



*How Should Christians Relate to Culture and Society?
Part 5 – Christian Political Engagement*



The Road Map:

Week 1: Should Christians Be Involved?

Week 2: Avoiding the Trap of Civic Religion

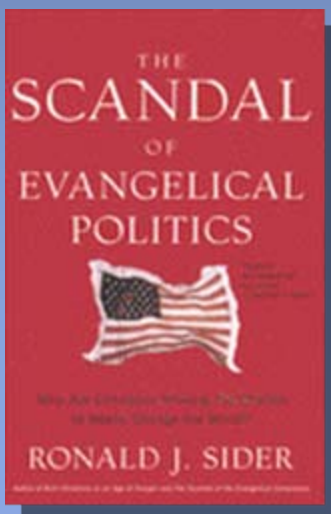
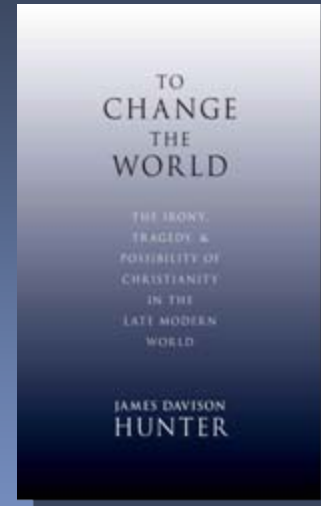
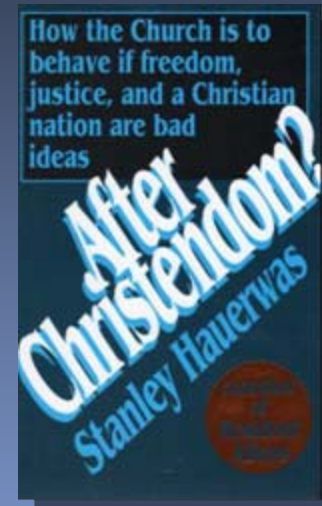
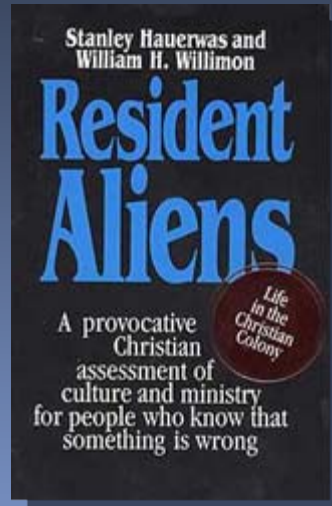
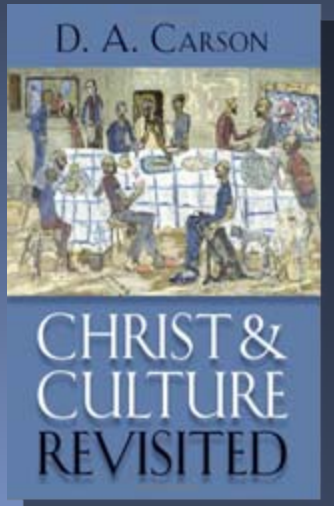
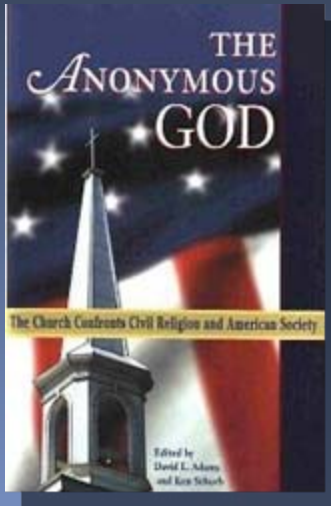
Week 3: Should Christians Withdraw / Set Themselves Apart?

Week 4: Can Christians Change Culture or Society?

TONIGHT: Christian Political Engagement



Read Along:





The Temptation of Politics

“Believing the Bible as I do, I would find it impossible to stop preaching the pure saving gospel of Jesus Christ and begin doing anything else – including fighting communism, or participating in civil rights reforms. . . . Preachers are not called to be politicians but to be soul winners. . . . Nowhere are we commissioned to reform the externals. The gospel does not clean up the outside but rather regenerates the inside.”

