Classic: Engaging Political Issues from a Biblical Perspective
with Darrell L. Bock, Bill Hendricks, and Dorothy Burton
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The Table Podcast

Bill Hendricks  
Well, I want to welcome you to the table. We have a very special broadcast today. I’m Bill Hendricks the activeing executive director or Christian Leadership at the Hendricks Center. And your usual host, Darrell Bock is to my right. And Darrell, you’re sitting there today because the topic of today’s discussion, you have a book coming out soon that I want you to tell us about. And, ah, let me go ahead and mention that topic, which is what is the Christian’s, ah, part in politics? We’re in an election year this particular time of the taping. And a lot of concern about the political landscape of America. The question is what is the Christian’s role in that? Is it to be silent? Is it to be aggressive? We’re not gonna talk about specific candidates, but we are gonna talk about how the Christian approach is the whole subject of politics.

And in addition to Darrell, we have Dorothy Burton with us. Dorothy is the founder and president of Christians in Public Service here in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. Doing outstanding job working with public servants at the local and county and regional level primarily. And I know you’ve got a lot of experience from that whole background, Dorothy. So thanks so much for being with us.

Darrell, I alluded to your book. Maybe we could use that as a way to kinda jump into the conversation. Tell us what the book’s about, why you wrote it and where that’s going.

Darrell Bock  
Well, the book does not have a controversial title. It’s simply called How Would Jesus Vote?

And, ah, do your political views really align with the Bible? And the premise of the book is that both the right and the left cherry-pick from scripture in terms of various issues. And as a result, we don’t get the conversations that we need to have on the political issues that we face. And we’re locked in gridlock as a result.

And that the values of pursuing thinking how to pursue categories of common good and human flourishing don’t get enough discussion nor does the approach of values in relationship to certain questions. Usually it’s either economics or how we view class or how we view race. That’s the lens – those are the lenses we’re looking at issues through. And in the process we probably do ourselves and our community and culture damage.
And so the book’s divided into two parts. First part dealing with setting up what kind of country we have and the way we, our country was structured. The opening illustration being how is that John Adams, who probably would qualify as an evangelical today, and Thomas Jefferson, who almost certainly wouldn’t qualify as an evangelical today, could sit down and design a government that they both said, we can both live with this? We can live with this system of government. We can be neighbors to one another and function alongside one another. How were they able to do that and design a government that works? And then what’s happened in the meantime?

So it’s a reflective book. And it – the first part goes through that. And then specific issues are taken for the Biblical values and trying to show how the cherry-picking happens. And then there are a couple of issues, actually three that I treat that don’t work that way but still need a Biblical assessment in terms of how you even approach them. And so the book is not about specific policy as much as orientation to the issues.

**Bill Hendricks**

Now, Dorothy, let me ask you, because as soon as we get into your world, you’re dealing with the folks that are actually making the sausage if you will. And that seems like a world removed from some of the issues that Darrell’s just raised. Because in the political realm things are very much a battle many would say. Is there really interest on the part of people in public service for this kind of discussion?

**Dorothy Burton**

I would say yes and no. I think that people are – for the most part are tired of the fighting and the back and forth. But who is gonna give first? And obviously we would say the Christian would because that’s our values and that’s our principles. But when you’re in the heat of the battle, you really don’t think that way, as Dr. Bock was saying. But it’s incumbent upon us as people of God representing Christ in the public sector to begin to think through why do we respond and react the way we do. Is it out of politics or is it out of who we are in Christ? And I just think that we are in a situation where even as Christians we over politicize everything and we overanalyze everything. And it’s not necessarily filtered through the Bible.

**Bill Hendricks**

Biblical world view.
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*Dorothy Burton* So if it’s going to change, it’s going to be the people of God that’s gonna have to do it.

*Bill Hendricks* So you would encourage people to get into public service?

*Dorothy Burton* Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely.

*Bill Hendricks* And as they do, what would you say is there a role there? As a follower of Christ, again, it feels like you’re entering an absolute battlefield many times. Why would anybody want to sign up for such a thing?

