

Office Politics – A Christian Point of View

Politics – definition (<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politics>)

- relations or conduct in a particular area of experience;
- exercising or seeking power.

Environment

- More than just the office
- Church, Home, School
- Any group where many people interact

Power – (from David W. Gill – <http://www.urbana.org/complete-book-of-everyday-christianity/power-workplace>)

- Power is just the ability or capacity to act.
- Power in the workplace can refer to policy, plans, and the distribution of influence
- How should we understand power as thoughtful Christians?

- Sources of Power in the Workplace
 - Competence and Skill (Col. 3:17, 23-24)
 - Relational Skills (Rom. 12:14-21)
 - Communication (Eph. 4:15, 25, 29)
 - Character

Fundamentals for the Christian

(Steve Farrar, *God Built (Bold Men of God Series – Joseph)*, (Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2008))

- God is Sovereign
- God is Providential
- God is Holy
- Psalms – 135:5-6; 115:3; 103:19; 24:1-2

God has a plan for us and it is the best one. Most times, we will not see God's providence until years later.

John J. Murray sums it up

The plan of God is perfect.

The plan is exhaustive.

The plan is for my ultimate good.

The plan is secret. God hides it from me until it happens.

I discover it day by day as it unfolds.

(John J. Murray, *Behind a Frowning Providence* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990) p.10)

Providence: That which God creates He continually sustains and provides for, and nothing – great or small – is outside of His absolute control.

- Christian Response (Mt. 22:36-40)
- Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, and mind
- Love your neighbor as yourself

The Bad side of Office Politics (from Althea DeBrule – Office Politics and the Christian – <http://www.everydaychristian.com/work/story/352/>)

- Gossip, rumors, slander
- Bullying, manipulative behavior
- Hidden agendas
- Cliques, favoritism, prejudice
- Envy, greed, covetousness

Maintaining your Christian Witness (DeBrule with additions)

- Treat others with respect (1 Peter 2:17)

- Develop a Reputation for Excellence (Col. 3:22-24)
- Keep confidences (Prov. 11:3, 20:19)
- Give others the benefit of the doubt (Luke 6:31,37; Romans 2:1)
- Keep control of your anger (James 1:19-20; Prov. 16:32)
- Resist complaining (Phil 2:14)
- Be patient (Ps. 37:7; Prov. 14:29)
- Trust in God (Ps. 20:7)

Joseph: God's good intentions (Genesis 37-50) (Farrar)

- Sometimes God will give you a dead-end assignment (Gen. 37:26-28)
- God provides opportunities to grow into a position (Gen. 39:2-6)
- Before God promotes, God tests (Gen. 39:6-10)
- Sometimes God uses setbacks to bring good (Gen. 39:20-23)
- Sometimes God makes us wait (Gen. 39:23)
- God is in control over all promotion and advancement (Gen. 41:39)
- We should recognize God's sovereignty (Gen. 50:19-20)

Daniel: The story of the lion's den (Ken Collins – Office Politics – <http://www.kencollins.com/hope-11.htm>)

- A story of God's provision, it also provides an informative example of office politics.
- Daniel is about to be promoted to a top position
- Jealous subordinates plot his downfall
- Despite dangerous consequences, Daniel maintains his integrity
- God delivers His faithful servant

Daniel: Political Lessons (Collins)

- People good at office politics are very good at exploiting other people's integrity
- The person who seems to be your immediate enemy might really be an ally that was out-manuevered
- Bad guys often work in groups and go strictly "by the book" – re-writing the book, if necessary.
- God does not spare Daniel from the Lion's den – he still has to go through it. We should expect persecution.
- God did not give the king special wisdom to figure out a procedural loophole to spare Daniel. There was no magical shortcut.
- Avoiding adversity is not as good as overcoming adversity. In this example, God's glory was recognized by the king and proclaimed throughout the kingdom.
- God is sovereign over all things – even wild beasts and scheming subordinates

Discussion Questions

- What forms of office politics are prevalent in your workplace? How do you maintain your Christian witness in your workplace?
- God is sovereign over all things – how have you seen God's guidance in your career?
- How would an eternal perspective change your view on the importance of certain aspects of your career – recognition, salary, advancement?