's. Jesus told us to follow his example. And Jesus did nothing like what you just said. As you know, Mark, he couldn't have been more involved in the day to day issues of his life and trying to be a redemptive force for good in the larger culture in which he participated.

Jesus obviously didn't run for office, but he influenced those that did all the way through Wilbur, William Wilberforce and Christians running for office today. Jesus wasn't himself involved in the geopolitics of the day, but the geopolitics of the world had been forever different because of what he did, because of the transformative impact that he made.

It's not without reason that Paul wanted to go to Rome because he knew that's where culture was going to most significantly be impacted. influenced and changed. He spent three weeks in Thessaloniki or Thessalonica as we call it, but he spent three years in Ephesus because it was luminesia. The light of Asia was the, that that cultural capital of the world.

And so, James Davison Hunter, I think is right in teaching this culture changes top down. It changes when you achieve your highest place of influence and live there faithfully. It calls it manifesting faithful presence. No places that needed more than in politics. And so while on one hand, our job is not to be political pundits.

We are nonpartisan as, as you know, and as our followers, I hope understand. We're not here to endorse candidates or to endorse parties, but we are here to encourage and equip Christians to be involved in the political world. Not just to pray for our leaders as we all should, not just to pay taxes as we're called to, but to engage in public service, to run for office.

I'm convinced more Christians are being called to public service and are answering the call. To be involved in political process as God leads you on the local level, all the way to the national and international level, to ask God to use your salt and light to make a difference in this means by which culture is so effectively changed.

Someone said politics is simply how power gets organized. It's simply how power, how influence gets organized. And so in that context, how can we not be involved in politics if we want to be a transformative influence in our culture?

[00:10:33] **Dr. Mark Turman:** I love that idea of politics just being the way that power gets organized. And there needs to be a redemptive approach to politics. We almost always think that politics is dirty, sully and something that, you know, reputable people should stay away from. And that really should be. not our attitude.

We should have a redemptive attitude about it. And there are there certainly are there is a need for more dedicated Christians to be involved in politics and government, but there are many there today. And I hope that many of them are listening to our podcasts and we grateful for them. I know many of them in the local community where I live, as well as in the state where we live.

And we've had some opportunity to meet people on the national stage as well, and just grateful that they love Christ and that they're trying to serve Him in these environments. And we often hear from them that they are experiencing opposition and it's sometimes very difficult and lonely. To serve Christ in these environments, but we're grateful that they're doing it, Jim, I want to back up the conversation here at the beginning, as we talk about discerning politics differently to something really fundamental because of the way our country originated because of what we learn about in our initial government classes and political science, all of which I really was drawn to.

In my educational experience from early days we somehow kind of grow up in the atmosphere of democracy as well as in the atmosphere of Christianity. But we sometimes. tend to see those things as synonymous. Christianity and democracy as synonymous. Even to the point that we might even be saying in some ways or expressing to people around the world that you have to believe in democracy to be a Christian or vice versa.

You have to believe in Christianity and in democracy equally, simultaneously that these things are the same. Even though I don't know that the Bible ever in any way endorses a particular form

of government is, so I'm trying to get it to a particular question here. Fundamentally is, is Christianity fundamental to democracy?

Is democracy fundamental to Being to Christianity is how should we think about that from a very fundamental standpoint?

[00:12:52] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I think those are great questions. I think those are two separate questions. I think they're related, but I think they're somewhat different. I would not say on any level that democracy is essential to Christianity. The strongest Christians I have ever met live in Cuba. Which is anything but a functioning democracy the time I spent in Beijing working with pastors in the underground church there I came away so humbled so grateful so impressed by the depth of their spiritual lives by the courage of their witness and So desiring just to on some level emulate them When I've been to Cuba over these years and when I've been in the Muslim world with pastors working there I asked them to pray for us that we could somehow in America Come to understand the faith on anything like the level of depth and sincerity that they have it And so in no sense would I say that one has to do democracy to do Christianity.

That wouldn't be true historically Democracy, as we think of it today, is a recent experiment that hasn't been available to the world for 1, 700 years, as we practice it anyway. Even Athenian democracy wasn't really democracy as we're trying to practice it. Constitutional republic, actually a democratic republic as, as we see it here in the United States.

And so, really for 18 centuries, you couldn't be involved in democracy and be a Christian. It simply didn't exist. It wasn't an option. And today. Some of the strongest places where the gospel is growing most quickly are not democracies. The fastest growing place on earth for the church, as you know, in statistical terms is Iran, which is ruled by a, by a theocracy, by a Shiite theocracy, as we know.

And so I certainly wouldn't say you have to do democracy to do Christianity. On the other hand. I do believe, I think the founders were very clear about this, that democracy depends on a cultural, consensual morality that is itself, in their mind, birthed in a religious, shared religious worldview. I'm not saying all the founders in America were godly evangelical Baptist deacons, wouldn't say that for a moment.

There are a lot of issues and controversy around deism versus Orthodox Christianity and the lives of individuals, and a lot of that's a moving target. But I do think it's very, very clear. George Washington's Farewell Address, John Adams statements so Patrick Henry, so many of the founders, who believed that you couldn't do democracy without a consensual morality, that it's impossible to do self rule if we can't rule ourselves, and that fallen human beings can't rule themselves without help, without the help of a higher power, a power that can transform us in a way we can't transform ourselves.

People that are drowning can't save themselves. People that are caught in the fallenness of sin can't save themselves. And so I do think democracy itself does depend on a consensual morality that I believe is most effectively formed through what Christ does in us. Am I saying that you can't be a good citizen without being a, of course, I'm not saying that, or that you can't be successful in public service without following Christ, but I'm saying as a trend, as a pattern, I would make the assertion that the founders made.