- Rev. Jerry Falwell, 1965



The Temptation of Politics

"[The goal of the Moral Majority is to] exert a significant influence on the spiritual and moral direction of our nation by: (a) mobilizing the grassroots of moral Americans in one clear and effective voice; (b) informing the moral majority what is going on behind their backs in Washington and in state legislatures across the country; (c) lobbying intensively in Congress to defeat left-wing, social-welfare bills that will further erode our precious freedom; (d) pushing for positive legislation such as that to Establish the Family Protection Agency; . . . (e) helping the moral majority in local communities to fight pornography, homosexuality, the advocacy of immorality in school textbooks and other issues facing each and every one of us."

- Rev. Jerry Falwell, 1980



The Temptation of Politics

"My religious beliefs never changed my views on the [political] issues to any degree because my political philosophy was already well developed."

- Ralph Reed, Director, Christian Coalition, 1989 - 1997



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American



Ideological



Political



Christian



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American



Conservative



Republican



Christian



The Temptation of Politics

Some Priorities of the Moral Majority:

Defeating Liberal Incumbents

Increasing Evangelical and Fundamentalist Voter Registration

Fighting Communism and Communist Takeovers

Opposing the Equal Rights Amendment

Opposing Nuclear Disarmament

Collecting Signatures to Pardon Lt. Col. Oliver North



The Temptation of Politics

What is the Allure of Politics for Christians?

Slavery. Civil Rights. Welfare.

Why Have Christians Been Unable to Effectively Engage Politics?



The Temptation of Politics

“All this may sound so complicated that some conclude, ‘Forget it. We don’t need all that highfalutin intellectual stuff.’ . . . [But] it is simple historical fact that political decisions have a huge impact – for good or bad, on the lives of literally billions of people. . . . The New Testament explicitly teaches that Christ is now ‘ruler of the kings of the earth.’ . . . Christians who know that must submit every corner of their lives to their wonderful Lord.”

- Ron Sider, Scandal of Evangelical Politics



The Temptation of Politics

What is the Allure of Politics for Christians?

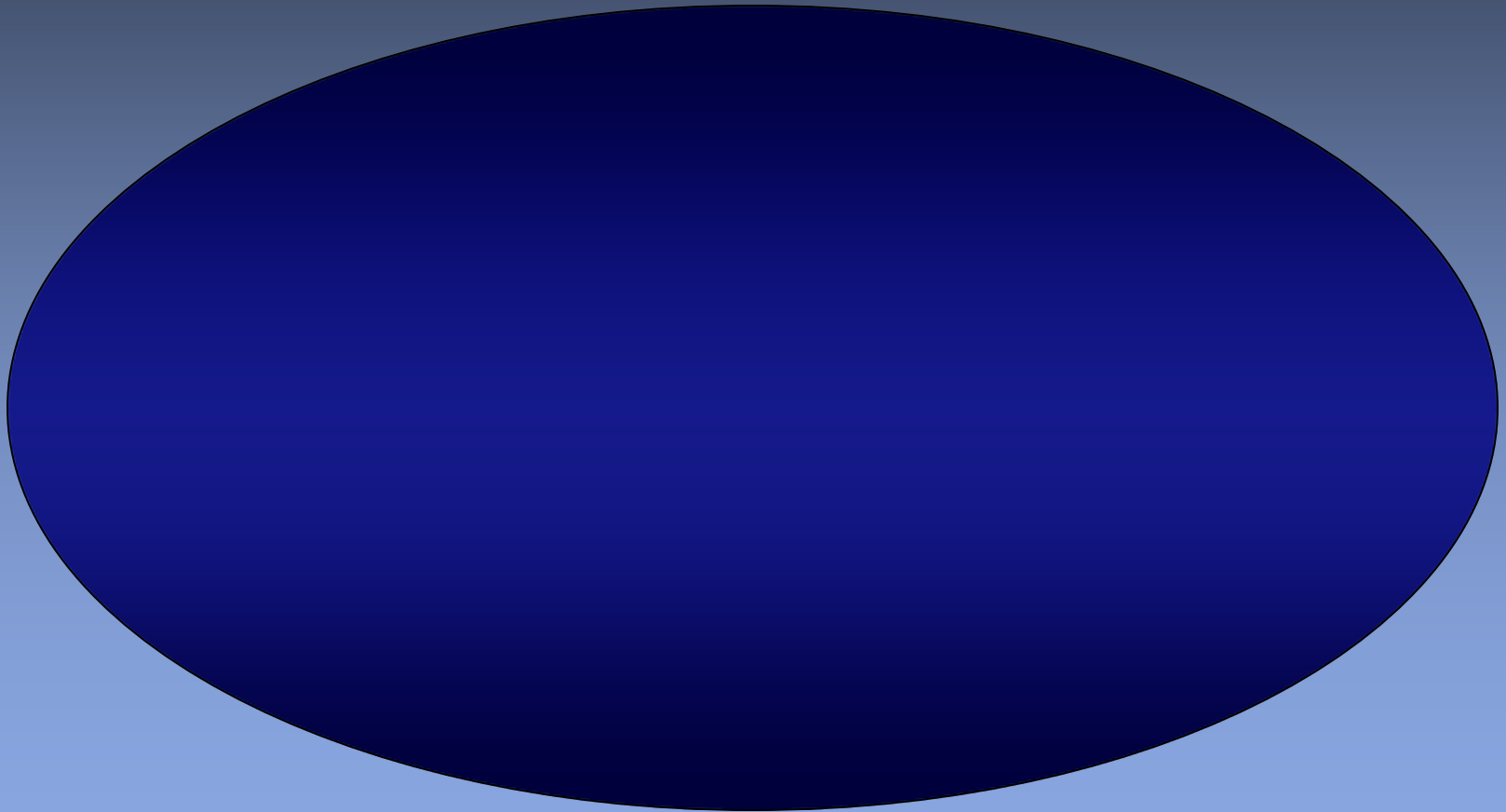
Slavery. Civil Rights. Welfare.