*Dorothy Burton* Well, it depends on where your heart is. Some people want to do it because there is an issue that is near and dear to their heart. People who want to run for city council, there could be an issue as simple as, you know they could fix that pothole if they really wanted to if they put their minds to it. And then there are those who are more interested in public education. So it’s what drives you. And it has to come out of a passion for something.

What’s so disappointing to me and so disappointing to others is that we are a passionless people. And I’m talking about Christians. Which is really sad. We have either given up and thrown up our hands or, like you, we’ll say, you know why would I want to do that and why would I want to put myself through that? That’s looking through a very selfish lens because it’s not about us. It’s about serving God through serving people. And we are for the most part we look out for number one first. And that’s just normal. Even with Christians. But we have to begin to look at it beyond us and what’s in it for me and it’s gonna be tough for me and it’s gonna be tough for my family. You don’t think it was tough for Paul and David and all those guys? Esther.

*Darrell Bock* Dorothy, you come with political experience. You not only have headed this organization, why don’t you tell us how it is that you came to form this organization and the previous experience that you had that caused you to do that? You come out of a public service background.
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Dorothy Burton | Yes. Not theology. My whole professional career and political background has been politics. Even my first master’s in master of urban studies. My whole goal in life was to be a city manager somewhere. But I ended up being a city councilmember instead. When I first got my, I graduated from UTA with my master’s in urban studies, I went to work for Lee Jackson who was at the time the county judge.

Darrell Bock | So UTA is University of Texas at Arlington for those who aren’t from the area.

Dorothy Burton | So I started as the administrative assistant, the executive assistant to the county judge. And I ran for office myself and city council. I lost my first race. I’ve actually run five races. I lost my first one and didn’t lose again. So my background is local government. I served at the national level on the Women in Municipal Government board of directors. Which is a subcommittee of the National League of Cities. I’ve served on a state board as the chairman of the Dallas Central Appraisal District board of directors.

So my background is varied and it’s deep. And the Lord led me to seminary. I didn’t know why. I had no, no, no desire. I just had a desire for a deeper walk with him. And I had no clue that he would use all of what I went through as a public servant, as running for office, as getting knocked down and making good decisions and bad decisions and going through everything that you could go through as an elected and appointed official, and he would bring that all together with the theological background to give me a pretty well rounded world view. Experientially, academically and in – so that’s where I am. Yeah. That’s my world view.

Bill Hendricks | See it’s folks like you that I love it when they come to seminary. Sometimes hardly knowing why they’re here. Because you bring that kind of real world experience and knowledge. And then, as in your case, you told me that you discovered a whole world of insight from the word and teaching of the word.
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Dorothy Burton

Yes. I would often sit in class and I would go to my car in the parking lot and I would just cry. I would just boohoo and just said Lord, if I had known what I know and learning now I would have served differently. I would have thought about the issues differently. But I just didn’t know. And I was convicted. I was very convicted. Convicted to the point I guess where God said, okay, if you know that then you need to reach back and let others know. So that’s kinda the impetus of why I do what I do.

Bill Hendricks

Darrell, I suppose a lot of people would say, look, why don’t you smart people who teach all this stuff just kind of review the issues and then tell us which way to vote. But you’re saying that’s not really a good way to look at it.

Darrell Bock

No. I’m saying that basically what happens in public discourse today, and you can almost pick the issue and watch it happen, is that each side is bringing a biblical value to the position that they’re taking. But in many cases no argument is taking stock of the whole array of biblical values that are in play in that issue. And that what you’re dealing with are tensions that emerge in a fallen world. We don’t live in a perfect world. That’s not a revelation. All you have to do is turn on your TV at 10:00 and you know that.

But in the midst of living in a fallen world we’re often negotiating space. Space that is in tension. Because there are competing values that the people do respect that are running up against each other. And the question is how do you balance those values? And when politics says this is an either/or choice, you know you either go here or you go there, sometimes what you do is you opt out of the tension.

Let me give you an example. Cause I think without a couple of examples it won’t –

Bill Hendricks

Stays –

Darrell Bock

Exactly. And Dorothy will react to the second example I’ll give cause she and I have already exchanged emails on one of these topics.

