

FLORIDA FAMILY POLICY COUNCIL: A Perspective on Winning and Losing Elections, by John Stemberger

Faithful till the end...

*A Perspective on Winning and Losing Elections
By John Stemberger*

So your guy didn't win the election? Maybe several of your candidates didn't win. What about all of the time, money and effort you spent? What about the credibility of your personal support? Or what about the countless hours of volunteering, sending e-mails and talking to neighbors and friends? Are you discouraged? Disillusioned? Upset?

Well, at the risk of sounding insensitive, welcome to politics in a fallen world.

I was speaking at a conference in Jacksonville when a man raised his hand and told me he was greatly discouraged by all the insanity of where the country is going politically. He asked me what I could tell him to encourage him. While I can really sympathize with this man's feelings, my response was straightforward. "Faithfulness is the goal."

For the world, "winning" is not just the goal, it's everything. For the believer, faithfulness is the goal. Now don't get me wrong. I want to win. And we will fight hard to win. In a sense, I have devoted my life to winning the battles we fight. But in God's economy, the focus is not merely winning— but on us being faithful to the end.

Do we stop proclaiming the Gospel or speaking truth in love

because the world rejects the truth? Do we give up on evangelism because we are not “winning” and seeing results with unbelievers? Do we give up as parents because we are not seeing “results” in our children? No, we develop a holy resilience to failure and setbacks and press on in faithful obedience to any task that we are called to accomplish.

In politics, as with evangelism, God simply calls us to be faithful to the message and the task. The results are in His providential hands. When history is behind us, we rest in His sovereign plan. We do our best to promote the virtuous and expose evil and deception. We work hard to elect the most principled candidates. We steward our citizenship by educating ourselves and others and voting with the best possible information we can find. But once we have discharged our responsibility, we can be satisfied and feel God’s pleasure in the fact that we were simply faithful.

As for me and my house, we are done with the emotional ups and downs of the roller coaster of election wins and losses—super elated with a win or totally depressed with a loss. We are learning the discipline of just being content with the knowledge that we were faithful to have done everything within our influence to elect principled men and women that will stand for life, marriage, and family.

It is natural and normal to be disappointed with a defeat and overjoyed with a victory. I am not suggesting we deny the emotional responses that come with either winning or losing. What I am suggesting is that we not become emotional slaves to the circumstances one way or another but instead to sense God’s highest satisfaction in knowing that we were merely faithful to do our part—irrespective of the outcome.

This understanding aligns us with an eternal perspective. It protects us from burn out and it gives us greater endurance and resilience. Most importantly it postures us to humble ourselves before the Creator of history itself to recognize

that we can only see in part and know in part and that ultimately His ways are higher, deeper and wiser than our ways.

My favorite historical place to visit in Washington, D.C. is the Arlington National Cemetery. To walk quietly at the feet of over a quarter of a million gravestones representing American soldiers from the Civil War to Iraq can be a profound experience. Looking across what appears to be an endless sea of mostly young men and women who have died so that I might live with freedom, is a sobering if not a completely transforming experience. Suddenly, everything comes into perspective. In that moment, I recommit myself with greater tenacity and courage to what I am called to do and realize that any disappointment or discouragement I have experienced is merely light and momentary compared to those who have paid the ultimate price.

Mother Teresa spent her lifetime serving the poor and unborn in conditions which just seemed insurmountable. Yet her timeless admonition still gives fresh motivation today. She said, "We do nothing. God does everything. All glory must be returned to Him. God has not called me to be successful. He called me to be faithful." Would that we could all have this same steady and eternal perspective when we face the wins and losses of life.