Why Have Christians Been Unable to Effectively Engage Politics?

- 1. We lack unity and leadership.**
- 2. We lack a coherent and consistent philosophy.**
- 3. We have overly-subscribed to politics as a solution.**



The Temptation of Politics





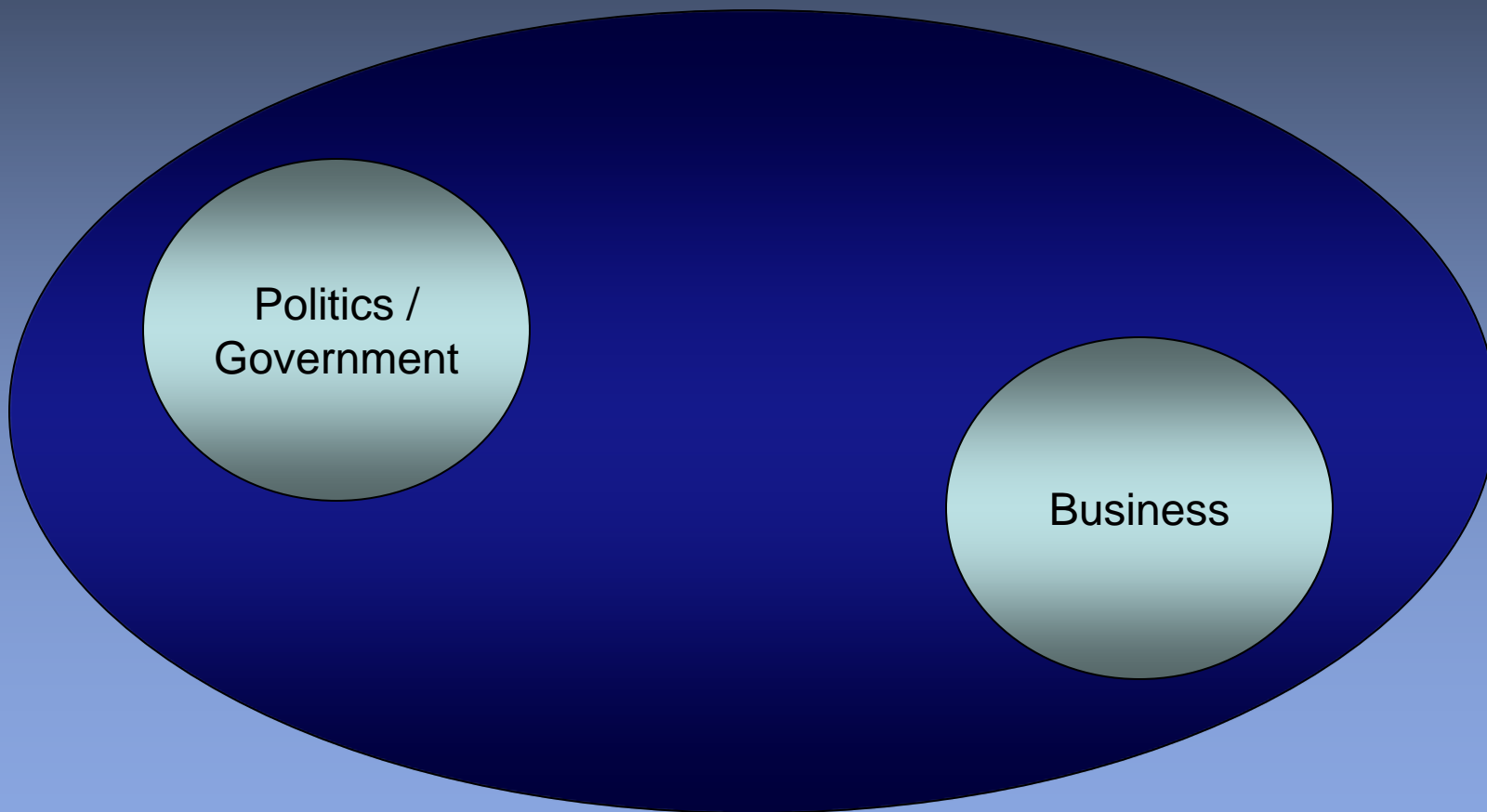
The Temptation of Politics



