

Outline

Amazing Race!

McCain and Obama and God's Choice!

Tomorrow begins a fast and furious two week competition that will involve the world's greatest gymnastic feats of spinning and twisting. Competitors will race by us spectators in blinding speed leaving us wondering if what we have seen could really be true, if all is as it seems or could the truth of the matter be enhanced by some type of performance enhancer that can never be humanly and naturally accomplished. Feats of strength to hold up a nation with a single promise of hope and rejuvenation will dazzle our thoughts and leave us hoping that each of us can live on that inspiration throughout the coming years. Victory speeches will stir our hearts and the playing of our national anthem will be set against the backdrop of a Redeem Team that promises to bring back the glory to our country and to bring home the gold of a championship nation. Of what do I speak? You guessed it! It is the Olympianic posturing and jockeying for our cheers and votes at the Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

Yessiree! here will be enough steroid laden, adrenaline pumping promises made over the next two weeks to last us for another four years when it will come again. It will be an [Amazing Race](#) of National Proportions and all aimed at convincing the American public that one of two teams is the best team and is deserving of you awarding them the gold medal of the Presidential Trophy in November. And today, it is my goal to tell you who you should choose to vote for in that starting gate on the first Tuesday in November. That's right. I am going to use this platform that I have here and tell you who to vote for.

Now hang with me before you get too antsy that this is going to turn in to a Spin Zone or a giant political rally, for that it is not. However, I do believe that we need to think about something that is so much a part of ourselves as the choosing of the leader of our country, for truly it is an Amazing Race and one that will affect not only our country as a whole, but truly each of us individually for the decisions that are made by a President and by members of National and State governments are decisions that do affect everyone of us individually whether we realize it or not. You have been affected by the decisions of people that you have chosen to put into office – and whether you have voted or not, you have influenced the decision, for indeed a decision to vote is part of the overall count that puts someone into office and a decision not to vote is a decision that has either helped or hindered someone from making it into office as well!

The thought that I really do not matter and that politicians do not make that big a difference in my life personally is a thought of ignorance. Whatever you think about the decision does not matter, but indeed we have personally intensified our influence in the Middle East and find ourselves in the middle of a war in Iraq because of decisions by people who the American people put into office. Conversely, decisions made by people that the American people, you and me, either by deciding to vote or deciding not to vote, have resulted in decisions to be made that contributed to the present economic climate that we as a nation find ourselves in at present. Supreme Court Justices have been placed on the bench by your vote of who to appoint to the Presidency and to Congress which has resulted in such wonderfully awesome decisions as the striking down of racist laws that contributed to prejudicial treatment of individuals, but also contributed to the massacring of millions of unborn babies through the legalization of abortion. Even how you choose to build your house, what kind of loan you can get, what your children will be taught in school, the content of that which can or cannot be viewed on television are all decided by people that are placed in positions of decision and power by the power of your single vote or choice not to vote.

So, I hope that you can see that I am not over-exaggerating when I say the true Olympic Competition begins this week and will continue on into the first week of November. And how should you vote? This is a very important point. So important to the two parties jockeying for your vote that they are going to

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spend 100's of millions of dollars in ads and conventions and speeches and trips and phone calls and text messages to get your vote and they are convinced it is worth it or they would never spend it. However, they also are relying on the fact that you are stupid and more interested in appearances, and sound bites than in actual principles that guide you to making a decision based on value and belief over a decision of fashion and feeling!

Which brings me to the [AmazinG Race!](#) All this year we at Ni River have been challenging everyone in our church to join the AmazinG Race! The race began in January where over 250 of us decided to take on the challenge of reading the Bible through in one year and using a fantastic tool to help us to do it – The *One-Year Bible* ([can we put a picture of the One-Year Bible on the screen?](#)) And for many of us, it truly has been an AmazinG Race! I could never have dreamed how I have read the Bible in a new way this year and seen so many things in it that I have not seen before. God has consistently challenged me through new truths that I had not seen in my reading of it before and many of you have told me the same thing. You see, for many of us the Bible can be a very dangerous book, for we try to make it back up what we want to do with our life and pick and choose words and verses out of context that seem to say what we want them to say. That is a dangerous way to read the Bible and a lot of very bad things and behaviors have been justified by using the Bible as a weapon in this way. When I choose to read the Bible in systematic way, like say a book at a time, or in the way we have in the *One-Year Bible*, I have to read it in context and it makes more sense that way and I am forced to keep it in context of what it is actually saying. That keeps me honest and makes me accountable to God! That has made this an [AmazinG Race](#) to me! Another reason that it is so cool to read through the Bible in the *One-Year Bible* is that, as my friend, Jerry Bradley is always saying, “[Every day is a new Starting Point!](#)” Even if you get behind, and for some of you, I mean waaaaaaaaaay behind, you can start again. You just find the date of the day it is and begin anew. If you have dropped out of the race, I want to encourage you to dust off that Bible and begin anew today on today's date – August 24.

Which brings me all the way back to my point of my message today – to tell you who to vote for! I find it very exciting that just as we are getting ready to move into the Republican and Democratic National Conventions that kick off the Amazing Race to the Presidential Elections, the AmazinG Race this last week took us to Proverbs 21 and Proverbs 21 is all about good leadership and good leadership issues! Let's take a look at who the Bible tells us we should vote for this fall! And it starts right off in the first verse to let us know who is actually in control no matter the President!