Gun control. Okay. We’re here in Texas. People like their guns here.
They pack. So you’ve – and what’s interesting is I spent my doctoral studies living in Scotland where guns were outlawed. People do not carry guns in England. You can get away with that if you’re an island. And so very different environment in terms of gun control. But that’s already decided for us. We have an amendment that gives everybody the right to carry a gun. So that’s not a debate you’re gonna have. And you couldn’t have it now anyway because there’s so many guns out there there’d be no way to go – there’d be – even if you wanted to go back you couldn’t go back.

So with that on the table, now the question is how do you live with guns being, millions of guns being a reality in your society? And how do you do that well? And on the one hand you’ve got the biblical value of the right to protect yourself. Which most people do recognize. They have the right to protect their home, their property, their family. You want to protect life. You want to protect the life of those of your loved ones. That’s perfectly legitimate biblical value.

But you also have in the scripture a lot of texts that talk about not being retaliatory, not seeking vengeance, being careful about how you use violence and exercise the power and the rights that you do have. Those kinds.

So how do you balance those two? That’s the question in gun control. So is it unreasonable to think about appropriate background checks? Is it unreasonable to think about making sure guns don’t get in the hands of people who aren’t qualified to have them? I mean we ask people to register for a license to drive a car because they can do damage with driving a car. They can certainly do damage with how they carry a gun. So those kinds of things.

You know are certain kinds of weapons really not weapons of self-protection but of mass annihilation? Should we be able to discuss how and under what circumstances those kinds of weapons circulate? That’s your public square conversation. And when you apply both of those values you’re balancing those two things against one another. Because they do kind of – can run into each other.
Second example. This is the one that Dorothy and I have already exchanged some conversation about. Was immigration. Controversial to bring up. Okay. Each side has a point. A nation has a right to define its values and to define its borders and to ask that its laws be kept. No doubt about that. There’s also a ton of scripture that talks about how the foreigner is treated and the alien is treated as a value. As a human value. Israel is supposed to remember her experience as being slaves in Egypt and then treat foreigners accordingly. Parts of the corners of their crops were supposed to be left open so anyone could come and pick from the crops. Those kinds of.

So you’ve got those two tensions. Excuse me. Coming in against one another. And the hard part that you deal with is the way our politics sometimes reduces to buzzwords. So for example, the word illegal alien. You know the illegals. We’re gonna talk about the illegals. They’re breaking the law. And yet the people who have been proposing immigration reform with this other biblical value in play about you gotta be sensitive to how you treat people even as you’re trying to enforce the nature of your society, have been proposing penalties for the people who have come here illegally as part of that reform. You pay for your crime with time.

And so it isn’t just the case of straight amnesty even though that word is being bandied about in the debate a lot. And so because of the way we talk about the issue, we never wrestle with the balance between the two biblical values in terms of thinking about what it is needed in relationship to immigration reform.

Now I mentioned Dorothy cause she’s read an advanced copy of the book. And it was the immigration chapter that set her off.

So why don’t you tell us about that? Cause –

*Bill Hendricks*  
I find it hard to believe you’ve written something that would set people off.

*Darrell Bock*  
It’s very, very, you know every now and again it happens.

*Bill Hendricks*  
Tell us more about that.

*Dorothy Burton*  
Well, let’s back up to the gun control issue first.
Okay. Okay.

As a former NRA member, proud NRA member, it’s not the good guys. It’s the bad – it’s not the bad guys that are gonna suffer under gun control it’s the good guys.

Right.

It’s us who follow the rules and make sure that we do the background checks and all that we have to do legally to do that. So when – and it depends on who’s talking about gun control. If it comes from gun control from the right or the left. It’s our basic second amendment right to be able to protect ourselves, our property and our families. So it’s not a matter of – it’s not, as you said, it’s a complicated issue. But what it boils down to is does the individual have the right, and the second amendment says that we do, to bear arms, to protect our family, our property and us individually. As a matter of fact, I had to back in the parking lot and put my gun back in the ______ cause I’m like, I can’t take on campus.

But we’re to that point –

Cause we have a biblical value about how we relate to one another.

There you go. There you go. Y’all might make me made enough I’ll take out my gun and shoot –

I left it in the car.