Politics /
Government

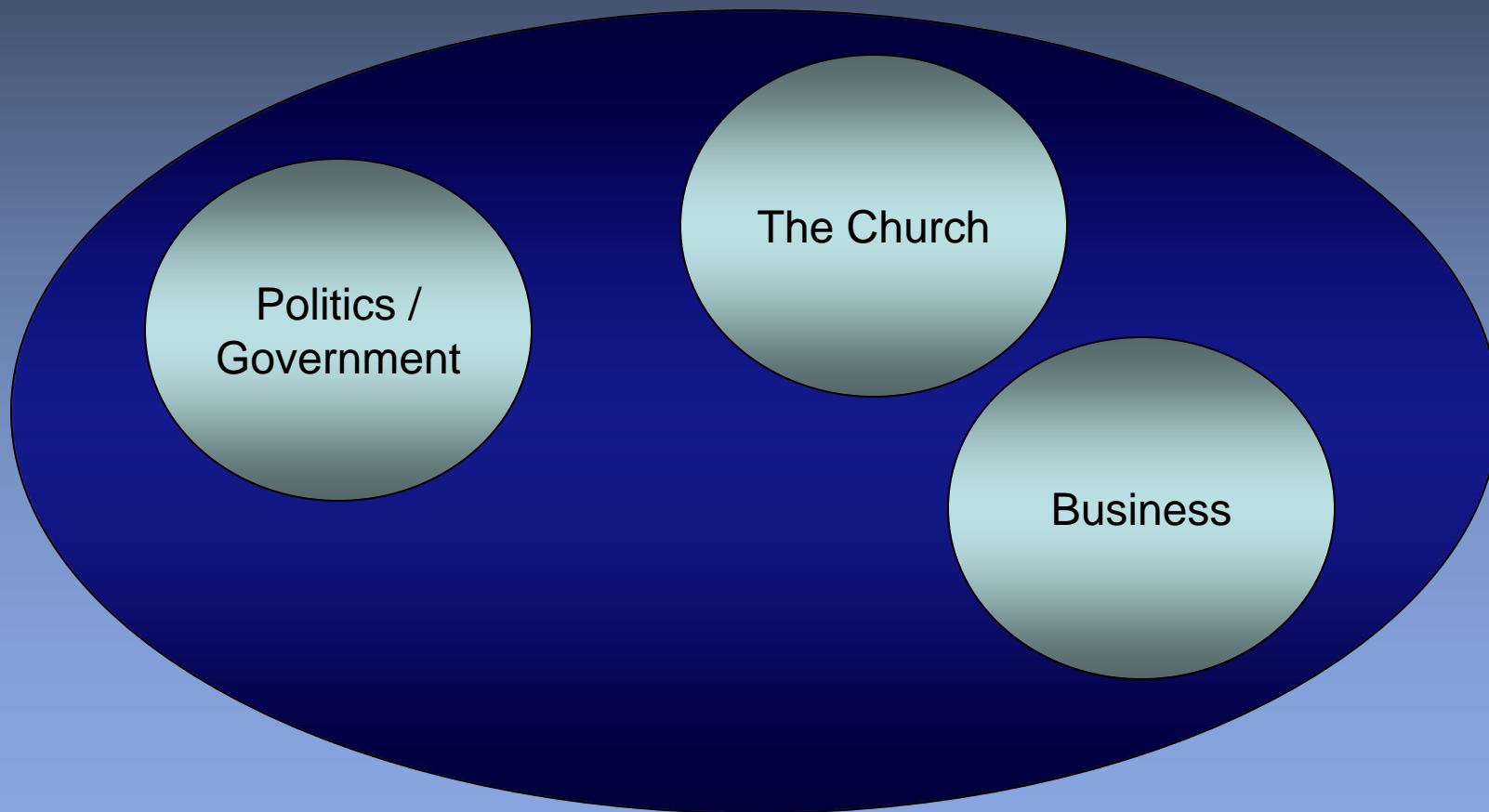


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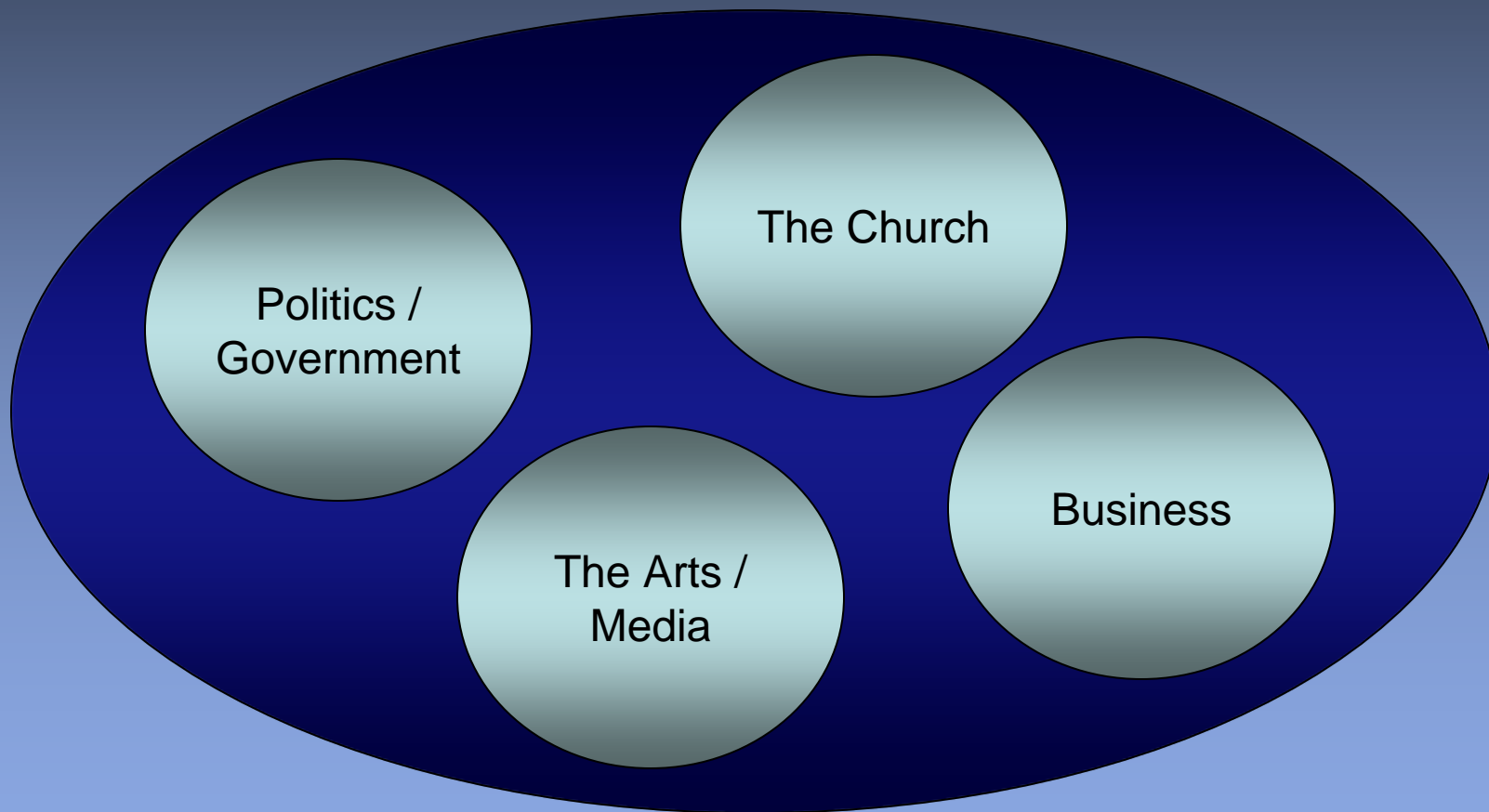


