

LC STUDY GUIDE**“Thinking Biblically About Politics”**

The Passage: Philippians 3:20-4:1

October 31 – November 13

Intro: The “Thrive” series was put on pause on Sunday, October 30th, as Pastor Bryan gave a message entitled, “Thinking Biblically About Politics.” Since it was a LC week, we thought we would pause as well. Normally, our LC Studies are not sermon-centric; they focus on the passage that was preached on, but not necessarily the content. We do this to be Scripture-centric and also for the practical reason that not everyone at our LC might have heard the sermon or is part of Grace Chapel. (Thus, the Scriptures themselves are the center point of the study in Christian community.) For today, we will explore some of the points made by Bryan while using one of the passages the sermon was anchored in.

First, a few house rules. Our time together cannot be about debate, nor is it about getting the last word. We should also exercise great caution before venting our frustrations (and we recognize they are often legitimate.) ☺ That said, the purpose of our gathering is to edify, learn together, grow together, and continue to demonstrate unity and respect. Let’s prioritize listening and leaning into the virtues found in community, especially when we see things differently.

Which bring us to today’s central idea: **Christ-followers can ultimately agree that, regardless of what happens as a result of our election, God is still the supreme ruler of all, our citizenship is in heaven, and we as Christians have a calling to live as the light of the world as we trust in Jesus.**

Philippians 3:20-4:1

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. ¹ Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

O – What do you find most encouraging in these three verses?

I – Biblical scholar N.T. Wright tells us that in order to understand this passage, we need to understand the dynamics of the city of Philippi. It was a Roman colony city whose population was marked by old war soldiers whom Rome did not want to return to their peaceful city. So the soldiers were “rewarded” with free land and continued the Roman way of life. More from Wright:

“Philippi was on a main road which ran west to the narrowest part of the Adriatic Sea, where you could sail easily across to Italy and travel on to Rome. Close contact could be maintained with the mother city. The Philippian colonists were proud of being Romans, and would do their best to order their civic life so that it matched the way things were done in Rome. The most recent innovation down that line was, of course, the establishment of the imperial cult: Caesar, the emperor, was to be worshipped as savior and Lord.”¹

So, how does this add meaning to the text when Paul tells the Christians of Philippi that their “citizenship is in heaven?”

(The purpose of the colonist was to bring the mother city’s culture to the new colony. Paul is saying now that you are a citizen of heaven, so bring the culture of God’s heaven to Philippi. This citizenship would create a culture clash between the Roman citizens and hence open the door for persecution against the Christians.)

A – One of Pastor Bryan’s 2x4’s for his “framework” was that “**No party or platform fully embodies the vision and values of the Kingdom.**” How does seeing ourselves as citizens (or colonists) of heaven inform our earthly, national citizenship? How does this help us to be faithful stewards of our greater citizenship?

O – By what means does Paul expect the citizenship of heaven to come to earth? (Hint verse 21 if needed)

I – Why does Paul remind his readers of the resurrection and the promise of a glorified body in verse 21?

A – Two-part question: One: Pastor Bryan emphasized the point that “Reasonable Christian minds will differ, and deserve to be respected.” What does that respect look like in the coming weeks and years?
Second part: If we added Paul’s encouragement of standing firm to the end with the hope of our citizenship and respect for others, how could we inspire the culture around us, including our holiday family life, our social media world, and our everyday interactions?

¹ Wright, T. (2004). *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon* (pp. 125–126). London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

- a. Please note that not all these questions are to be asked in a single meeting. Take some time to prayerfully discern what will serve your LC the best. Select and reword the questions that best fit your voice and your Life Community group.
- b. Complement these questions with “process questions” (what else? what more? what do others think?)
- c. When you ask questions, give people ample time to think and respond. Wait. Take your time; don’t rush people but encourage participation. Avoid answering your own questions!
- d. Application: Pace the study to conclude with difference-making application.
- e. Secondary texts—use other texts sparingly, even if they are relevant. Such texts will push you into “teaching” rather than facilitating, causing people to feel distracted or de-powered.