There you go.
And the issue of immigration. Now – and it’s on both sides. Because we know that on the left side it helps with the voter rolls. Eventually when children born here get to be 18 and are able to vote. And then on the right side it’s cheap labor. We just have to recognize that. But we – but a nation, if a nation is going to be a nation there are three things that make a nation a nation. That’s borders, language and culture. And when you have immigrants how come in who refuse to assimilate into the culture, who say, okay, America, we like what you are, but we don’t want to be part of who you are. We’re gonna bring who we are and we’re gonna make you be who we think, who we are. Now that’s not right. If you’re gonna come to America, we welcome you to come. We welcome you to come number one, we welcome you to come legally and we will welcome you with open arms.

The second thing is you must be willing to assimilate into the culture and not make us be where you came from. That’s not what America is. And the third thing is we get this whole thing of lovey-dovey immigration confused. I mean the government is not here to do that. I mean where does the church come in? Where does the individual come in? Government is not intended to let’s have a love fest with immigrants. It’s just not intended, it just wasn’t set up to be that way. So whenever there is a threat to any nation, _____ America, whenever there is a threat to our borders, our language and our culture, we have every right in the world on God’s green earth to stand up and fight against that. We welcome you. But we welcome you to be a part of our culture.

Well, it sounds to me like we’ve got values –

And that’s why he said we had those emails going –

And, Darrell, let me ask. Because you’ve used the word balance. And we’ve got to balance these tensions. It seems like a synonym that actually is what it becomes in the actual public discourse is compromise. And that’s a word that people struggle with. Particularly Christians. Because it sounds like if I compromise I’m compromising core values in some way. I’m having to go against what I believe in my heart is right.
Darrell Bock: Well, actually before we even get to the word compromise we’ve gotta take about two steps back. Because part of what’s going on in the little exchange that you have that we probably should continue because it’s part of the conversation, is how do you even think about approaching not just the issue and the particulars, but even having the conversation –

Bill Hendricks: How to have the conversation.

Darrell Bock: - how to even have this conversation. How do I do it in a way that respects the positions that are – the substance of the positions that are being raised that are coming at me from different directions? And how do I think about how we as neighbors live with the choices that we face both as a community and in the votes that we take? Who wins and who loses and how to win and lose well. I mean there are overarching approach issues before we even get down into the particulars that are gonna help us either relate to one another well in a way that our society has some chance at some level of cohesion versus being broken up into a kind of tribalism. Which is where I think we often are today.

How do I love my neighbor well? Now we’re not talking about a love fest. Okay. We’re talking about a practical kind of engagement with someone who I know and recognize thinks differently than I do. And where that resolution of that tension actually ends up being resolved. And this is one of the places where the limitations of politics is important. Because you cannot solve the political problems that at their core a problems of the heart. Okay. Unless hearts are changed. Which is why the gospel is important as a conversation about this.

Now that is a long way away from answering your question about compromise. Because what my argument is is the reason we never talk about compromise or think about comprise or engage in thinking about compromise is because we haven’t even built some of the steps to think about having those conversations and what’s involved in them. and those are necessary conversations for us to understand how we’re gonna relate to people who are very different than myself in terms of how they view the world who happen to be my neighbors at the same time and we all have to function together side by side. It’s the Thomas Jefferson, John Adams illustration coming back at us if you will.
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*Bill Hendricks*  
Well, it seems to me that very quickly we get down to this issue of trust. And if we’re gonna have a meaningful conversation with each other there has to be some level of mutual trust, at least mutual respect. And it seems that in our public discourse today that frequently has broken down. That we’re coming from places of such mistrust that anything the other person says is immediately discounted. And you felt like that was a really healthy exchange. But we can learn some things just from that interaction. Tell us a –

*Darrell Bock*  
That’s right. I mean now Dorothy comes back to me and says, we absolutely have our right to second amendment. No one’s disagreeing with that. That the second amendment is in play. I’m not in Scotland anymore. I’m quite aware I’m in Texas. All I have to do is look at the back of a pickup truck and I know I’m in Texas.