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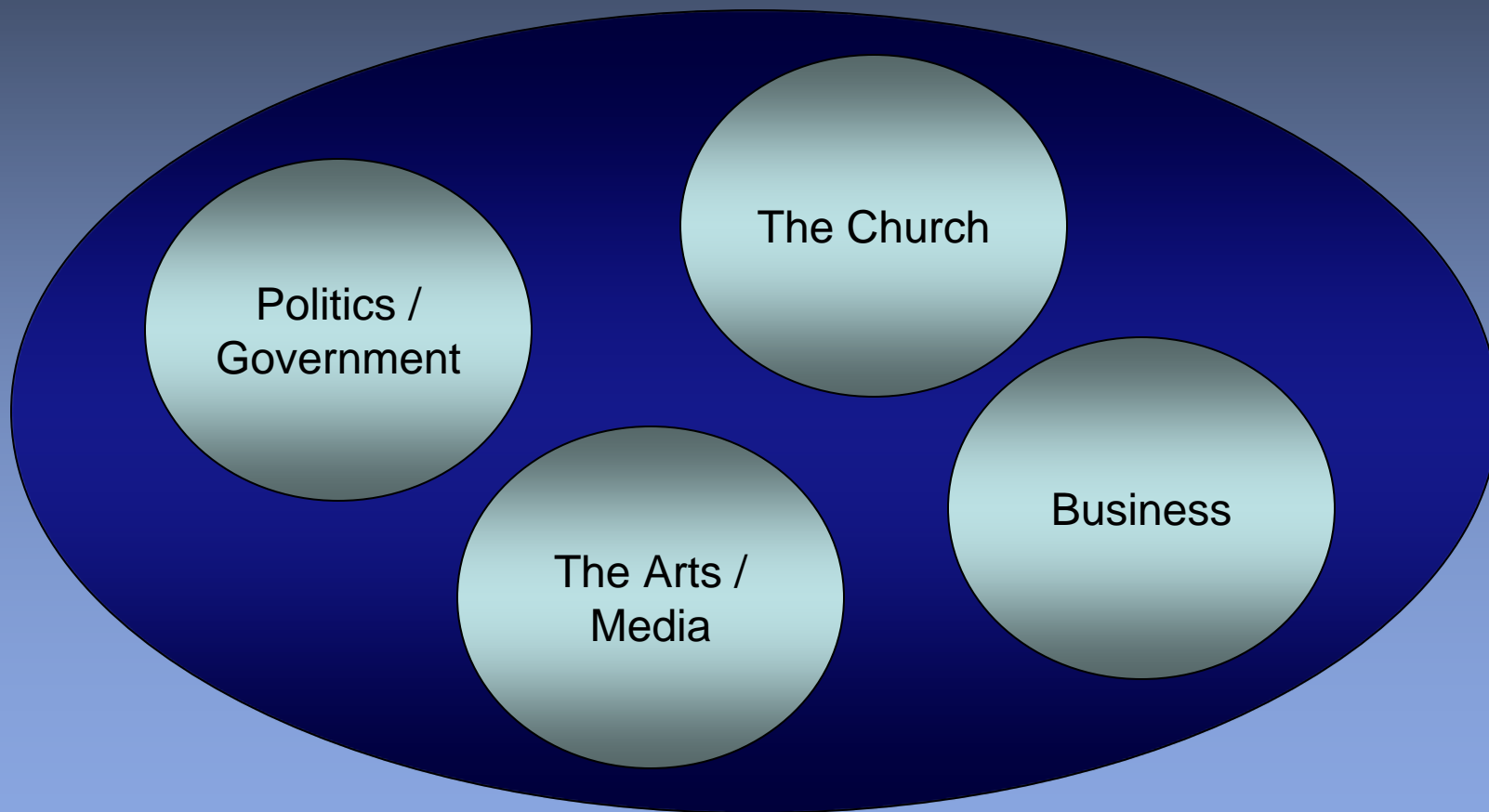


