CHRISTIANS AND GOVERNMENT
Sunday Morning Adult Bible Study • Fall 2026 • SVCC
October 11, 2026

HUMILITY IN OUR ASSESSMENTS AND OPINIONS

KING JOSIAH'S FATEFUL DECISION (June or July 609 BC)

Josiah was a godly king. He became king at age 8. At age 16, he committed himself to following the Lord. He began to eradicate idolatry in Judah and even in Israel the best he could. Around age 26, he renovated God's temple, renewed the Passover celebration, and recommitted the people of Judah to following God's law.

Then came 609 BC. In 722 BC, Assyria, the superpower of the Middle East, had conquered and ended (northern) Israel. In 701 BC, Assyria conquered almost all of Judah and would have taken Jerusalem, except that faithful King Hezekiah called on God for help, and God miraculously saved Jerusalem. Babylonians, the adversaries of Assyria, visited King Hezekiah to congratulate him.

By 609 BC, Babylonian forces were overtaking Assyrian lands. Assyrians and Egyptians planned to combine their armies near Carchemish to stop the Babylonians. Pharaoh Necho II marched north from Egypt to join the Assyrians against the Babylonians (see 2 Kings 23:29).

Then came Josiah's fateful decision…

2 Chronicles 35:20-27

• Which nation does Josiah appear to have thought was good (on Judah's side and God's side)?

• Which nation does Josiah appear to have thought was bad (against Judah and God's people)?

• In what ways did Josiah consult God for counsel before engaging Necho and the army of Egypt in battle, to our knowledge?

• *From class discussion:* What reason(s) might God have had—because of his love for Judah and for Josiah—to favor Assyria and Egypt in their battle against Babylon at this time?

HUMILITY WHEN DISCERNING GOD'S WILL IN CURRENT EVENTS

Sometimes we, like Josiah, think we know exactly which policy is right or which candidate is best or what our nation should do. But we need to approach such decisions and assessments with humility. Josiah thought he knew, too—and it cost him. We don't see life from God's much fuller perspective (Isaiah 55:9).

• BILLY GRAHAM met Richard Nixon in the 1940s, and they became good friends. They rose to national—and in Graham's case, international—influence at about the same time, during the 1950s. In 1968, Graham endorsed Nixon's candidacy for president and let Nixon used his endorsement in TV ads. This was a major endorsement; to many, Graham was the "Protestant Pope," the spokesperson for non-Catholics everywhere, and what he said was nearly gospel. Nixon won the election and was reelected in 1972. But after his involvement in the Watergate scandal was found out, he was discredited, and he resigned his presidency on August 9, 1974. Graham was a friend to several presidents over the years, but in 2011 he told *Christianity Today* that he "would have

steered clear of politics" if he had it to do over again. "He said he was grateful to have ministered to the needs of 'people in high places…but looking back, I know I sometimes crossed the line, and I wouldn't do that now.'" *Ron Elving, "Billy Graham Walked a Line, and Regretted Crossing over It, When It Came to Politics" — NPR, February 24, 2018 — accessed at www.wunc.org* • other material here is from "Pastor to Presidents: Billy Graham and Richard Nixon," October 21, 2020 — accessed at billygrahamlibrary.org

- Christian leaders were strongly divided over whether or not to support Donald Trump's candidacies for president:
  - Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, expressed his support for Trump's reelection in September 2024. *https://themedialine.org/by-region/franklin-graham-pledges-support-for-trump-mda-in-emotional-israel-visit/*
  - James Dobson, founder of Focus on the Family, endorsed Trump during his first campaign for the presidency, in July 2016, and supported him again in 2024. *https://time.com/4418163/donald-trump-james-dobson-evangelicals/* • *https://baptistnews.com/article/at-88-james-dobson-still-warning-of-doom-if-a-democrat-is-elected-president/*
  - Russell Moore, president of the Southern Baptist Convention's Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, which leads Southern Baptist policymaking and lobbying, strongly criticized the religious right for supporting Trump's candidacy in 2016. *https://www.npr.org/2016/12/20/506248119/anti-trump-evangelical-faces-backlash*
  - During the 2020 campaign, Minnesota preacher Doug Pagitt traveled the country with other evangelical Christian leaders, trying to convince Christians not to vote for Trump. *https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/28/meet-the-evangelicals-pushing-back-against-trump*

Reflections

- Is it possible for a Christian to have strong opinions about politics and yet maintain humility concerning those opinions? What would we need to do to accomplish this feat?
- If Christians are divided concerning a political issue or candidate, what might that say about God's perspective on that person or issue? What might that say about Christians?
- What are some steps we can take to form our political opinions carefully and with a godly perspective?

JEREMIAH 17:5-10

This is what the Lord says:

"Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who draws strength from mere flesh and whose heart turns away from the Lord. That person will be like a bush in the wastelands; they will not see prosperity when it comes. They will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives.

"But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?

"I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward each person according to their conduct, according to what their deeds deserve."