*Bill Hendricks*  
But why is it that some people feel that it is important? That somehow somebody’s gonna take that –

*Darrell Bock*  
That away. Well, I think they feel threatened for the very reason that Dorothy also mentioned. Which is the problem with guns are not the people who treat them well but the people who will abuse them and treat them poorly. So how do I protect myself? You notice that both immigration and gun control have the same concern to some degree. An issue about self-protection in terms of how people see a threat in the world. Which is there and it’s legitimate. We live in a fallen world.

So the question is how do you that? But the other half of the equation is how do I engage with someone next to me and keep from treating them so much as the other that I lose my ability to draw them in to the thing that I'm really concerned about as a Christian and that is that they would come to appreciate what the gospel is and the opportunity to be invited into it.

And so the point on gun control would be no one’s worried about your second amendment right of having the gun. But the question is how do we as a society best function in being aware of what our gun usage is in such a way that we don’t make it as easy as possible for people to abuse guns they have. Now a criminal who wants to break the law is gonna figure out a way to break the law and create trouble. Everyone’s gotta deal with that.
But there’s a lot of killing and use of weapons that is impulsive. That happens because someone reacts immediately and they have access to something would haven’t – so some of the restrictions that some people are asking about weapons aren’t an attempt to take your weapons away from you. At least I don’t think. Their intent is to create more hurdles for people. And in some cases get in the way of more instinctive types of things that sometimes happen. Or limit the access that people have to kill in masse in a hurry, in a short space of time. Those kinds of thing.

I’d submit that’s a legitimate discussion to have in the public square. That what we need in the public square is a discussion that says, I appreciate the value of what you have in terms of owning a gun. I respect that. I get it. But on the other hand, can we talk about ways in which we can craft legislation that might operate as at least a hurdle to the person who impulsively will misuse a weapon? Those kinds of things. Things that aren’t unreasonable and that still respect your right to carry a gun. That’s the kind of conversation I think we deserve.

Immigration. Same kind of thing. Yes, the issue is how people assimilate. But I’ll remind several things on immigration. One, virtually every group that is now somewhat assimilated, I’d argue that people don’t always all assimilate. Some groups come over and they never assimilate because it’s the nature of them as minorities to want to be sure that they keep some of their own identity in the midst of being here.

How do I want to say this crisply? If you look at our immigration law and the history of immigration, virtually every group that we now respect for being here and being assimilated, took four or five generations to assimilate. And originally the original people who were here didn’t want them here. Okay. I can go through Italians. I can go through Eastern Europeans. I can go through Asians. I can show you in the history of our immigration laws where the very same arguments we’re using now were used to argue those people shouldn’t be here. You just fill in the blank.
And so now we’re grateful that Italians are here. We’re grateful that the Irish are here. We wouldn’t have St. Patrick’s Day. We’re grateful that the Asians are a part of our country and have learned to be a part of an – assimilation is in part not only how a person comes to a country but how a country welcomes them when they come. When I did an original Bible study on immigration I did it completely different than Bible study I did in my life. I opened by having everyone go around and say, how did your family get to America? I was in Bible study with 25 men. Twenty-three of them knew how their families got here and how long they’d been here. It was amazing actually that they did that well.

And you went around the room and you went through and you went through the list of why that was going on. And the point that of course I was making in the beginning is we’re all beneficiaries of immigration who are here. One way or another. Almost all. Unless we’re a Native American Indian, okay, we’re all beneficiaries of our immigration policy to one degree. Certainly a substantial majority of us are.

The second part of the concern that is legitimate – so a nation has a right to set its borders and to ask people to become a part of the culture into which they step. That’s absolutely correct. Okay. Respect that. Get the point. But the other half of the equation is is that we to some degree have created the situation we are now in. we have 12 million people here who are probably here illegally. Who try to operate completely underground, aren’t a part of our society, isolate themselves. Yes, they’ve broken the law, because right now if they come forward the likelihood is not only will they be deported, their families will be broken up and there are all kinds of social consequences for all those choices.

Now although we have some people who have argued that’s the way we ought to apply the law, most people understand there is no way we can practically apply the law that way because of the social consequences. So something has to be done. The question is what needs to be done?
Now notice what I’m saying. What I’m saying is is I respect every point that Dorothy is putting out on the table as a part of this conversation. Okay. What I’m asking of her is to respect points I’m putting on the table that I also think need to be a part of the conversation. And now the conversation that we need to have is how do we craft legislation in such a way that we pay attention to all those values as much as we can as simultaneously as we can? That’s the political discussion we deserve. That we rarely get because people say, I either want to build a wall or I want to let everybody in. okay.