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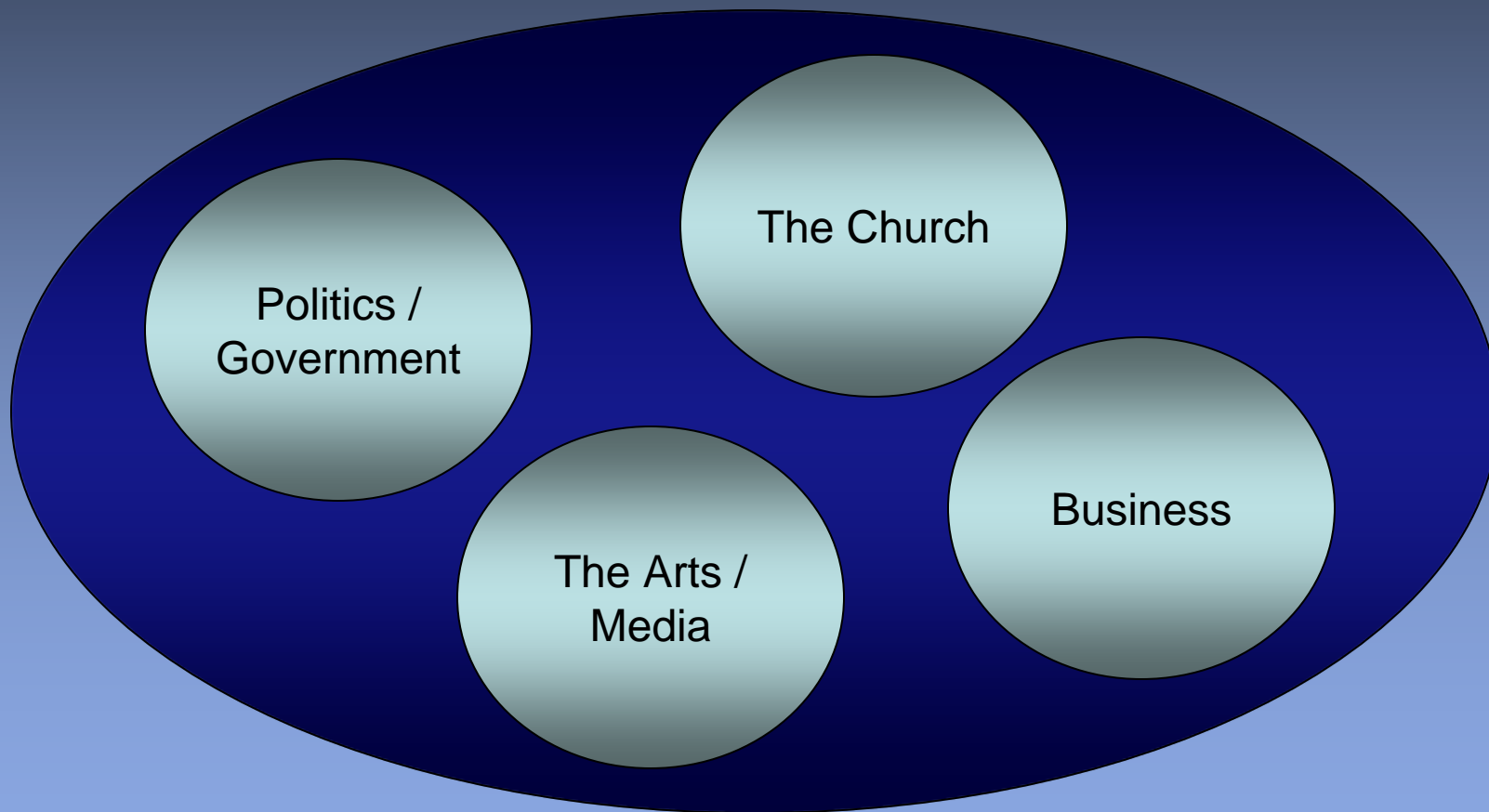


The Temptation of Politics





The Temptation of Politics





The Christian Right

Criticism:

- *Political ideology dominates theological considerations (conservative, limited government, free market, democratic);*
- *Nostalgia for a mythological past;*
- *Insistence on a "Christian America," past and future;*
- *A sense of victimization;*
- *Blame and suspicion of "others," including secularists, liberals and foreigners who might influence society;*
- *Actions and statements that have led to retaliation against all Christians;*
- *A history of anti-intellectualism and late entry into politics;*
- *A premillennial dispensationalist outlook on society's future;*
- *Close association (and use by) the Republican Party;*
- *Politically schizophrenic positions (i.e., "pro-life" positions).*



The Christian Right

Positives:

- *Truthfully identify that America is in a moral decline;*
- *Truthfully identify that America is becoming more secular;*
- *Have been a strong voice on (a selected number) of priorities of Christ and His church;*
- *Have had success in influencing the outcome of recent elections (1980 – 2004) and success in short-term political outcomes.*



The Christian Left

Criticism:

- *Leading voices born out of anger over the Christian Right; many times more of a reaction than a self-initiated action;*
- *Many desire to be just as politically involved as those on the Right, but have not gained ability within Democratic party;*
- *Unexamined reliance on a hermeneutic or exegesis that applies the major and minor prophets to the modern world;*
- *A focus on social gospel that often minimizes the emphasis on belief (orthopraxy which supersedes orthodoxy);*
- *Waning influence and presence of Mainline denominations;*
- *Acceptance of a post-modern ideology in recent resurgence of evangelical progressives;*
- *A general belief that government can solve many of society's problems, especially through government programs.*



The Christian Left

"If biblical prophets like Amos and Isaiah had read the news about what happened to child tax credits for low-income families, for example, they surely would be out screaming on the White House lawn about the justice of God – and be quickly led away by the Secret Service."

