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## Upcoming Election Raises Fundamental Issues

Some of you may have already cast your ballot in the upcoming election. We are told that well over ten million of our fellow citizens have already voted. However, many of you, like me, will be waiting to vote until much closer to the election. Here are a few resources and thoughts you may wish to consider before casting your vote.

The [Pew Research Center](#) has identified the top ten issues Americans are considering as the economy, health care, Supreme Court appointments, the coronavirus outbreak, violent crime, foreign policy, gun policy, race and ethnic inequality, climate change, and abortion. Pew polling also identifies how Americans in the two parties feel about the relative importance of these issues and which party or candidate they feel would best handle the issue. This could be a helpful starting place for you as you prayerfully consider which issues are the most important to you.

Christians often have additional concerns like religious liberty and a much deeper interest in the details of policies impacting the sanctity of life that they want to factor into their decision-making process. Voter guides like these offered by the [Family Research Council](#) and their [analysis of the party platforms](#) may help you discern more clearly details of particular interest. Those of us who share deep concern over the abortion issue may be heartened by nomination to the Supreme Court of Amy Coney Barrett. However, even if her nomination is confirmed by the Senate, we should not rest easy. Even an overturn of *Roe v. Wade* would still leave much legislative work to be done to protect life in the womb.

In a typical election, analysis of these matters would probably be enough to cast your vote wisely. However, in this election year there seem to be at least two other important concerns in play. The death of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police department and the coronavirus have called into question two fundamental principles that many Americans may have thought were settled.

The first of these is our perspective on racism. Over the past sixty years most Americans have come to believe that racism is clearly wrong and support Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream that individuals, "will not be judged by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character." This principle is now being

challenged by those who feel that race and gender define each of us to a greater degree than our personal choices. Those who believe this frequently feel that our founding documents and institutions of government, law enforcement, education, and commerce are all seriously flawed by systemic racism and must be radically changed.

The other fundamental principle being challenged at this time is belief in the importance of our basic rights under the constitution including the freedom of religion, freedom of assembly, freedom of speech, and the freedom to bear arms. Many Americans cherish these liberties. However, concerns over COVID-19 make it seem that they are threats to our security and safety rather than a source of national strength. In recent months, these constitutional guarantees have been routinely put on hold based on rulings of governors, mayors, university presidents, and school superintendents. This is not to say that in some instances public health concerns made temporary suspension of these rights prudent. However, if you feel that your elected officials have taken a cavalier stand regarding the importance of these rights, this election will be an important opportunity to rein them in.

Polarization around these ideas seems to be intensifying and there are increasing numbers in both parties who are willing to take extreme measures to advance their beliefs. Reports of yard signs being defaced or stolen, violent rioting in some cities, and the plot to kidnap the Governor of Wisconsin all bear witness to passionate divisions. It is likely that even after the upcoming election these differences will remain. So, I encourage you to take these matters affecting the bedrock of our nation under consideration as you prayerfully decide how to cast your vote.

As we prepare to vote, we should prayerfully weigh these matters and others that the Lord has placed on our hearts in light of the clear teaching of scripture and God's call on our lives. As Christians we are called by Jesus to the two great commandments: "love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength," and "love your neighbor as yourself" (Mark 12:30-31). The first of these commandments may guide us in voting for individuals who support the free exercise of religion and the preservation of God's gift of life. The second commandment reminds us that when we cast our vote, we should also consider how government policies affect others and support policies that are fair and promote the welfare of all. We should also realize that well-meaning Christians may weigh the various issues differently and come to different conclusions regarding which candidates they will support. We must strive for unity within the Church even when we weigh the political issues of the day differently.

We cannot control how others may vote and what the outcome of this election will be. However, we do know that the Lord hears our prayers, he is in control of all outcomes of human affairs, and he wants us to bring all our anxieties to him in prayer.

In writing this column four years ago, I thought these petitions from *Method of Prayer*, written in 1710 by the British minister Matthew Henry, were appropriate to place before the Lord. They seem even more relevant today.

*O you hope of Israel, its savior in time of trouble, be not like a stranger in the land or like a traveler who turns aside to tarry for a night; but be always in the midst of us: We are called by*

*your name, O do not leave us. Though our iniquities testify against us, act, O Lord, for your name's sake; though our backslidings are many, and we have sinned against you.*

*Restore us to yourself, O Lord God of hosts, and let your face shine, that we may be saved! O stir up your might and come to save us!*

*Show us your steadfast love, O Lord, and grant us your salvation; yes, let your salvation be near to those who fear you, that glory may dwell in our land. Let steadfast love and faithfulness meet, righteousness and peace kiss each other: Let faithfulness spring up from the ground and righteousness look down from the sky; yes, let the Lord give what is good: Let righteousness go before him and make his footsteps a way.*

*O let the throne of Christ endure forever among us, even the place of your sanctuary, that glorious throne set on high from the beginning.*

*Let your lampstand never be removed from its place, though that is what we deserve, because we have abandoned the love we had at first. Never do to us as you did to your place that was in Shiloh, where your name shall dwell at first.*

*Let us never know what a famine of the word means; nor ever be forced to wander from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth, to seek the word of God.*

*O Lord, be the stability of our times, abundance of salvation, wisdom, and knowledge; and let the fear of the Lord be our treasure: Let the righteous flourish among us, and let there be those who fear you in our land, while the sun endures, and as long as the moon, throughout all generations; that peace may abound, and that children yet to be created may praise the Lord.*

Please share your thoughts on this column that you would like other readers to see by entering them in the form below. Personal comments can be sent to [JMitchell@ceai.org](mailto:JMitchell@ceai.org). John Mitchell is on staff at CEAI and teaches part-time in the suburbs of Washington, DC.

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