The democracy requires self rule that requires an ability to rule ourselves, which requires a kind of consensual morality that I think is best birthed by the Christian worldview.

[00:16:04] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. So I've heard you talk and use that term shared consensual morality a number of times. Could you unpack that term a little bit more? It has a lot to do with defining terminology in similar ways. If we all have different definitions, then we, we're not going to arrive at the same place, but unpack that a little bit more.

What do you mean by a shared consensual morality?

[00:16:28] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah. And again, this is more descriptive than it is prescriptive. I think, I don't think the founders ever identified a specific set of moral standards that one had to adhere to a kind of 10 commandments to be an American, you know, so to speak, the things that they laid out had more to do with problems with England and with George the third or issues relative to governance of specific localities, that sort of thing.

So I don't think there was ever any kind of a shared litmus test that says this is morality and this is not. But there was a shared sense that morality is objective, that there is such a thing as right and wrong, that there is such a thing as good. And evil and that what King George the third was attempting to do was on some level evil with taxation without representation and with the degree to which he was enforcing a very tyrannical sort of puritanical kind of, royal sort of authority on the larger colonies and culture here.

So there was, first of all, the sense that objective morality exists. There was second, I think, in a consensual sense, what we could think of as a broadly Judeo Christian kind of morality, that the Ten Commandments do in fact capture. That they do in fact, I think, on some level articulate. Now I'm not again suggesting that they have to be, and we've talked about this in the past, that they have to be displayed in public in order to be understood in private.

Not suggesting all the founders by any means lived by them, but they would have agreed I think in the, the genius of these founding documents in the Judeo Christian worldview. There was a great attraction to the example of Jesus in Thomas Jefferson, for instance, who compiled what's known as the Jefferson Bible that was composed of the teachings of Jesus.

He said that he considered the teachings of Jesus to be superior to any other in all of human history. Even though we can debate the degree to which he was what we think of as an orthodox Christian. Great fascination for the teaching of Jesus, the life of Jesus, the example of Jesus. So, first of all, we believe morality is objective.

Second, we believe in a broad sense of Judeo Christian morality, not unique to Judeo Christianity, by the way. A great deal of what they would have believed is shared in other religions. Religious traditions as well. But all of that together was what I think of as consensual. It was agreed upon. It was accepted.

The declaration of independence that says we hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal is a Judeo Christian statement. That they're endowed by their creator is a Judeo Christian statement. Inalienable rights is a Judeo Christian belief. Life, liberty, pursuit of happiness are biblical constructs.

And so if that's our founding creed. If G. K. Chesterton was right that America is the only nation founded on a creed, and if that's our creed that creed itself expresses a consensual morality that's at the heart of the democratic experiment.

[00:19:09] **Dr. Mark Turman:** And I think going back to some of the things we should remember in our civics classes is that those things particularly that you just articulated about our founding documents were radical in their day, where they've become commonplace to us in some ways. And certainly have spread from the origin of America to other parts of the world and found flourishing in some of those places.

But the idea, even the idea of all men being created equal. Was not something widely accepted 300 years ago. And

[00:19:40] **Dr. Jim Denison:** George III would not have agreed with that.

[00:19:42] **Dr. Mark Turman:** he would not have agreed with that. That's right.

[00:19:44] **Dr. Jim Denison:** didn't agree with that, in fact, so.

[00:19:46] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah.

[00:19:47] **Dr. Jim Denison:** And I'm not saying they lived up to that entirely. It's a tragedy. In fact, people consider slavery to be America's original sin. It's a tragedy that the very people who wrote those words and endorsed them held slaves. Clearly didn't consider all men to be created equal in that sense. And that women were not allowed to vote for as many generations as they were not allowed to vote and were seen in so many ways as second class citizens. If I was



writing the declaration of independence, I would have said that all people are created equal for, for instance, and I certainly would not have.

Allowed that statement to stand and yet allow the three fifths kind of compromise in the constitution and the way that slavery was allowed to exist. And so I'm not suggesting that these men and women lived by everything that they were articulating, but that they nonetheless had a standard that they were trying to build this democratic experiment upon that was a kind of consensual morality birthed into Judeo Christian worldview.

[00:20:39] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. We don't, we don't often think these days about how those ideas were aspirational and not just in some ways factual or actual at that time, but there was a significant aspirational aspect to them that still stands in front of us, it's still. Is something we must continue to pursue.

[00:21:00] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Martin Luther King was right about that. He's trying to get us to live up to our highest ideals. Frederick Douglass said the same thing. If we would just live up to the Declaration and the Constitution, so many of our problems wouldn't be problems. Yuval Levin's made that point with a recent book that he's published, that the Constitution is still the answer to our problems, if we would live by it, if we would do the very things the founder suggested as aspirations for our country.

[00:21:24] **Dr. Mark Turman:** and it's, and it's a really good point for us to ponder right here at the beginning of this series is that. We, we have to be willing and humble as Americans to accept that there are goals and aspirations from our founding that we have not lived up to fully, and that we need to stretch for that this democratic republic that we're trying to To live in together is still something that requires ongoing effort in pursuit.

We have not arrived yet. And we need to commit ourselves together to again, pursuing those highest ideas, and even, even that would make a big difference in the, the discourse of what we're experiencing today. Jim, as we kind of get into this again, at the beginning here of this series would there be two or three, maybe four principles.

Just on a large, broad scale that when we look at Jesus, when we look at the New Testament, some commands or basic principles about Christians being involved politically what might, you know, just three or four of those at the beginning, I'm thinking the golden rule, obviously some that you just managed a moment ago that all people are created equal.

Are there two or three others here, kind of on a broad spectrum, when you look at the life and teachings and testimony of Jesus, the early church that was birthed not in a democratic environment by any stretch? What would be two or three ideas that we need to just keep in mind as we navigate this whole political season?