- Jim Wallis, Sojourners



The Christian Left

Positives:

- *Has returned a very valuable balance to Christianity's political voice;*
- *Has reignited an emphasis on practice verses mere belief;*
- *Social justice was a missing from Christian politics / recent theology;*
- *Has given rise to a new type of progressive movement that stands apart from the declining Mainline experience;*
- *Has capture the imagination of younger church-goers / voters;*
- *Has succeeded in enticing the Democratic Party to focus again on faith issues and people of faith.*



The Neo-Anabaptists

Criticism:

- *Stand against many things, but offer relatively few prescriptions;*
- *Wary of state power, and thus abdicate any influence in that arena;*
- *Rely heavily on the language of politics, which confuses issues;*
- *Choose to live apart from the state and its offices.*

Positives:

- *Correctly call out the temptation of Constantinianism;*
- *Focus on the church being the church, not a political institution;*
- *A prophetic (although sometimes radical) voice;*
- *Critical of both the Right and the Left's adherence to global capitalism, government solutions and the free market.*



Consequences

- 1. The public witness of the church has become largely political.*
- 2. Politics cannot answer most of the pressing issues in society, nor reach their root causes (i.e., declining family values, inequality, loss of decency, vulgarity, mistreatment of the elderly, poverty).*
- 3. Both Right and Left are bound together by misinformation, selective view of the facts, a sense of injury and anger / reaction over the views of the other.*
- 4. The focus on politics has taken away the church's focus on other areas: philosophy, scientific, intellectual, artistic and literary efforts that might have had a greater influence on culture.*



Observations: Jesus and Social Power

- 1. Jesus' power derived from complete intimacy and submission to the Father.*

"For I did not speak of my own accord, but the Father who sent me commanded me what to say and how to say it. I know that his command leads to eternal life. So whatever I say is just what the Father has told me to say."

John 12:49-50



Observations: Jesus and Social Power

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"Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 'All this I will give you,' he said, 'if you will bow down and worship me.'

"Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

Matthew 4:8-10



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"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

Matthew 20:25b-28



Observations: Jesus and Social Power

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"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, . . . He humbled Himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross."

Philippians 2:5-8



Observations: Jesus and Social Power

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- 3. Compassion defines the power of Christ's Kingdom.*



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"Not only in His sacrificial suffering and death, . . . but in the time, attention, effort and resources he gave to address the needs of others – caring concretely for those who were fearful, hungry and thirsty, poor, humiliated, despised, demon-possessed, discriminated against, confused, blind, sick, paralyzed, diseased and dying."

James Davison Hunter



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"As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, "Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?" But Jesus turned and rebuked them, and they went to another village."

Luke 9:51-56



UP NEXT:

- Week 1: Should Christians Be Involved?
- Week 2: Avoiding the Trap of Civic Religion
- Week 3: Should Christians Withdraw or Set Themselves Apart?
- Week 4: Can Christians Change Culture or Society?
- Week 5: Societal & Political Engagement of the Right, Left and Center
- Next Week: Formulating an Effective Witness



WELCOME TO EXODUS INTERACTIVE FORUM

INTERACTIVE



Participate, ask questions, talk back...

What if we listened to what everyone had to say — and discovered that God can speak through us all? After all, we all learn better when we talk things out, hear different points of view, and give room for the Spirit to speak through our deliberation.

[Read more](#)

THOUGHTFUL



Test everything, hold on to what is good...

Many hours of research are dedicated to prepare each one of our series. We explore the scriptures, the breadth of Christian scholarship, contemporary authors, and consider a wide range of sources outside of our faith.

[Read more](#)

FAITHFUL



Set apart Christ as Lord...

We all have questions. But we learn together in a way that tackles the deepest part of our doubts while making sure that our purpose is clear: to always know the reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, and to be prepared to share that answer with everyone who asks us about that hope.

[Read more](#)

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EXODUS INTERACTIVE FORUM.

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COMMENTS, AND WE WOULD
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INFO@EXODUSPODCASTS.COM

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