Now finally we’re getting to the answer of your compromise question. Which is the only way to get to a solution that Dorothy and I can sit down at the table and hopefully continue to fellowship with one another afterwards on is if we have the very kind of conversation I just outlined. With the very kind of appreciation for why all those elements are on the table that I’ve just suggested. And so we’re talking about a different kind of conversation in which a variety of values are put in play. Some of which in our current situation some of those values are the right values and some of those values to the left values, okay. And right and left tend not to value the things that the other side is bringing up.

My plea in the book and in the conversation we have is is that we need to recognize that all those values are a part, are a legitimate part of this conversation. And that we need to think through it. And the other thing that we have to be aware of is we do live in a fallen world. This world is not perfect. We will not design legislation that will ever be perfect. We have to be willing to live with some limitations in how we balance out these conversations.

And the floor is now yours, Dorothy.

Dorothy Burton

Well, thank you. I don’t think that I’ve said that immigration is not important. We do welcome immigrants. However, respect our laws. We are a country of laws. And we welcome you. Just do it legally. Now for those are here or in the shadows and are illegal, obviously there is something that needs to be done so that families won’t get broken up and this social chaos for these 12 million plus that are here. But the seven letter dirty word is amnesty. Nobody wants to go there.
So what is the answer? And if there is going to be an answer, again, I go back to what I said to Bill, it’s gonna have to come from the body of Christ. The body of Christ, however, has been so politicized that it’s almost impossible for us to lead the type of conversation that you’re talking about that is desperately needed. That only the people of God can lead. When the people of God have been so compromised by politics. I’m sorry, Dr. Bock, that’s just the way it is.

_Darrell Bock_ Mm hmm.

_Dorothy Burton_ And, um, you know in a perfect world, yes. But in the political climate that we’re in, even going into November making those who are illegal legal, i.e., amnesty – and we’re talking about among Christians.

_Darrell Bock_ Yeah, but we’re not talking about amnesty. We’re talking about an immigration reform. At least the way it was promised –

_Dorothy Burton_ But you can’t have immigration reform without talking about amnesty. And when that gets on the table, even among Christian candidates, and we know who they are. We’re not naming candidates here. It’s a nonstarter.

_Darrell Bock_ But we’re not talking about amnesty in what has been proposed. The legislation that was in line to be looked at proposed that the people who were here illegally, who broke the law, would pay for their crime with time. They would go to a back of what was already gonna be a long –

_Dorothy Burton_ There’s no political will to do that.

_Darrell Bock_ Well, that’s another question.

_Dorothy Burton_ Yeah.
Okay. That’s fair enough. That’s fair enough. That’s another question. But the point is to call that penalty amnesty is to frame an issue I would say inappropriately. I was gonna say un-biblically. Unlovingly. Okay. If I could use a strong word and say it’s almost a lie. To frame the issue. That’s the other thing that gets in the way. Is the way in which we talk about the issues in such a way that we never get to the conversation we’re supposed to have.

Exactly.

Because we mis-frame the conversation that we need to have.

And it’s done intentionally.

Exactly right. To create the political climate that will push people in one direction or another on the issue.

Right. Including Christians.

That’s exactly right. And there’s a lot of money that goes behind making that happen. Etcetera. There are all kinds of issues that are wrapped up in this. But the point is, and I think on this Dorothy and I are completely agreed, the point is is that unless or until we get to a different kind of conversation we’re going to be – we are gridlocked and we will remain gridlocked. Agree?

So who is to lead – I agree. I agree with that. So who is to lead that conversation? It’s not gonna be the politicians.

That’s right. It’s gonna have to be people. It’s gonna have to be people –

Politicians are people.

Maybe.
It’s gonna have to be people and I think in some cases Christian leaders or other people of good intent. I don’t think this is just limited to Christians who can have this capability. Who think about values like the common good. Human flourishing. What it means to be a good neighbor. What it is to recognize that the playing field that we play on in America is not a church playing field. It’s not. We were never designed to be a theocracy.