[00:22:58] **Dr. Jim Denison:** It's a good question. Matthew 18, 15 comes to mind immediately, where Jesus says, if your brother sins against you, you go to him. And you try to make it right. If you won't hear you, you take two or three others. If you won't hear them, you take it to the church. And then ultimately you move them outside the community of the church.

But the idea is I can't speak about you until I speak to you. I can't say things about you. I wouldn't say to you. Think how that would change our political discourse. If we would all live by just that one verse, think about how different it would be of politicians. We refuse to say about each other what they wouldn't say to each other. Think how different it would be if those of us that aren't in public service would speak of those who are, with Matthew 18 15 in mind. We are commanded by scripture not to slander, not to libel, not to speak ill of others. That's just God's word for us. And so if we'd start there and think about the way we manage differences, the way we manage disagreements, we can disagree without being disagreeable.

We can do this and be civil. We don't have to do character assassination in order to advance political agenda. Tragically in our culture today, for lots of reasons that we've talked about, and we can talk about again, that is not what gets the attention of the culture. If it bleeds, it leads. And the more radical the statement, the more follows it gets, the more clicks and likes it generates.

And that's a tragedy. We can be better than that. We can be different than that. And so our discourse needs to be dramatically different. A second thought that comes to mind immediately is Jesus statement that we're to pray for our enemies. We're to pray for those who persecute us. I think we can extend that even to those with whom we disagree.

The more I disagree with you, the more I need to pray for you. The sicker the person, the more necessary the physician. The more a person rejects biblical truth, the more I need to be praying for them and praying for God to work in their life and in my life. And to use me as a means to the end of accomplishing a common good in their life and in our, in our mutual relationships.

And so there's a praying for each other that I think is at the heart of how Jesus would have us engage in the political world of our day. And then third, there's the sense that politics come and go, but witness is eternal. It's so critical, I think, that we manage our lives, our social media feeds, our influence between now and November 5th in such a way that we can still serve Jesus on November the 6th. Long after this election, people are going to be living eternally. But C. S. Lewis made it clear that 10, 000 eons past this world the demise of this world, you and I are going to be living someplace. We are eternal beings and we are not. In fact, we can't sacrifice our eternal witness, our eternal influence, for the sake of political points in the present, for the sake of winning elections or winning arguments.

You can win arguments and lose souls. And so let us please prepare and protect our witness. Pray every day, Lord, help me to speak the truth in love. Ephesians 4, 15, help me to honor you with what I say as I disagree agreeably, as I engage in politics in a civil way, in a way that honors you. It loves my neighbor as myself.

It doesn't say love the neighbor with whom you agree. Jesus didn't say love the neighbor. Who's as red as you were as blue as you, he says, love your neighbor, whoever your neighbor is. And Jesus made it pretty clear. Your neighbor is anybody who needs what you have. That's a, that's a commitment that demonstrates a degree to which we love the Lord, our God as well.

[00:26:24] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. And one of the most redemptive things we can do in living that way, the way you describe it is we start to realize that every part of our life, including our politics is a platform. It's an opportunity for us to demonstrate our faith and to point people to Christ. And that there is no part of our life in which we compartmentalize things and we take off our faith and lay it in the corner.

And go engage in that part of the world. We don't, we shouldn't be doing that in business. We shouldn't be doing that in education. We shouldn't do that with our friendships or our hobbies, and we shouldn't do it with our politics. We take all of ourselves and that includes our life of faith and especially our life of faith and every environment that we're in, our families, our friendships, all of those things, including our politics.

Become a platform and an opportunity for us to be those representatives for Christ. And we never know what we may be able to do in those environments that can help someone know him better and walk closer to him. Wanted to get your take on this. This, I apologize. This is a little bit of a curve ball, but I'm going to see if I can get a reaction out of you.

One of our later guests is our friend Curtis Chang, who has written and talked in many ways about these topics. But he raised the topic recently in a conversation I was part of where he said, we come to politics and we take two different approaches, or we are confronted with two different realities.

One is, is we enter into pol politics as something like looking into a crystal ball, and we engage in politics. We think about candidates, we consider policies, and we look at it as to the world might become this or that. By looking into the current situation in politics, what will this do in terms of how our future or my future will unfold?

But then in some ways, we are also confronted that our political engagements and our political realities, particularly right now, are a mirror reflecting something back to us. Do you think he's right about that? Is he on to something? React to that statement a little bit. Crystal ball and mirror. Hmm.

[00:28:32] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah. I think those are great metaphors for where we are now. Frank Wolf, who's retired from the U S house from Virginia is one of my real heroes in in public service over these years, and he's the first, others have said it, but he was the first person that really explained to me that politics are downstream from culture and culture itself is downstream from the church.

Chuck Colson believed the same thing. And so in a democracy, you kind of get what you deserve. You get the leaders you deserve, as it were, and your leaders should reflect you. That's the way the system is supposed to work. We're supposed to be electing leaders who will represent us. That's why it's called the House of Representatives.

They're supposed to be representing our desires and our wishes. And so if the majority of Americans, for instance, believe X about a moral stance, whatever it might be, we ought not be surprised. When the legislators in Washington or your capitol or your local school board or whatever are reflecting that majority position in the legislation that they're seeking to accomplish.

Because in fact they are supposed to be reflecting the will of the people, as we say. And so if our politics are chaotic, then the mirror is a good metaphor here. We ought not be surprised. We ought to be asking ourselves to what degree is that my fault? To what degree is the chaos out there?

Something that I am on some level instigating or at the very least one could say reflecting back to the larger world, I'm certainly not helping. I'm certainly hurting more than helping is a way to look at this and a way to ask ourselves that. So to some degree, these things are themselves in the larger world, kind of the, the smaller world writ large one could say.