[The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD; he directs it like a watercourse wherever he pleases. Prov-
verbs 21:1 NIV](#)

We often get so worked up by which party and which person gets in the White House. And it is certainly important that we become a part of the process for it is each individual's responsibility to allow the influence of their purity of heart to be added to the weight of major decisions that happen in the world. Truly, as we will see later in this chapter in Proverbs, Edmund Burke had it right when he said, “Evil prevails when good men do nothing.” We each have a collective spiritual responsibility to the truth placed in our hearts by God and to contribute that truth and good to the collective whole of advancing God's agenda. However, we do harm to the process when we fret and fume and fuss and stress over who is in the White House. Even as we come to determine the values that God has placed in our hearts through prayer and study of His Word, we must relax that He is in control of history and future. The heart of the King is truly in the Lord's hand and He will use the good and the evil that is produced by leaders to produce the future that works for the best of humanity. Even in such evil leaders like Hitler, God produced great good, for out of World War II came great solidarity of the nations of the world and a world-wide compassion that has created the most world-wide boon of compassion organizations and freedom of individuals in the history of the world. God used a dark time to create a positive future for the world. Truly the heart of the President is in the Lord's hands and He will direct the future!

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Proverbs 21 gives us our next clue as to who to vote for in this election in the very next verse!

[We justify our actions by appearances; God examines our motives. Proverbs 21:2, NIV](#)

Character Counts! The politicians may try to make their candidate look and say the right things, but God expects us to look beyond the exterior and the sound bite. God expects us to look for the character – now this is not in the same way that the politicians view each other, for they will smear each other and hold each other accountable for past mistakes and foibles. That is simply hypocrisy and should give us an indication as to the character of the individual creating the charge. No one is perfect. Everyone sins. Most have inhaled. However, character cannot hide – it always comes to the surface over the life of the individual. God does not expect a sin-free life, nor should we. However, God does desire that we are authentic about our lives – owning our indiscretions and seeking to turn from them and pursue godliness and righteousness. This is always exhibited with a humble spirit that communicates with appropriate honesty and transparency, not telling all of that which is private, but owning that which is needing to be owned – private sin dealt with privately and public sin dealt with publicly. Spin is just not acceptable in God's eyes.

[Arrogance and pride – distinguishing marks in the wicked – are just plain sin... Make it to the top by lying and cheating; get paid with smoke and a promotion – to death! Proverbs 21:4,6 TM](#)

Those passages in the Bible should be a guiding light pointing the way toward the person for whom we should vote. However, Proverbs 21 does not stop here, but goes on to tell us what that person should stand for and what kinds of issues should be important to us:

[Justice \(It might not be the economy, stupid.\)](#)

[To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice. Proverbs 21:3 NIV](#)

Far too many times do we Americans allow our wallets and purses do our voting for us. If we are hurting in the money department, we are willing to overlook the negatives of a candidate's platforms if he promises to return the money to our coffers and bring us back to the comfortable lifestyle to which we have grown accustomed. We have a responsibility to defend the defenseless, the innocent, the hurting, the enslaved, the tormented. God desires that we choose to do what is right, not what is convenient, that we stand alone among the oppressed even if it costs us. Our leaders must stand for that which is morally right and against the injustices of evil. Often this gets a little blurry and is not as black and white as we would like for it to be. However, the *10 Commandments* are a good simple, moral guide for us. If someone is dictating belief, stealing, killing, lying, or promoting immorality against others, it would be a good idea to stand for justice. No, I am not saying we need to post the *10 Commandments* anywhere, but we better make sure that the people we vote for exhibit a lifestyle that promotes them and make decisions that reflect them!

[Poverty \(poverty is solved by a benevolent nation\)](#)

[If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered. Proverbs 21:13](#)

Show me a leader without compassion and I will show you a tyrant obsessed with power and doomed to lose that power. God wants us to be concerned and involved in assisting those who are less fortunate than ourselves. We need to do this as individuals, as churches, as leaders and as a nation. If leaders

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are only talking about power and the economy, they are peg-leg leaders and destined to fall. God has blessed our great nation because we have chosen to bless other nations. The moment we stop being a benevolent nation is the moment we stop having the power to bless others as well as ourselves. We must be the first to rush in and support tsunami ravaged nations, earthquake devastation in China, standing against the slavery of Darfur in the Sudan, and fighting AIDS in the 3rd World. I believe this is the meaning of another verse in Proverbs where God tells us not to love our ease and comfort so much that we fail to share with others.

He who loves pleasure will become poor; whoever loves wine and oil will never be rich.
Proverbs 21:17 NIV

And why He warns us against becoming bedfellows with those who are evil or cause injustice and promote poverty.

Better to live in a tent in the wild than with a cross and petulant spouse. Proverbs 21:19 TM

Finally, I believe God shows us that whoever leads us must be a person of conservation rather than spending, one who believes in long-term growth rather than immediate gratification. God has never designed quick fixes into anything and whether it is our finances, our care of this world, or our relationships world-wide – slow and steady is better than quick and easy in God's Book.

Conservation is the choice of a guided nation.

In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has.
Proverbs 21:20

I told you I was going to tell you who to vote for today. Is it John McCain? Is it Barrack Obama? Yes, if you can find within them the following:

Proverbs 21 Candidate

- Lifestyle of Character rather than image of Perfection
- Demeanor of Authentic Humility lived out in Compassion and Understanding
- Defender of the Weak verses bedfellow of Profiteers
- Poverty Strategist through Giving of Hope

Economy Builder through Conservation and Delayed Gratification

That's who you should vote for. Dig into the *One-Year Bible* and get into the AmazinG Race to guide your vote this fall. Vote for the candidate God leads you to rather than your sense of fashion or a pretty sounding sound bite. Let the games begin!

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