Dorothy Burton Right.

Darrell Bock And so I’ve got to be able to live in public space – part of what is not in the book but I want to write about eventually is the difference between public space and sacred space. That we – the world biblically speaking is public space. It’s sacred in that God is in it and present, but he’s not in it and present in the way that he’s present in the church. He’s not in it and present in the way he is in the hearts of people who have responded to him. And so there’s public space out there. And we think the role is to take sacred space and invade public space. I actually think we have the metaphor backwards.

What we are trying to do is to invite people out of public space even though they still remain there, into sacred space. And to get the heart capability to think about things differently than they did when they were just in the world.

Dorothy Burton Right.

Bill Hendricks But you know something about that.

Dorothy Burton And that’s the heart of our organization.
It is to recognize that we are first of all Christ centered. Christ is the center of what we do. Being that is the case, then how do we go out and formulate policies and frame conversations and do what we do on the political level as far as writing policy, as far as the whole gamut? We are supposed to look at it differently. We are supposed to come from a biblical frame of reference. And that is what we as Christians in public service try to do. It is, okay, if you name the name of Jesus Christ there is a different way of governing that he expects you to do. And that is – first of all, it’s coming from a biblical world view. A Christian world view. And it goes back to values and principles that are outlined in the Bible. Sometimes that’s not easy to do as, you know we’ve had that conversation too as being an elected official myself sometimes that’s the last thing on your mind. The first thing on your mind is winning and getting your way. And even that there is a way to win and getting your way from a Christian world view.

But if this is going to, if we are going to be salt and light, and I teach this all the time, there is a certain expectation that should be different about us. Not necessarily beating people over the head with the Bible. And saying you need to do this, you need to do that because this is what the Bible says. Un uh. We are turning people off and turning people away. It should be by our actions and how we treat people and how we talk and the conversations that we have. I perfectly agree – we do agree on that.

_Darrell Bock_  
mm hmm.

_Dorothy Burton_  
So it is looking at the world differently. It is looking at policy differently. It’s not so much about the politics of my particular party or my platform. And I will tell you that is an incredible pressure. The pressure is incredible to conform to platform and not to serve out of biblical world view. And that is the tension that many Christians are caught between.

_Darrell Bock_  
That’s a great observation. And that whole area of how Christian world view informs the politics of the public service that a Christian engages in. there’s a way I like to talk about this too that I think is important. And that is – and I actually think this is the way Christians need to think about interacting with the culture at large as a whole.
There’s a difference between saying it’s true because it’s in the Bible and it’s in the Bible because it’s true. And the church has tended to say to the public, it’s true because it’s in the Bible. Which for a person who doesn’t respect the Bible means next to nothing.

Dorothy Burton
Nothing.

Darrell Bock
Okay. But flip it. If it’s in the Bible because it’s true that means that when we engage and present our world view that part of what we’re trying to do is to say it is healthy for human beings created in God’s image to flourish and manage the creation well, to live in a way that’s healthy for one another. Okay. And then you move into your political discussions to ask questions like, what is healthy for one another? Well, one of the things that’s healthy is stable families. Stable families, kids, generally speaking, turn out better. Etcetera. So that impacts your family policy and how you think about family. How you think about marriage. How you think about all those issues.

What is valuable about having an education that makes you aware of the differences in the world that are around you? How do you prepare for globalization in our world? Well, you better have an education that tells you about the different world views that do exist. What different religions think. Not merely as a matter of right and wrong but just being able to relate to people who are built differently than you are. Those kinds of things.

Dorothy Burton
Right.

Darrell Bock
So when we talk about it’s in the Bible because it’s true, you’re presenting your world view in a way that tries to say the person who doesn’t respect the Bible like you, this is still valuable way to think about life. This is an authentic way to think about life. Those kinds of things. And you do your politics out of that lens.