And so I have to ask, okay, where should I be repenting? What should I be asking God to change in my life? I, I really, as it said, if I'm going to point at you with one finger, there's three other fingers pointing at me, right? And so I first have to ask myself, what is it that I need to be doing differently before I can ask you to change?

Can't lead you where I'm willing, not willing to go. Can't ask you to do what I'm unwilling to do. So there's that mirror there. When I'm reading the news these days, I'm trying to learn to pray through the news. I'm trying to learn to pray for those that are involved in the news and to ask the Lord to show me where in my own heart.

I need to be different because of what I'm reading here. Would I have thought that? Could I have said that? Does that reflect who I am or where I am on some level? A mirror, I think, is a very, very important metaphor for that fact. In terms of a crystal ball, politics have become religion in this country.

It's very, very clear. The studies are pretty clear here that as we've seen less and less people involved in their churches, involved in denominational life and in organized spirituality, they've transferred a lot of that fervor, a lot of that even angst, a lot of that engagement into the political context.

And whereas there was a day when we tried to change the world by praying, tried to change the world by trusting the Lord, by preaching the gospel, by sharing the good news of God's love, by being salt and light out in the world. And, and in that kind of crystal ball sense, making a better world through our religious obedience.

Now we're trying to do that through our political obedience or our political engagement. We're trying to shape the world by the people that we get elected and by the legislation that we support and so forth. That's an important role. Okay. I'm not here to say it's either or it's not a binary choice between how the church can be salt and light and how public service can change culture as well.

We said earlier that that's a vital way in which we serve the kingdom is to do it through public service, but you're seeing a passion now. Almost a religious passion, a religious fervor. I watched a couple of days ago as I won't name which, but as one of the political rallies was happening and, and just the, the the, the spirit that I saw in the room, the, the sense of what was in the room it felt like a worship service in many ways.

And I've seen that on both sides of the aisle. I've seen that sense of, of fervor, that sense of, of joyfulness, that sense of, of support and engagement that, that felt almost quasi religious. And so in that sense, I think Curtis is also right, that politics have become a crystal ball in a way of trying to define the future and understand the future, foresee the future, and even change the future.

By virtue of our political engagement.

[00:32:34] **Dr. Mark Turman:** So if I'm following you, then it kind of tracks back to something, a book I heard you refer to a couple of weeks ago and that I've been spending some time with as well called the great de churching. This book basically claims that 40 million Americans over the last 25 years have left the church.

They've disengaged from organized faith. You should say that doesn't mean that they've completely abandoned their faith, but they've at least. Abandon the expression in the pursuit of their faith in the context of a local church, 40 million active adults have done that in the last 25 years. So you're, do you think there's some correlation to that kind of reality and to the transference of that passion into something like politics?

And, and in some ways that many of us may be asking something of politics that politics and government were never designed to, to provide. Is that part of the explanation possibly?

[00:33:33] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I think it is. Absolutely. You can put more bricks in a barrel than the barrel can hold. And that's a lot of what's happening here. A C. S. Lewis described the role of the state pretty well when he said that if you're able to dig in your garden, if you're able to read a quiet book by the fire, if you're able to play a game of darts at the pub, that's what the state is there for is to ensure those things.

And really nothing. More than that politics are always a means to the end of the common good, of the civil common good, always a means to an end. I really do believe myself, Mark, and I don't mean this unkindly, but I really do think the founders wouldn't have imagined a political class, people that spend their whole lives simply being in political service, that wasn't their experience.

The vast majority of our early leaders were farmers. They were business people. They were landholders. They had other businesses. They were attorneys. I'm reading Brett Baier's book right now on George Washington's role in the constitutional convention that really kind of saved our country in a number of ways that the degree to which these people that came to these constitutional conventions did so for a brief period of time, and then kind of step back into their normal lives.

They saw public service as, you know, kind of like serving in the local PTA. It's something you do because you love your kids. It's not something anybody aspires to for a career. I have been to Thomas Jefferson's grave. I have seen his epitaph that he himself directed. He does not mention being president of the United States in his own epitaph. I just don't think they had the same sense of politics as an end unto itself, of politics as a be all end all to the degree that we kind of do in our culture. And I do think that you can see a bit of a correlation, if not causation there between those that used to commit themselves on a level of fervor and, and passion to serving God through the church, to trying to accomplish perhaps some of those same aims through political process and political parties.

You certainly see a kind of denominationalism. Inside the parties, such as used to be the case in America. I am again, old enough to remember a bad day when Catholics and Protestants saw each other in something of the way that Republicans and Democrats see each other. Now, I remember especially pre Vatican II, a day when there was a common consensus among some of the Catholic world that if you weren't in the Catholic world, you weren't really in the church.

In the historic church and some on the Protestant world that said that if you were a Catholic, you weren't really a Christian.

[00:35:56] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Mm

[00:35:57] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I remember a day when someone would say there were a Catholic and somebody might say, yes, but are you a Christian? And in the same way that I thought that was pretty offensive, but that was kind of the idea back in the day.

We're seeing some of that same partisanship relative to Democrat and Republican that we used to see, I think, relative to denominations. So I do think that there are certainly, if not causation, there's certainly correlation between those two trends.

[00:36:20] **Dr. Mark Turman:** hmm. Yeah, Jim, let's go down that road a little bit further. Cause that's something I've really been thinking about. Cause I think, I do think that we're exactly doing that. We're putting bricks in the wheelbarrow beyond what the wheelbarrow can hold when it comes to our politics. We, we're not recognizing the limits of what government is intended to do.

And as somebody recently said, you know, we only really focus on the government when the government messes up. That's a pretty harsh way to look at something. But how would you say to a person, you know, we did, we said it earlier on in this conversation that, you know, trying to not be involved or completely Excluding yourself from the opportunities of a democratic republic is not what Christians should do.

We should be aware and informed and engaged as spirit filled Christians. But how could a person discern if they have in some way idolatized politics and power and what would be maybe some of the indicators that a person has just wrongly transferred some of their hopes, expectations, and desires that should be in their relationship with God, but now they've transferred them.

To this part of life. What might that look like in a person?

[00:37:37] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Hmm, that's a great question, Mark. The first thought that comes to mind is something that Ronald Reagan used to tell his staff. We have opponents, not enemies. To the degree that we're demonizing people, to the degree that we're imputing to them eternal significance to present activity, to the degree that we're seeing them as the enemy when Satan is truly the enemy.

Then we have done what you're talking about. We have turned a religious fervor into a political expression. Our battle is not against flesh and blood as Ephesians 6 12 says it's against principalities and powers and when we think we're doing battle with our fellow fallen humans Then at that point we're seeing humans in the way that we should be seeing our spiritual enemy.

Not human enemies because they're not enemies. They may be opponents, but they're not enemies. On a second level, when we become as convinced that we are right politically as we are convinced that we are right spiritually about the big fundamental facts of orthodox christianity,

I'm absolutely convinced that Jesus Christ rose from the dead and is coming again as Lord and Savior.

A thousand percent convinced of that. Absolutely certain of that. If I become that certain, relative to my political positions, especially if they're not biblically couched, if they're not positions that are clear demonstrations of biblical truth, but a more political opinion. Now, I'm once again being religious about politics.

I'm getting old enough to remember when the Panama Canal Treaty was being negotiated, and just the fervor that came out from some of the pastors and the Christian leaders in the culture making this as though it were a kingdom issue when it was a Panama Canal Treaty. Because they were as, they were disagreeing with one particular position here as though it were the virgin birth and the bodily resurrection.

And so again, there's a fervor issue here, I think, that is a thing to be asking ourselves. If I'm getting that worked up, and if I'm claiming that level of certitude about what really is opinion. What really is on some level subjective, that's my opinion relative to a political position, but I might be wrong.

So if I, if I can't be humble about things about which I should be humble, then I think at that point I need to be careful, need to be asking. Then I think on a third level, to what degree am I praying before I'm acting? We know in the spiritual life that we really can't serve God unless we've prayed and asked God to do through us what we can't do for him. Human words can't change human hearts. We can't convict of sin. We can't save souls. We can't change lives. If God doesn't do that through us, we can't do it for him. And so that's why we understand the importance of praying before we speak, of praying before we serve, of praying for the very people we're seeking to influence.

If we're not bringing that spirit over to our political engagement, if we're being secularized, as it were, spiritual over here and secular over there, and we're acting in one way in social media there and another way on Sunday at church, if we're behaving differently with our Christian friends than we are with our non Christian friends now we're bifurcating.

Now we're that compartmentalizing that you were warning us about a moment ago. Now Jesus isn't Lord of all of us. He's just Lord of one day of us. He's Lord of part of us. And if we ever get to the place where we think, that we have to, on some level, give up Christian character to succeed politically, we've made a drastic mistake. If we ever believe that we can elect people to office, and we can be involved in politics in a way that isn't consistent with the character of Jesus, we're wrong. We might be right politically for the short term, we might get more votes, but we're wrong as followers of Jesus. When Jesus said, take up your cross and follow me daily, he didn't just mean when you're in church. When you, when you're crucified with Christ, that's a full



time commitment. Presents your body a living sacrifice. That's a 24 seven commitment. You have to do that in politics. Just like you have to do that in the church or you're not following Jesus fully.

[00:41:30] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Is it Jim? Would you, would, would we go one step further or just listening to you? Think about those, those characteristics where somebody, one of us could easily, and I'm, and I'm subject to this. I'm vulnerable to this. I've always been intrigued by politics. I enjoy the drama of it. And I, I, and I, I sometimes I'm guilty.

Does it even get down to really the tactile level of how much time you're I'm trying to think, hopefully this is not the case that somebody who used to be actively involved in their church. Now since their ties and offerings to their political party and the amount of time that they spend consuming information and, you know, even good material perhaps but I, I'm trying to envision, you know, my, my pastor used to say all the time, more Bible, less newspaper.

And for people who don't know what newspapers are, you can google it and get an explanation of what a newspaper is. But, but even back then going back, you know, even 40 years ago, there was this idea that you could get captured by something that is as interesting, as intriguing as politics. And it could just consume too much of your time and attention.

Does it get down to that level?

[00:42:45] **Dr. Jim Denison:** It does. And your pastor said that in a day when you didn't have social media, 24 seven doom loops.

[00:42:51] **Dr. Mark Turman:** right.

[00:42:51] **Dr. Jim Denison:** And a day when people weren't measuring their worth in life by what people thought about their latest political post. Or you can literally be 24 seven following political news. If you have a cell phone with some, some ability to get to the internet, then you can be as engaged in this stuff as you absolutely want to.

And we're in the tribalism. Where we are so curating news around particular ideologies. Where we're reinforcing our own beliefs by ignoring the beliefs of others. There was a day when media made money by being objective. When Walter Cronkite was America's most trusted man, because nobody knew what his particular personal political beliefs were.

And that was why he got the ratings he got. That's why media was respected. Because it was seen to be objective reporting of news. Now you make money by targeting specific ideological demographics. And being as, as targeted to that particular audience as possible. And so I'm only listening to the things I agree with and ignoring that which I don't.

And then I'm using my own social feeds to engage in this conversation and see if other people like what I said. And boy, how consuming does that become? I mean, Jonathan Haidt's right when he's talking about the way that our digital resources are damaging our youth. It's not just the amount of time they spend, which is damaging by itself, although it is, it's the way in which they see themselves so much through the eyes of the people that they're following and that are following them.