And I’m not sure we have enough of that going on.
We don’t. And Jesus said it’s not a matter of so much – he said they will know you are mine by your love for one another. And that one another is our neighbor, is the immigrant, is those that are different from us politically. It goes back to that four letter word. And it goes back to love and what does that look like. That means putting one’s – someone else’s needs above yours because you love them. That means if you are a public servant and a politician or elected official, that means how can I serve you in a way that’s meaningful and matters and will make a difference for you in your life and your family? It is putting that other person and their needs first.

And it also means –

That’s counterintuitive.

That’s right. It also means understanding the limits of what politics can achieve without changed hearts.

Exactly. Right.

As I like to say, if you want to see what good law looks like with bad hearts read your Old Testament. That’s why we got the new covenant. You know. We got the new covenant because God has to do work inside a person to change them from the inside in order to get them thinking in a way in which they not only are willing to serve but in some cases to sacrifice in order for people to function alongside one another.

And that’s the basis for gun control right there, Dr. Bock. You can’t legislate hearts.

That’s right.

You really can’t.

That’s right.

I think of that young man. Two lives were lost. The young man in Denton that, the road rage who killed a young woman. The young man that killed her is actually, what? A marine. He was a marine.
Bill Hendricks: Eighteen years old.

Dorothy Burton: With a weapon. No amount of legislation could have saved that girl. That young woman. It is a heart deal. You can’t legislate that.

Darrell Bock: That’s right.

Dorothy Burton: You just can’t.

Darrell Bock: That’s right. And then the question, of course, on the other side is but you do want to have enough legislation in place so that people handle their guns as responsibly as possible. Just like we have laws that regulate, you know how we drive our cars. You know there are limitations that we – I can’t go on the freeway and go whatever speed I want. My car’s capable of doing that. Okay. But we have speed limits for a reason.

Dorothy Burton: Mm hmm.

Darrell Bock: And so, again, this tension between the freedom and the rights that we have and limiting those rights to some degree so that we actually can function better together. That’s – I think that’s the core of good political reflection is being able to figure out what that balance is.

Dorothy Burton: And one of the core problems is along with balance is boundaries. The boundaries of decency are being erased.

Darrell Bock: Mm hmm.

Bill Hendricks: The boundaries of public discourse. The boundaries of how we conduct ourselves are being erased.

Darrell Bock: Mm hmm.

Dorothy Burton: So along with that boundaries –
Bill Hendricks: Let me jump in here. We’ve got just a couple, three minutes left. You have talked about coming together to have civil discourse to try to look at these issues that are in tension. And I’ve heard you say today that Christians, Christ followers out to be at the forefront of that conversation. Is this a role that the church, and I mean churches, local churches, is there any role for local churches in this?

Dorothy Burton: Sure it is. We wouldn’t be the country that we are today if it had not been for the involvement of the church.

Bill Hendricks: And yet it seems like churches have retreated from talking about politics.

Dorothy Burton: Because they believe the lie of separation of church and state. They have that thing flipped backwards. And Dr. Bock, you can talk about that better than I can. It wasn’t a matter of keeping the church out of the state. It was keeping the state out of the church.

Bill Hendricks: Well, during the break you had mentioned some statistics that you had heard from – was it George Barna?

Dorothy Burton: George Barna.

Bill Hendricks: Recently.

Dorothy Burton: Yeah.

Bill Hendricks: Tell us about those.

Dorothy Burton: A large percentage, over 50 percent of people, women of, conservative women that were surveyed said that we wish the church would inform us better on the issues. Not so much who to vote for. But just the issues. We have a lot of church rich but information poor voters. Christians. And if we – we cannot make a difference if we don’t know what the issues are.
Bill Hendricks

Well, it seems to me then that we’ve at least opened up a significant opportunity for churches through this conversation today. To strategize, be creative, think about how could we engage our people in looking at the values that are in play in some of these very, very tricky issues.

Darrell Bock

Has the feel of another podcast to me.

Dorothy Burton

As I said earlier, this election is about the soul of America. The election in 2008 and 2012 was about who would capture the heart of America. I’m sorry to say that the church has lost the heart of America. This election coming up is about the soul of America.

Bill Hendricks

And so we’re gonna have to search our hearts and souls in this coming election. And do so looking at the fact that we ourselves are always in tension. And we’re gonna have to ask Christ to help us resolve in order to vote.