Such a temptation to be an avatar, to be in public, what you're not in person, and you know that. So much a temptation to measure your success by the popularity of your social feed. And so easy to do that, if you'll do that in the political world in which we're embraced. I mean, there was a day when we really lived, Between elections, it wasn't the, elections weren't four years and two years in the state of the house and six years in the state of the Senate.

I mean, we kind of got through political seasons and we kind of went back to life. I envy the British who have these six week political seasons where they, from the time they announce an election to the time they have the election, it's about a month and a half or so. I'm really kind of jealous of that.

As soon as November 5th comes, November 6th is going to start the next election. Already you're hearing about people that don't want to be engaged in this office or that office because they're positioning themselves for the next election. It is that totally consuming now, and we have to speak against that.

We have to stand against that. We have to say, Jesus, I want you to be Lord of my mind. I want you to be Lord of my heart, Lord of my life, help me not to be consumed by the idolatry that says I am what people think I am based on my political consumption.

[00:45:24] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. So good. Let's, let's take that one step further. Cause that's really a practical way that I want people to experience what we're trying to talk about, which is how can, how would you recommend a Christian trying to discern politics. How can they be reasonably informed and appropriately involved, but not consumed?

And, and then I guess my followup question to that is, is, is that calling the same for all Christians or could there be distinctions in how much a person Might pay attention or might consume material or I mean, obviously the difference between a person who is a homemaker raising children or running a small business would likely be different from a person who feels called into political service.

That obviously would be different. How could a. Just so many people in my family, my church, my friends, I'm thinking about how can they be reasonably engaged and informed without being consumed. What would be a pr, what would be a practice they could do during the week to make

[00:46:33] **Dr. Jim Denison:** wonderful and very practical question. First thing, obviously we know this, but I'll say it is to pray about it and ask the Lord to give us wisdom and direction inside all of this and see what's right for me. Cause again, what may be right for me may not exactly be right for you. And then second critical, I think we get out of the echo chambers.

Vital that we listen to positions with which we disagree. Nancy Gibbs had a marvelous article in Time Magazine the other day in which she, she was describing the answer to the political chaos and rhetoric and rancor and anger and violence and frustration of our day as listening to voices that aren't yours, intentionally doing that.

Pay more attention to news and less to opinion. More attention to what's being reported and less to what the pundits are saying about what's being reported. Pay attention to how this affects you viscerally. Watch your stress here. Watch the degree to which you get riled up by things and step back from that. Manage the degree to which you watch what you're, what you're consuming here to try to be objective about it. And to try to, on some level, segment your emotions from what you're reading. And then on a third level, I'm seeing more and more people recommend this, set time limits. Create structure for yourself.

There've been so many studies recently talking about the anxiety of the culture right now around politics, how concerned people are about the election, how worried they are about the political rancor of the day and how it's affecting them, how they feel more depressed. They feel more anxious as a result of what they're doing.

And some of the psychological research is suggesting we'll set time limits about that. Give yourself an hour a day. Let yourself only watch one show or 30 minutes of one show. Limit yourself to two newspapers, as it were, two social platforms and make sure there are different positions than one another.

Be be on some level restrictive as you need to be. You couldn't eat food all day long and be healthy. You can't consume politics or pretty much anything else all day long and be healthy. And so set some boundaries for yourself, make them draconian. Initially, And then expand them as you need to. And if it's harder to do, that makes it more necessary to do. The harder it is to give up as many hours as you consuming political news. Now that may be indicating the reason you need to do that very thing. And so I just think it's critical that we take control of this before it controls us, because there's a motive, not just to winning elections, but to making money.

In controlling us, clicks pay, ads pay generating social response pays. Cookies are there for a reason. I mean, there's an enormous amount of money to be made in trapping us in this stuff, in dragging us into this, in engaging us in this. The analytics, Mark, you know this, but they're better at knowing us than we are sometimes knowing ourselves.

If you read this article, don't be surprised when this article pops up. In your feed or on your website or whatever because they know what you're going to want to read next They want you to read that next they want you to click on that next they make money By the degree to which they engage you in this stuff and they know that happens emotionally even more than that happens consciously or Rationally, it's been there's a thing called the primal brain and the new brain There's i'm not going to get in the evolutionary stuff behind all that or the degree of which it is or isn't But it's pretty well demonstrated that there's a trust piece You Behind what you're able to see.

There's a visceral piece before there's the rational piece. Your feelings on some level determine what you let yourself read intellectually. There's something about not wanting to engage that with which we disagree. That which is going to make us angry and are certainly that which is going to cause us to rethink our position.

Or on some level realize we were wrong about something. There's something very gratifying about people agreeing with us people saying what we want to believe or what we want to hear That's very very gratifying and the people that make money using media as a means to then know that so restrict your your feed try intentionally to read and listen to that with which you don't agree with an open mind To see what you can learn from this.

And at the end of the day, be praying for the Lord to use this as a means to the end of being the salt Elijah called to be today.

[00:50:34] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, it just makes me think of several things. One is, is, is it reminds me of my own tendency to have an addictive personality. And you can be addicted to a lot of things. We talk these days about being addicted to screens and the phones and the social media, but you can also be addicted to politics and to a number of other things.

Also makes me remember that. One of the fruits of the spirit is self control and that we need the spirit's help in order to discipline, to have that discipline, to say, no, I, I don't need to listen more. I don't need to read another article. I don't need to get myself into an emotional spin because of more information than what I should be consuming right now.

And, and that kind of self control comes in significant, if not total measure out of our relationship with the Holy spirit and asking for his help. And for his guidance we get, I got a dozen questions I could go on, but I want to get to a few more. You mentioned you've all Levine a few minutes ago and read an article by our friend Russell Moore, who was also commenting on Levine's recent book.

about the constitution. Part of that conversation is about understanding what winning in a democratic political environment really means. How should we understand winning in our

democratic republic? And how to, as I kind of process through this, Jim, I was thinking as Christians, one things that both.

Levine and more talked about is that no matter who wins the next election or the next one after that, or the, or any election, that doesn't mean that the opponents are all going to disappear in a democratic Republic. We believe in this concept of majority rule and minority rights. So how does that help us frame a healthy understanding of what it means to win or not win in the context of a political environment?

And how, how should we be excited about that as Christians? How should we understand that and discern that rightly as Christians?

[00:52:42] **Dr. Jim Denison:** It's a great question. If we're coming at this from the question, how do I love my neighbor as myself? How do I serve as I've been served? How do I continue to advance Jesus ministry in the world today? As the spirit lives through me, then the common good is far more important. than winning and losing specific agendas, elections even to the degree that we think they contribute to that.

You can win battles and lose wars here. You can win on such a level of demonizing the opponent that you're only deepening the divisions that we have to live with when the election is over. And we're seeing this. We're seeing a pulling out of and a fraying of the social fabric that has held us together as a United States of America since the Civil War.

It's not a South versus North so much as it is a Red Blue, even in specific communities inside cities. We have people choosing the schools they send their kids to and the neighborhoods in which they live based on the political demographics as they're able to understand them at that point in time. We have whole municipalities and even states saying that they're not going to enforce certain legislation if they disagree with it.

Whether that has to do with immigrants or drug abuse or other means of breaking the law and on, on various levels. We're already seeing this fragmenting. We're seeing this division of the social fabric on a level that's really frightening. I think. And a lot of that is because I think winning for the common good means I have to win.

It means my candidate has to win. My agenda has to win. And if we lose, then we have to fight back in whatever way it takes to win next time. So we demonize the other side. We drive the division because we're convinced the other side is evil. These are battles not between right and wrong, but between good and evil.

We're now seeing each side characterize the other as that. And we're seeing political violence rising as a consequence of that. We're now seeing more and more this day in which to win means

that good wins and evil loses. And only one side, and both sides are saying this, really believe in democracy. Only one side really cares about what's good for the country.

The other side is only using you as a means to their own particular agendas, and both sides are saying that. Right now. That's always been true to a degree, but certainly not to the degree now that social media has amplified and curated those messages. And so winning is when America wins, even if my particular candidate loses.

Winning is when the common good is advanced. Even if I turn out to be wrong about something, or it turned out that I needed to do something at that point that politics can't accomplish. When we're at a place where that's really the role of the church. That's really my role as a follower of Jesus. That's a place where I need to be engaged and I'm kind of, on some level shunting off to politics a role that really should have been mine all along.

If I'm seeking the common good, if I'm praying for the common good, if I'm praying that kingdom come, that will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's what winning looks like, ultimately. And everything we do in politics should be a means to that end.

[00:55:47] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah, such a great way of thinking about it. And really a great segue to what probably needs to be our last question for today in the last place of conversation, which is, you know, we're, we're now sitting here roughly about a hundred days before the next presidential election. We know that there are more coming.

There's another convention yet to be held. There are debates that are likely to occur and a whole bunch of things that nobody can predict most likely. And there's been a number of conversations and probably will be more conversations about what the stakes are at this particular moment. And, you know, we've already seen tragically an assassination attempt that fortunately failed.

We've, we've, one of the things we ought to call out here constantly is, is that we need to reject violence. We are not a country of political violence, no matter what you think about either side of, of our political, political spectrum. We've seen now a presidential sitting president who was on his way to being the next nominee from his party withdraw and everyone's aware of that.

There is lots of conversation in many platforms around. This is the most important election. That's almost always said now. There is this sense of foreboding that if you don't vote for this candidate or that candidate, that America is in jeopardy that it's, it's whole future hangs in the balance.

What are the stakes? And maybe that's a good way to kind of wrap this up, including just for you, Jim, this idea of what's your greatest concern and what is your greatest hope at this moment as we stand in this political season?

[00:57:31] **Dr. Jim Denison:** Yeah, thank you for that. I think the stakes couldn't be higher, but not because of the reasons that they're necessarily being reported in the larger media and by the two parties. We're facing genuinely unprecedented issues. We've never been around a world of artificial intelligence like this before.

Which, in the minds of many people, could be a humanity ending development. Very possibly, very plausibly. Medical science has never been where it is with genomics right now. With all the good that can come from that, and all the evil. That is coming and can come from that, which is again on a level of a science fiction you would thought, but it's becoming reality more and more every day.

We've not been in a place where we are right now in terms of what the Middle East could turn out to mean. where you could see an alliance between Iran and Russia and China that could lead to a third world war utilizing technology that has never been employed in war before. Americans have been held safe by their oceans, from tanks, and from invading armies for the most part.

We're not safe from drones. We're not safe from satellite technology. We're not safe from nuclear weapons in space that knock out our digital infrastructure and return us to the Stone Age. We're not safe from that. We are no longer safe from the ideologies that we as Americans used to think didn't have to affect us. We are more secularized than we have been at any point, certainly in generations, and less committed to that kind of consensual morality we were talking about before than ever before. And we're seeing the outworking of that in social morality, in sexual morality in disagreements relative to what marriage is, to what family is, to what gender is, to how that's to be expressed in a zero sum binary way in schools, in athletics, across the board.

We're seeing a divisiveness around things that a generation ago were taken as assumed realities. These are all unprecedented, genuinely unprecedented for us. These are all issues for which the political process that's before us is going to be relevant on some level. There are genuine differences between the two parties.

As regards some of the issues that I've just described and even issues for which there aren't political differences, party differences, whoever's elected president is going to have a major role to play and the Congresses will have major roles to play in how we navigate these things, how we negotiate these issues, what it is that we do to get ahead of these things and to protect ourselves from what could be cataclysmic downsides of some of these disruptive events that are happening right now in this season.

So in that sense. This is an unprecedented election because we're facing unprecedented challenges. I myself not as concerned as some are apparently as regards the degree to which this is the most important election of all time relative to what a particular candidate if elected might do. I really do believe that the three I'm sorry, Mark, you might have to pause that for a second.

I'm getting text over here. And if I turn that off, I turned my mute. I turned my volume off over here. I'm afraid so. All right.

[01:00:34] **Dr. Mark Turman:** that out.

[01:00:35] **Dr. Jim Denison:** All right, can you do that? Okay, go back to that. I'm not as concerned as some appear to be as regards what could happen to the country if one particular candidate is elected versus the other to the Oval Office, just because we have three branches, and those branches have checks and balances that are of great significance.

I'm grateful for that. I'm grateful for the fact that even though in my lifetime the person I wanted to see elected has lost as much as my candidate has won, even lost more than they won perhaps on some level our country's still here. And we're still functioning as a democracy and the founders understood that diversity that radical diversity.

Again, Bret Baier describes how radically diverse the 13 colonies were back at the end of the 18th century. How about the only thing they had in common, at least two thirds of them, was that they didn't want King George III to be their king. About a third of the populace were Tories. About a third were loyalists, at least at the initial part of the battle for independence, but of those that were seeking independence, that's about all they had in common.

And so to build a kind of a democracy around such radically disparate sort of cultures required the kinds of checks and balances that we now have and that I'm grateful that we have. They make politics laborious. They make it difficult to get stuff done. And that's on purpose. That's intended so that we can have as broad a representation as possible and have a process that can be as, as safeguarded as possible.

And I'm grateful that we have that. And so I myself, not as concerned about individual candidates as some, but very concerned. About what I consider to be disruptive issues of historical significance, unprecedented significance, and praying for the Lord to guide us and to guide us as a nation as we navigate these uncharted waters.

[01:02:20] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Yeah. So much to think about and so much for us to, to pay attention to but always to remember that God is not surprised and that God, you know, I was reading just the other day in, in the middle part of Isaiah, somewhere around chapter 40, 42, I think it says that God holds The oceans in his hands, literally the, the picture S language is that the world is like a marble that God can toss from one hand to the other.

And that, that these things do matter and our lives matter and our choices matter, and that includes our political choices and engagements. But God is not disturbed and God is not fearful. And that is where we can see through all of our politics to the hope that we have in Christ. And I



just wonder, Jim, as we close, maybe you would just at the beginning of this series, offer a brief prayer.

for our audience and for all of us as we navigate these difficult issues and the opportunities that are hidden inside. If you would close us out today with a word of prayer.

[01:03:21] **Dr. Jim Denison:** I'm happy to do that. Father God, I thank you that you really do redeem all you allow. And that you want to and will redeem. Even the political issues, challenges, chaos, controversy, rhetoric, anger, animosity of our day. Father, I pray that you'll do that. First of all, by showing us that we need to trust you, not each other and not ourselves.

That humans are finite and fallen, that our ultimate authority is you, that our ultimate trust should be in the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. I, father, I'm so grateful that your throne is not subject to our opinion and that you are Lord of all that is. You're the great, I am not the, I was, or I will be, but the great, I am.

And you are the Lord of, of the universe. I praise you for that. I thank you for that. And I pray God that you use all of this to teach us that, to teach us that we need you More than we need each other. And we need to trust you more than we need to trust humans. We know that drowning people can't save themselves.

Lord, we thank you that you are the savior. So I pray God, you use this by drawing us even closer to yourself. Second, Lord, I pray that you'll redeem these times by helping Christians to be salt and light in a day desperate for both. I know the darker the room, the more obvious and powerful in transforming the light.

So Father, may we be people who speak the truth in love. May we be people who model civility. May we be people who pray for those with whom we disagree. May we be people who speak to rather than about, who refuse to slander, who refuse to gossip, who refuse to speak in ways that dishonor you. Amen. Amen.

That but father, people that continue to maintain our witness far beyond this election, may we be that leavening influence in the culture and father, the more angry and, and, and rancorous our culture becomes the more powerful and positive our witness in following Jesus becomes. So may we be that I pray Lord God.

And then third, I pray Lord that your spirit will help us. To have a peace that passes understanding, to guard our heart and mind in Christ Jesus. Help us to pray through all that we see and read and consume and, and Father, the concerns and the fears of the day. May we turn them as opportunities to trust you, to turn to you, to seek your face, to turn from our wicked ways to ask you Lord, to be Lord of us and the Lord of all of us.

May this be it's a season, Lord, where the fears of the day make us even more faithful. Where the pain and the suffering and the rancorousness of our culture draws us even more to your strength and to your help and your hope. May we be people who offer to others the hope that we find in Christ. And Father, when this season is over, may you be Lord of our lives, Lord of our witness, and may your kingdom come and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven, even more fully because we were that intentional about these days.

I pray that for me. I pray that for us. In the name of Jesus, our Lord.

[01:06:00] **Dr. Mark Turman:** Amen. Thank you for that, Jim. And thank you for our audience for listening. And we hope that this has been both equipping and encouraging to you. And as I said, this is a. The first of an eight part series on discerning politics differently. We hope that you'll join with us in the next few weeks. And let me remind you again, additional resources, articles from Dr.

Denison and others. On what's going on in the world of politics. You can find those at [denisonforum.org](http://denisonforum.org) forward slash election. There are many resources there already, and there will be more to come in the coming days. And we thank you for being a part of this. We could not do this ministry without you.

We thank, thank you for your prayers as well as for your financial support. And we just thank you again for being a part of this conversation. Rate, review us on your podcast platform, and we'll see you next time on the Denison forum podcast.